



State of New Jersey

GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL ON SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER

P. O. Box 345

TRENTON, NEW JERSEY 08625-0345

PHILIP D. MURPHY
Governor

TAHESHA L. WAY
Lt. Governor

NEIL VAN ESS
Acting Chairman

CELINA LEVY
Executive Director

MINUTES

Governor's Council on Substance Use Disorder

May 20, 2025

Attendance: Neil Van Ess (Chairman), Celina Levy (Executive Director), John Armato (Public Member), Gregg Benson (Public Member), Donna DeStefano (Public Member), Sweta Kansagra (Public Member), Gisele Pemberton (Public Member), Cornell Williamson (AOC), Herb Kaldany (DOC), Lu Pereira (DOE), Jessica Atkinson (DOH), Don Hallcom (DHS), Briana Menjivar (DOL), Tiffany Wilson (LPS), Noelle Lee-Turner (DMAVA), Allison Samay (NJ President's Council)

The three hundred and ninety third regular meeting of the Governor's Council on Substance Use Disorder was called to order at 10:00 a.m. by Acting Chairman Neil Van Ess.

Open Public Meetings Act Statement

Mr. Van Ess announced that notice of this meeting was provided in compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act (N.J.S.A. 10:4-6 – 10:4-21). In addition, Mr. Van Ess stated that public comments were to be provided electronically, through the GCSUD website contact portal between the hours of 10am and 1pm on the day of the meeting and must state "Public Comment" in the subject line.

Roll Call

Katelyn Assenheimer called the roll. Members present and absent were noted for the record.

Chairman's Report

Chairman Van Ess welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked the Council members for attaining quorum to vote on the FY26 County Plan Resolutions.

Approval of Minutes

After a brief discussion, the minutes for March and April were approved.

March (Y-12; N-0; ABS-2)

April (Y-13; N-0; ABS-1)

Awareness Month Resolutions

Executive Director Celina Levy read resolutions recognizing April as Alcohol Awareness Month and May as Mental Health Awareness Month in New Jersey. After a vote, both resolutions were approved.

Alcohol Awareness Month Resolution (Y-14; N-0; ABS-0)

Mental Health Awareness Month Resolution (Y-14; N-0; ABS-0)

FY26 County Plan Resolutions

Director of Prevention and Planning, Sara Thode explained to the Council that the FY26 Plans were reviewed by the Council Review Team and voted to present the County Alliance Plans to the Council for approval.

Executive Director Celina Levy gave an overview of the voting process. The following Council members informed GCSUD of the need to recuse themselves from voting on the FY26 County Plan Resolutions:

John Armato – Atlantic County

Gregg Benson – Morris County

Eileen Fishman – Essex County

Gisele Pemberton – Union County

After a vote, the plans were approved:

- **FY26 Joint County Plan Resolution (Bergen, Burlington, Camden, Cape May, Cumberland, Gloucester, Hudson, Hunterdon, Mercer, Middlesex, Monmouth, Ocean, Passaic, Salem, Somerset, Sussex, Warren) (Y-14; N-0; ABS-1)**
- **FY26 Atlantic County Plan Resolution (Y-14; N-0; ABS-2)**
- **FY26 Essex County Plan Resolution (Y-14; N-0; ABS-1)**
- **FY26 Morris County Plan Resolution (Y-14; N-0; ABS-2)**
- **FY26 Union County Plan Resolution (Y-14; N-0; ABS-2)**

Executive Director's Report

Executive Director Celina thanked everyone for attaining quorum to vote on the FY26 County Plan resolutions. She also thanked the County Coordinators for their good work and the County Alcohol and Drug Use Directors for their support. She took a moment to recognize the GCSUD Alliance staff for overseeing and guiding the process.

The draft of the Master Plan is anticipated to be completed for submission to the Governor's office by next month. Ms. Levy thanked the public members and designees for their input.

The 2025 NJPN Conference will be held on June 12th and June 13th at the Atlantic City Conference Center. Registration is now open on the NJPN website.

Ms. Levy thanked the Council members for their support and input, County Coordinators and Alliances for their commitment to New Jersey communities, to GCSUD for going above and beyond to ensure the work of the Council moves forward and to Neil for his leadership and commitment to the Council.

Adjournment

Chairman Van Ess adjourned the meeting at 10:43.