



State of New Jersey

GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL ON SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER

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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

September 16, 2025

Attendance: Neil Van Ess (Chairman), Celina Levy (Executive Director), John Armato (Public Member), Gregg Benson (Public Member), Donna DeStefano (Public Member), Eileen Fishman (Public Member), Sweta Kansagra (Public Member), Cornell Williamson (AOC), Michelle Graham-Lyons (DCA), Adam Cortes (DOC), Lu Pereira (DOE), Lashunda Omida (DOH), Don Hallcom (DHS), Briana Menjivar (DOL), Katie Kurek (LPS), Noelle Lee-Turner (DMAVA), Allison Samay (NJ President's Council)

The three hundred and ninety sixth 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.

Approval of Minutes

After a brief discussion, the minutes for May, June and July were approved.

May (Y-12; N-0; ABS-4)

June (Y-12; N-0; ABS-4)

July (Y-11; N-0; ABS-5)

Observance Day Proclamations and Resolutions

Executive Director Celina Levy read proclamations from Governor Murphy recognizing Suicide Prevention Week, Recovery Month and Overdose Awareness Day in New Jersey. She also read resolutions recognizing Suicide Prevention Awareness Month, Recovery Month and Overdose Awareness Day. The Council members agreed to bundle the resolutions and after a vote, the resolutions were approved. **(Y-15; N-0; ABS-0)**

Presentation: County Funding Formula FY27-31

GCSUD Deputy Director, Rebecca Alfaro, gave an overview of the FY27-31 County funding formula to the Council members. The formula is data-driven and reflects shifts in population and as well as spending patterns across the counties. After a vote, the Council approved the funding formula for FY27-31. **(Y-15; ABS-0; N-0)**

Presentation: Department of Education Updates

Lu Pereira, Director of the Office of Student Support Services of the NJ Department of Education, gave an overview of some of the initiatives that the department has been involved with to the Council members.

The New Jersey Tiered System of Supports aims to provide targeted interventions based on students' mental health needs. The five stages for implementation include: exploration and development, installation, initial implementation, full implementation and continuous improvement.

Brick by Brick is a free online course developed in partnership with Rutgers University to provide school leaders with tools for implementing school-wide social-emotional learning programs.

Mr. Pereira also shared the changes and achievements on mental health and school climate improvement over the past few years, including increased access to Naloxone and the development of the New Jersey School Climate Improvement Plan.

Executive Director's Report

Executive Director Celina shared that the DMHAS Suicide Prevention Conference took place on September 10th and was well received and attended. She also shared that the DMHAS Opioid Summit would be taking place on September 17th.

The Governor's office is in receipt of the Master Plan and the final draft will be presented to the Council for adoption at the next meeting.

Sara Thode, Director of Prevention and Planning shared with the Council that 100% of the County Plans and 87% of the Municipal Alliance Plans have been approved by GCSUD staff. She also shared that the Volunteer of the Year Ceremony will be held at our December 9th meeting.

Ms. Levy thanked the Council members for their guidance and support, the County Alliance Coordinators for their good work, GCSUD staff for moving the office forward and to Neil Van Ess for his ongoing leadership and support.

Adjournment

Mr. Van Ess adjourned the meeting at 11:56.