

**ERIE COUNTY MENTAL HYGIENE COMMUNITY SERVICES BOARD
MINUTES**

February 5, 2026
Webex, 9:00am – 10:00am

COMMUNITY

SERVICES BOARD: Esther Annan, Victoria Brooks, Sharon Cavanaugh, Max Donatelli (Secretary), Emma Fabian, Jane Mogavero, Pastor George Nicholas, Stephanie Orlando (Chair), Elda Pichardo, Christopher Ramnauth, Elizabeth Smith, Charles Syms

MENTAL HEALTH

DEPARTMENT: Sarah Bonk, Shannon Stocker

EXCUSED: Terry Alford, Daniel Antonius

ABSENT: BJ Stasio (Vice Chair)

QUORUM PRESENT: Yes
(a majority of the members of the Board)

Approval of Minutes:

- January Minutes were approved. Motion made by Esther Annan, seconded by Victoria Brooks, no discussion, all in favor, no one opposed, Charles Syms abstained since he was not at the January meeting.

Introductions:

- This was Esther Annan's first meeting as a member, so everyone introduced themselves.

Subcommittee Updates:

- MH Subcommittee (Jane):
 - o Last meeting was January 12th. Minutes will be sent out.
 - o We welcomed several new members, reviewed the roles and expectations of the committee, and what the structure of the CSB is overall. Discussed priorities and how we can best align with the vision of the County but also bring our perspective and expertise to those conversations.
 - o We talked a little bit about the MH Crisis Triage Tool which the County is helping to lead, and how we can support those efforts through our networks.
 - o Next meeting will be March 9th.

- PASS Subcommittee (Elizabeth):
 - o Last meeting was January 22nd. We did not have quorum until the end of the meeting, so at our next meeting, we will approve the January and September minutes, then minutes will be sent out.
 - o We reviewed our 2026 priorities and determined that our bigger focal points will still be:
 - Overdoses and access to treatment, specifically within each demographic
 - Workforce
 - Education curriculum within the field of substance use and other related areas
 - Access to care, including impacts from Medical Answering Service (MAS) transportation issues. A lot of Opioid Treatment Programs (OTPs) are experiencing issues with transportation. OTPs are considered medical services under OASAS. There was a lot of alleged fraud being reported. In an attempt to

resolve fraud issues, if individuals are going to receive MAS transportation, they are being confined to going to treatment at Preferred Provider Organizations (PPOs) in their zip code. There are not OTPs in every zip code and a lot of them only have daytime hours. This confinement has not resolved the fraud issue.

- Sarah will meet with Elizabeth ASAP to discuss and address transportation issues sooner rather than later.
 - We are working to keep up with grant funding, cuts, etc.
 - We are also working on leading with data. We talked a bit about an annual Reporting and Data Analysis Report (RADAR), that OASAS provides to providers about their service recipients.
 - Next meeting will be February 26th.
- I/DD Subcommittee (Max):
- Last meeting was February 19th. Minutes will be sent out.
 - We have been reviewing our priorities, including workforce, housing, and families needing out-of-home services. Personal care aids in the community have gone from having 600 Fiscal Intermediaries (FIs) to 1, which is Public Partnerships, LLC (PPL). There have been continuous problems with that. It is a different system; it's not OPWDD, it's Department of Health.
 - The Governor's Budget came out with a 1.7% increase in the Medicaid reimbursement rate. The agencies are hoping to negotiate that up to a 2.7% increase.
 - Early intervention is still very much underfunded, and we are working with agencies and campaigns across NYS trying to push for more funding.
 - Next meeting will be March 19th.

Department Updates:

- We do not have any additional specific information about budget planning for 2027.
- At the State Legislature Hearing yesterday, one of the Senators was really pressing the OMH Commissioner, Ann Sullivan, about what she is going to do now about the issue around people with dual diagnoses and how we've had a significant reduction in group home spaces. Since we don't have group home beds available, where are people (all over the age spectrum) with dual diagnoses ending up? We did not get an answer, but Commissioner Sullivan said it would be a long, uphill battle. This is where our continued efforts and advocacy are important – we need this resolved now because it is causing system pressure in CPEP, in group homes, in crisis diversion efforts, in substance use, etc.
 - A CSB member added that the public doesn't know about these issues. We need to talk about this in a robust campaign to get the public engaged.
 - ECDMH will be audited by the Comptroller's office.
 - The other thing to balance with that is that, at the current moment, the most flexible of our dollars are tied up in the least regulated of our organizations, meaning we are supposed to be coordinating millions of dollars of non-clinic based services (things outside of OMH, OASAS, or OPWDD's normal regulation). It adds a lot of new opportunities for us as Sarah starts to share this information in an upfront and honest way about what these impacts look like.
 - We need volunteers to take the lead on behalf of the CSB to run a community forum.
 - CSB volunteers so far are: Charles, Christopher, and Max.
 - We could partner with the Anti-Stigma Coalition (ASC) and the Community Foundation. The ASC recently brought on a staff to focus on community engagement.
 - We could invite local assembly members and senators as well.
 - We will work on getting a team together to start taking the next steps
- We are also continuing to do a lot of work on the 730 issue.

Chairperson Updates:

- The State received a Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) grant to bring to WNY a new model of integrating care for people that are on Medicare and Medicaid, called the Innovations in Behavioral Health (IBH) Model. We had our first convening of current WNY stakeholders. Value Network is working with the State Office of MH on that. <https://www.cms.gov/priorities/innovation/innovation-models/ibh>
- On February 9th, the NYS Independent Living Association has their legislative education day and are having a rally in The Well of the Capital. We are working on several different housing initiatives, such as access to home, protecting independent living centers, the nursing home transition waiver, etc. <https://ilny.us/advocacy/advocacy-priorities>.
- The Alliance for Rights and Recovery Rally will be on February 10th. They take over the Capital with several organizations participating. <https://rightsandrecovery.org/>

Miscellaneous:

- The Mental Hygiene Budget Hearing was yesterday in Albany. In a lot of ways, it echoed some of the conversations we are having here.
- Sarah and DSS were evaluating a new Persons in Need of Supervision (PINS) grant. A new sentence has been added in the reproductive health part of the grant that says something like, 'these moneys will be used to actively reduce pregnancies out of wedlock.' We will work to make the language what it needs to be to reflect maximum rights and choice for our community.
- This link is for some new updates to the confidentiality provisions from COVID to be permanent now. For more information on HIPAA updates check out here <https://www.hhs.gov/hipaa/for-professionals/regulatory-initiatives/fact-sheet-42-cfr-part-2-final-rule/index.html>

Next Meeting:

- Thursday, March 5, 2026, from 9:00-10:00am.