

**SOUTHERN REGIONAL BEHAVIORAL HEALTH POLICY BOARD
MEETING MINUTES**

DATE: Wednesday, November 29, 2023

TIME: 8:00 a.m.- Adjournment

Meeting Location: Virtual - Online Only

1. Call to Order and Roll Call at 8:00 am

Members Present:

Dr. Kevin Osten-Garner (Chair)
Stacy Smith (Vice-Chair)
Assemblyman Gregory Hafen II
Missie Rowe
Boonn Hem

Chief Scott Lewis
Sarah Dillard
Dr. Whitney Owens
Coleen Lawrence

Members Absent:

Brenda O'Neill
McKaye Traynor

2. Public Comment:

No Public Comment given at this time.

- 3. For Possible Action:** Motion to approve minutes for the October 31, 2023, meeting was made by Missie Rowe, and seconded by Stacy Smith. All in favor, none opposed.

- 4. For Information and Discussion:** Allison Genco, Public Health Resource Officer from the Governor's Office, began by briefing the Policy Board with discussion regarding the state's efforts with the DOJ (Department of Justice) report on children's mental health and the over institutionalization of children. Ms. Genco mentioned that they are currently working with hospital partners to allocate funds from a current tax structure, specifically for children's behavioral health needs in the state. Ms. Genco stated that the Governor has also allocated funds for Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics (CCBHC).

Allison Genco mentioned that the Governor had signed AB528, which is a wide-ranging homelessness assistance and prevention fund to build out supportive services in southern Nevada through a project that could leverage as much as \$200 million from the state, the gaming industry, and other partners. Ms. Genco discussed the priority of increasing the workforce in all healthcare areas, specifically the behavioral health workforce. Within that, the Governor signed a bill that created the Behavioral Workforce Center to continue efforts in recruiting and retaining behavioral health providers in the state. They are currently working to get an Innovation Waiver approved to not only assist with the current loan repayment programs, but to expand efforts of retention in other ways beyond that, including easing licensure barriers. Allison Genco briefly discussed efforts in being involved in the Social Work Compact and increasing reimbursement rates through Medicaid.

Vice Chair, Stacy Smith, expressed appreciation to the Governor's Office for making the workforce a priority. Vice Chair Smith discussed retention opportunities within colleges and local sectors to support those that want to stay in local communities, including social workers. Stacy Smith mentioned the difficulties and the opportunities with clinical supervision for social workers, and remote learning. Allison Genco brought up the Public Option program that involves paying off student loans in exchange for a 5-year workforce commitment in their local community. Allison Genco explained that within that 5-year period, individuals taking part in the Public Option would become grounded in the community. Allison reinforced the continued focus and support for remote learning.

Boonn Hem noted that transportation is a big challenge in the rural and frontier areas. Other board members reiterated the difficulties with transportation and workforce retention in the rural areas for behavioral health needs. Allison Genco acknowledged these issues, and asked the members how these needs can be supported, and what can be done to help. Members gave feedback mentioning the need for higher level providers in higher level acuity environments, and the ability to provide a holistic care approach for entire families, and efficiency in provider reimbursement parameters.

Assemblyman Gregory Hafen expressed appreciation for Allison Genco and all the efforts that the Governor's office has already put forth with these issues. Mr. Hafen encouraged the Board by discussing how funds are being allocated to help the current needs. Assemblyman Hafen also brought up transportation opportunities and asked Allison Genco to bring this critical issue forward.

Dr. Kevin Osten-Garner asked Allison Genco for her assistance with the opportunity for health grants that target the younger generations and leveraging school systems in helping to create awareness of the health professions and interest in the health professions throughout our public schools. Chair Osten-Garner also mentioned the transportation issue, and seeking a long-term solution that would involve getting the state payment system aligned to where both providers and facilities can survive in the rural areas. The chair also referenced the previous discussion about remote supervision and would like to have a presentation given on the topic from the American Psychological Association and Counseling Association.

Colleen Lawrence showed agreement with Dr. Osten-Garner regarding further discussions with universities and aiding a long-term transportation solution. Vice Chair Smith also discussed building up the FAST and MOST teams in the communities which would lead to a proactive rather than a reactive approach to mental wellness and prevention.

Dr. Whitney Owens agreed with Dr. Osten-Garner's discussion of finding ways to retain providers in the state and being reimbursed adequately. Dr. Owens further discussed reimbursement challenges with Medicaid and barriers for licensure-noting that there needs to be a balance to where barriers are being reduced, without reducing the quality of services and providers. Allison Genco closed out her time by thanking the Board for having her join, and providing a contact email as follows: agenco@gov.nv.gov.

Dr. Kevin Osten-Garner opened the discussion for the Board to reflect on ideas on how communications can develop and continue with the Governor's office. Dr. Whitney Owens

encouraged having ongoing conversations to keep things moving forward. Chair Osten-Garner asked Assemblyman Hafen on how the Board could best support him and his efforts as a legislature. Assemblymen Hafen replied by referencing the meetings that are currently being held, as they encourage communication on a regular basis. Mr. Hafen requested that any regulatory hurdles and licensing hurdles be brought to his attention. Mr. Hafen mentioned that he would like ideas presented to the Interim Committee, so that they can get a better understanding of all rural Nevada's needs, especially in the behavioral health aspect, so in the future, it will be easier to move bills forward.

- 5. For Information and Discussion:** Coordinator Mark Funkhouser gave a presentation with updates and reports on state grant deliverables, scope of work and activity for the southern behavioral health region and coordination (Coordinator-Board). [Coordinator's Update - 2023 Final Report.](#)
- 6. For Possible Action:** Dr. Kevin Osten-Garner explained that there would be no December meeting. He also noted that facilitation of the meetings would be coordinated between the chair and vice-chair. He suggested building a strategy with the Board to invite stakeholders to the meetings, discuss potential outcomes, and then work to provide outcomes at the end of the year and create agendas with these strategies. Sarah Dillard noted that she would like to see an increased focus on the specialty courts in the new year.

Members expressed that they would like to see presentations from Sarah Hunt (Workforce Development Center), Aging and Disability and 988 and how crisis would be managed in rural and frontier Nevada.

Chair Osten-Garner suggested getting members together at a later meeting to discuss bylaws.

- 7. Public Comment:**
No Public Comment given at this time.
- 8. For Possible Action: Adjournment:**
The meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:48 am. Motion to adjourn was given by Dr. Whitney Owens and seconded by Colleen Lawrence.