

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

DATE: Wednesday, February 14, 2024

TIME: 8:00 a.m.- Adjournment

Meeting Location: Virtual - Online Only

This meeting held via teleconference at: Join Zoom [Meeting Login Link](#) (see additional details and links in the notes section below).

1. Call to Order and Roll Call (Chair, Dr. Kevin Osten-Garner, and Coordinator)

The meeting was called to order at approximately 8:01 by Chair Kevin Osten-Garner.

Members Present:

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

Chief Scott Lewis
Brenda O'Neill
Dr. Whitney Owens
Coleen Lawrence
McKaye Traynor

Members Absent:

Sarah Dillard

2. Public Comment was opened.

Public Comment was given by Kelcy Meyer, Regional Coordinator, Nevada Aging and Disability Services Division (ADSD) introduced herself and explained that she covers the Northern rural area to include Carson, Douglas, Storey, Churchill, Lyon, and Mineral Counties. Kelcy Meyer outlined other positions around the state with the agency and explained that these positions look at barriers and gaps to services for individuals with disabilities for the senior populations and how they can help bridge some of those gaps. Ms. Meyer mentioned that there is community collaboration and outreach efforts performed within those positions as well. Kelcy Meyer outlined the role of a point of contact for the counties the assigned region including the tribes. Finally, Kelcy announced the Aging and Disability Conference from April 16-18 at the Atlantis Resort and Casino in Reno, NV where there will be a wide variety of speakers covering the lifespan for individuals with disabilities.

3. For Information and Discussion: Board Chair, Dr. Kevin-Osten Garner proposed discussion on how the board members would like to be addressed. The coordinator asked each board member individually and all stated they would like to be referred to by their first name. Notable options were Assemblyman Gregory Hafen and Dr. Whitney Owens, both of whom were comfortable being addressed by name or title.

4. For Possible Discussion and Action: Chief Scott Lewis made motion to approve the minutes from the January 10,2024 meeting. Assemblyman Gregory Hafen seconded motion. All in favor, none opposed.

5. **For Possible Discussion and Action:** Jaren Stanton, District Attorney, Mineral County, started off by introducing himself and discussing his interest in serving the board. DA Stanton noted that half of his time is spent in criminal law and the other half is on the county side of advising them. DA Stanton explained that he does impact mental health in the work for the county in addition to impacting the criminal processes in finding alternatives to incarceration while promoting justice. Lastly, Jaren Stanton mentioned that the coordinator had reached out to him and inquired if he was willing to serve. DA Stanton welcomed questions from the board for any further information.

Colleen Lawrence inquired about what DA Stanton thought was lacking or could be improved upon in the rural areas for communications at the leadership level. Mr. Stanton replied that there are not enough resources for individuals and sometimes it is difficult to know what resources are available. Mr. Stanton referenced a scenario where there may be an individual with an issue that jail and prison are not the answers, but then there is a challenge in finding solutions based on the resources that are available. Mr. Stanton would like to see a system in place so that, if there is a need, there is a place to go or to get the help that is needed.

Boonn Hem asked how Mr. Stanton got his dedication to start advocating for mental health services and rehabilitation for individuals. DA Stanton referred to his job experience and that he sees the need and that is where his passion comes from. Mr. Stanton noted that although there are programs set up, that the mental health aspect is still being missed and that is where his advocacy comes into play.

Scott Lewis noted that what Jaren Stanton had discussed in his segments were spot on with the intentions of the Board. Chair Osten-Garner mentioned that the Board could not motion to approve Mr. Stanton but the board could recommend to Assembly Speaker Yeager that the board recommends the appointment of Mr. Stanton. Scott Lewis made a motion to approve the recommendation to move forward with a recommendation to the assembly speaker for the acceptance of Jaren Stanton onto the board. Motion was seconded by Boonn Hem. All in favor, none opposed.

6. **For Information and Discussion:** The coordinator gave an update on the scope of work and deliverables for the new grant year. Coordinator discussed an objective regarding development of a comprehensive community mental health system. Under this objective, Coordinator mentioned activities to include maximizing the integration and cooperation of mental health and substance abuse programs and services across state, counties, and community organizations. Also notable would be the participation in and convening of meetings with behavioral health service providers. The work also includes development and implementation of long-range plans for behavioral health services. Coordinator noted his efforts while traveling throughout the region to develop those working relationships in addition to coordinating the policy board meeting. A highlight was the monthly and annual reporting to the state. Coordinator referenced challenges with data collection as there have been areas where the data has been lumped together and therefore not reflecting accurate information or the true needs of the individual communities. Another objective that the coordinator discussed was the support of overdose education and Naloxone distribution opportunities and assisting with the promotion of overdose related materials, data, programs, services, technical assistance (TA),

and outreach. Finally, a specific deliverable is around supporting and assisting in the development of deflection and diversion programs in the region. A link is provided of the presentation as follows: [Link](#)

Stacy Smith expressed agreement on the remarks that the coordinator had made regarding combined data collection and noted that it makes it especially difficult when it comes to grant writing, acquiring funding, and resolving issues.

Kevin Osten-Garner mentioned that the Behavioral Health Workforce Education and Training Grant from the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) will be released on February 28th and noted a sizeable increase from congress to be able to accept more training programs involved with the grant.

Boonn Hem expressed that she would like to see increased access to recovery support groups. Ms. Hem noted that her efforts alongside local stakeholders in Tonopah for implementing support groups and that they have been extremely effective and well received by the community and surrounding areas. Ms. Hem mentioned that they are working to implement a Veteran support group as well.

Dr. Osten-Garner also mentioned the Behavioral Health Workforce Education and Training Grant (BWEPT) and networking and support for professionals that is helping to finance and fund peer support programs.

7. For Possible Discussion and Action: facilitated discussion and action to develop and determine board 2024 priorities around rural behavioral health (Vice-Chair and Board).

Coordinator gave a brief update on the work that Stacy Smith has been doing over the last month regarding the priorities. The coordinator reminded the board that the three big categories that were addressed more last month were transportation and transport, crisis response and stabilization and access to care and services including barriers to insurance. The coordinator mentioned that workforce development, youth/parenting support, family systems and engagement, courts and justice, data assessment and collection were not talked about in as much detail. Chief Scott Lewis mentioned that he is going to have a meeting with the northern area of the county because they are in a near crisis on many of these issues that have been discussed. The board had robust discussion on barriers to insurance, emphasizing that although insurers are saying that there are enough providers to serve the areas, that in fact is not the case. Coleen Lawrence explained the thought process of how behavioral healthcare positions are filled and what type of providers they are filling them with. Whitney Owens stated that the data shows if mental health is improved then physical health improves and creates less drain on insurance usage. Dr. Owens also mentioned that commercial insurers for Nevada do not reimburse trainees, and how that hinders access to care. Chair Kevin Osten-Garner noted that as insurers pay out more in claims, they recoup the cost though higher deductibles, copays, and premiums to the consumer.

Stacy Smith encouraged discussion and displayed a grid showing the priorities how those priorities are moving toward. Dr. Whitney Owens mentioned collaboration with BeHERENV. (Be Here Nevada) around workforce development. Chair Osten-Garner and Chief Lewis

discussed the challenges and needs of the volunteer workforce. Coleen Lawrence mentioned the inability to recruit licensed physicians (access to care/workforce development priority) and really focusing on who is in the provider networks. Dr. Osten-Garner noted that with telehealth becoming so prominent for those providers in private practice, the agencies cannot compete to have a provider in a physical location. Missy Rowe discussed the challenges with admissions to the hospital that involve behavior health.

Boonn Hem questioned how to handle crisis response and stabilization in the very remote areas. Coleen Lawrence encouraged meetings in a safe space, establishing relationships with the right people/creating connection (possibly over a zoom call), and planning from there (possibly bringing in a clinician/psychiatrist when necessary). Ms. Lawrence recommended finding a trusted person to collaborate with.

Vice Chair, Stacy Smith, explained that she, the Coordinator and Kevin Osten-Garner want to see what other boards are looking at as well. Ms. Smith encouraged the Board members to submit any further ideas for the ongoing priorities to the coordinator. Chair Osten-Garner encouraged Assemblyman Hafen to communicate any ideas on how the board could help these efforts on the assembly side of things. A grid that was used can be found at the following [link](#).

- 8. For Possible Action:** Chair Osten-Garner explained that he would be getting the recommendation over to over to Speaker Yeager that same day to start the process in getting the approval for Jaren Stanton to join the Board. Assemblyman Hafen offered to assist Dr. Osten-Garner in that process. Chair Osten-Garner also recommended that the presentations be tabled for the March agenda to ensure there is adequate time to continue progress on the priorities. The coordinator mentioned that reappointments for the board members who want to continue serving could be on the agenda over the next few months. The coordinator also mentioned the need to have a Sheriff (law enforcement representative) with a behavior health background as a board member. Chair Osten-Garner explained that these will be items for review at the March Policy Board Meeting.
- 9. Public Comment:** Dr. Sara Hunt of BeHERENV explained that she is excited to partner with the board in their efforts. Dr. Hunt advised of a survey that the Nevada Psychological Association had just sent out to psychologists and mental health clinicians regarding their experiences with insurance as it relates to parity. Dr. Hunt encouraged a presentation from them once all the data is finalized as the intent is to share the information with the Legislature and Policy Boards. Lastly, Dr. Hunt mentioned BeHERENV (Be Here Nevada) and how that initiative can help support some of the issues that were mentioned throughout the meeting.
- 10. For Possible Action:** Dr. Whitney Owens motioned to approve the adjournment of the February Southern Regional Behavioral Health Policy Board meeting. Assemblyman Gregory Hafen to second. All in favor, none opposed. The meeting was adjourned by Chair Kevin Osten-Garner at approximately 9:47pm.

Documents and Further Information can be found at the following links:

Southern Regional Behavioral Health Website:

https://dpbh.nv.gov/Boards/RBHPB/Board_Meetings/2024/southern/

Department of Health and Human Services Website:

https://dpbh.nv.gov/Boards/RBHPB/Board_Meetings/Meetings/ (here you can find the agendas and minutes for current meetings including an archive of previous meetings and a listing of board members)