

**GEAUGA COUNTY BOARD OF MENTAL HEALTH
AND RECOVERY SERVICES**

Dr. Steven Oluic
Chairman of the Board

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Board Minutes

February 19, 2025

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Reba Dykes, James Lee Holden, Kathy Johnson, Douglas Lundblad, Steven Oluic, Michael Petruziello, Patricia Varanese

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT: Alberta Chokshi, Carolee Lesyk, Mary Ruth Shumway

STAFF PRESENT: Christine Lakomiak, Jim Mausser, Teresa Slater

GUESTS: Allison Wilson (Geauga Maple Leaf), Mary Wynne-Peaspanen (Signature Health), Melanie Blasko (Lake-Geauga Recovery Centers), Gail Roussey (Geauga League of Women Voters), Kristine Frankenberry (NAMI Geauga), Kristy Mowry (Red Tulip Project), Vicki Clark (Ravenwood Health)

I. CALL TO ORDER, ROLL CALL, PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chairman Oluic called the meeting to order at 6:02 PM. Mr. Holden called the roll for attendance; the following Board members were present: Reba Dykes, James Lee Holden, Kathy Johnson, Douglas Lundblad, Steven Oluic, Michael Petruziello, and Patricia Varanese. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

II. APPROVAL OF BOARD MINUTES FROM JANUARY 13 AND 15, 2025

Ms. Johnson moved to waive the reading and approve the Minutes as presented. Mr. Holden seconded the motion. There was no discussion. **ROLL CALL VOTE: AYES-7; NAYS-0; ABSTENTIONS-0. MOTION APPROVED.**

III. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Chairman Oluic welcomed everyone in attendance. He said a lot of good things are happening in the community and thanked our partner agencies and everyone involved.

IV. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Director Lakomiak provided the following updates:

OhioMHAS:

Proposed a name change to the Ohio Department of Behavioral Health

The proposed state budget for SFY2026-27 was released. There is an increase of 4.1% in SFY 2026 and 2.3% for SFY 2027, respectively, to the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services. The Director of OhioMHAS will determine funding distribution methodologies and shall consider, at a minimum, population, poverty rates, health workforce shortage statistics, relevant emerging behavioral health trends, and the amount of the fiscal year 2025 awards made to each board for related programs that are eligible uses of the state block grant funds. Ohio Department of Medicaid confirmed that Medicaid rate increases included in the last budget are sustained in this proposed budget. The final budget should be adopted in June.

SFY2026: The RFP and grant applications will be posted on the Board's website on Friday, February 21, 2025. Proposals must be submitted by March 28th. Contracts will be awarded no later than June 30, 2025.

Suicide and Overdose Statistics: Many initiatives are taking place in the county. OhioMHAS is focusing its attention on suicide and overdose programs. The cumulative total of suicides in Geauga County from 2020-2024 was 62, with an average age of 49, and 87% were males. In 2024, 14 residents died by suicide; the average age was 58, and 93% were men, typically by firearm and hanging. The total number of overdose deaths in 2020-2024 was 55, with an average age of 43; 64% were male. In 2024, six residents died from overdose; the average age was 49, 50% were men, and 80% of the overdose deaths included some form of fentanyl.

Director Lakomiak and the board of directors discussed board priorities and funding for FY2026. Preventing overdose, enhancing access to suicide prevention and crisis care, enhancing access to treatment and recovery supports, and promoting resilience for children, youth, and families. Mr. Petruziello would like to know the youngest and oldest age for suicides and overdoses. Director Lakomiak will forward the information to the Board. Some OhioMHAS priorities include crisis stabilization, crisis flex funds, 988, and the suicide and crisis lifeline.

The Board discussed gathering more background information regarding suicides and overdoses - such as criminal activities, involvement with the justice system, incarceration, and if someone is in and out of recovery homes – to identify areas of concern to focus on. Director Lakomiak met with Commissioner Brakey last week about the suicide/overdose rates in Geauga. The Commissioners have the authority to establish suicide and overdose fatality review boards under the Ohio Revised Code, including specific guidelines on how the committees are to be structured. Director Lakomiak sent Commissioner Brakey an email encouraging her to develop those review boards for Geauga County. In this way, the Board would have access to information from other systems, get a complete picture of both issues, and provide programs to meet those needs in order to reduce the suicide and overdose deaths in Geauga County.

Question. Persuade. Refer. (QPR) Training: Our board contracted with NAMI Geauga to provide QPR training, and their new staff has been trained to provide it. Presentations will be forthcoming.

GeaugaLives.org: The Suicide Prevention Coalition of Geauga County will be working on creating this website.

Assessing & Managing Suicide Risk (AMSR) Training: The Board received a grant from the Suicide Prevention Foundation to provide this training on February 28th. It is limited to 30 attendees and filled up quickly. Hopefully, the Board can get another grant to offer this training again to help with the costs of the training materials.

Family First Council: This organization is mandated by the Ohio Revised Code, and various entities are required to participate. It includes multi-system involvement. Director Lakomiak was voted in as the new Board Chairperson at last week's meeting.

Non-Medicaid Medical Necessity Audits: The SFY2024 audits have been completed. There were no agency paybacks. Recommendations were made for some programs, and quality indicators from the previous year's audits have been implemented.

First Responder Fellowship: In partnership with the Geauga Board of MHRS and University Hospitals, a Health and Wellness event is scheduled for February 20 at the Munson Town Hall. The keynote speaker is Jonathan Sague, COO of University Hospitals in Geauga, Geneva, and Conneaut. He has also served as a paid and volunteer EMT. Wellness resources and Man Therapy handouts will be provided by Board staff, UH will provide free health screenings, and Trauma Informed Yoga will be provided by Ubuntu Wellness. There were approximately 40 people who participated in the last First Responder Fellowship event.

V. COMMITTEE REPORTS

A. Programs & Policies

Ms. Johnson said the committee has not met since her last report to the Board.

B. Fiscal & Capital

Ms. Dykes said the committee has not met since her last report to the Board.

VI. BOARD REVIEW AND ACTION ITEMS

Director Lakomiak reported that the Fiscal & Capital Committee recommends approval of these resolutions based on discussion at their last meeting.

A. Resolution 25-02-1 Permanent Supportive Housing Program Grant Award

Director Lakomiak said the Board has been receiving this grant for many years. These funds are used to pay for operational expenses at the apartments. Mr. Petruziello moved to approve the Resolution. Ms. Johnson seconded the motion. There was no discussion. **ROLL CALL VOTE: AYES-7; NAYS-0; ABSTENTIONS-0. MOTION APPROVED.**

B. Resolution 25-02-2 Landlord Incentive Program Allocation

Ms. Johnson moved to approve the Resolution. Ms. Dykes seconded the motion. Discussion: These funds were first applied for last year. The funds are to be used as an incentive for landlords to lease to individuals being discharged from a psychiatric hospital, someone with a

mental illness and/or substance use disorder, or someone with a criminal background. The money can be used in a variety of ways. Agencies have not had much success finding landlords to participate in this program. Mr. Mausser said that not all of the funds from the initial allocation were used, and staff applied to carry those funds to the current year. The state also allocated additional funds this year that did not need to be applied for.

Director Lakomiak reported that when the grant was first received, staff worked with the Geauga Metropolitan Housing Authority to get information to landlords. The availability of these grant funds was posted on GMHA's website. Newspaper ads were also placed. The availability of this money was announced at various coalition meetings, and information was given to direct service staff. There have been no takers over the last two years. A portion of the grant can also be used for agency administrative costs.

Ms. Dykes said there are a lot of criteria that must be met to rent an apartment, such as credit checks, criminal backgrounds, etc., and landlords may decline to rent based on the requirements. She suggested making sure the people who take the applications know about the funds and direct service workers and landlords/apartment managers. Ms. Dykes has a good relationship with many of these individuals and offered to reach out with information about this program. It may sway someone to consider renting to these specific populations if they know it is linked to the Board. Director Lakomiak will draft a letter with information about the program. **ROLL CALL VOTE: AYES-7; NAYS-0; ABSTENTIONS-0. MOTION APPROVED.**

C. Resolution 25-02-3 Amendment to the Recovery Housing Program

Mr. Petruziello moved to approve the Resolution. Ms. Johnson seconded the motion. Discussion: These funds are for administrative expenses that will be passed to agencies. **ROLL CALL VOTE: AYES-7; NAYS-0; ABSTENTIONS-0. MOTION APPROVED.**

D. Resolution 25-02-4 Amendment to the SFY2025 System of Care FFC Allocation

Mr. Holden moved to approve the Resolution. Mr. Petruziello seconded the motion. Discussion: The Board heard at last month's meeting that Family First Council may not need the second half SFY2025 payment of \$137,500 from the Board since fewer children are being placed out of county. This Resolution will reduce the allocation to \$137,500 on the System of Care Resolution previously approved. The funds can be used to supplement Ravenwood Health's SOS 4.0 funding shortfall. **ROLL CALL VOTE: AYES-7; NAYS-0; ABSTENTIONS-0. MOTION APPROVED.**

E. Credit Card Policy

The State Auditor has determined that mental health boards are now permitted to have a credit card. Currently, depending on the expense, staff has to pay upfront and then get reimbursed. Breakfast for the First Responders Fellowship is an example. Staff travel is another example. Everything required by the Ohio Revised Code was included in the draft policy.

Things to determine: maximum credit card limit; single transaction not to exceed amount; number of cards; who would be authorized to use it; some physical control mechanism of the

credit card. Director Lakomiak will review this matter further and provide recommendations to the Board.

F. Financial Reports

Mr. Mausser reported on the following for January:

- 51.2% of the Board's administrative budget for SFY2025 was expended.
- Geauga County calendar year expenses for January were just over \$711,000.
- Auditor's SFY2025 Fund Balance through January was slightly more than \$2.6 Million.
- Voucher Recap #703 for January: \$711,493.00

VII. OLD BUSINESS

Mr. Mausser reported that everything has been signed and is in place for the generator at the Board's administrative offices. The original waiting period was 3 or 4 months. He will reach out for an update.

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

Dr. Oluic asked for feedback on the freezing of government spending:

- Mr. Mausser said he lost access to HUD funds for a week.
- Kristine Frankenberry said NAMI National is having conversations about their reliance on federal funds.
- Vicki Clark of Ravenwood Health said some of their funding was frozen for a short time. One of their biggest concerns is the funding shortfall agencies will experience if Medicaid expansion is rolled back. Discussion also centered around grants and other federal awards.
- It was suggested to reach out to the legislature about Medicaid. It was also noted that Congressman Dave Joyce is very responsive to constituents.
- Director Lakomiak has attended Legislative Day in Columbus since the last board meeting. She felt the meetings she had were very successful. Everyone spent a lot of time and was fully engaged. She thanked the Board for their time and activity in other groups and advocating for agencies; it is very much appreciated by staff and agencies. Recently, one of the local VFWs provided monetary donations to agencies due to the involvement of some Board members. What the Board and its members do in the community is not unnoticed.

IX. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Dr. Oluic asked the audience if they had any issues or concerns. He said there is a veteran's resource fair on July 30th at Guido's in Chesterland. It will be even bigger than last year, and many of our agencies will be there. There is also a senior resource fair on June 4th with a polka band, 40 different vendors and resources, baskets and giveaways, and a speaker to talk about scams. Lake-Geauga Recovery Center's annual sober St. Patrick's Day event will be at Painesville Township Park on March 14th.

X. ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Petruziello moved to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Johnson seconded the motion. The meeting was then adjourned at 7:20 PM.

Respectfully submitted by:

Teresa Slater
Administrative/Office Manager

Steven Oluic
Chairman of the Board

James Lee Holden
Secretary of the Board