

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

**Dr. Steven Oluic**  
**Chairman of the Board**

**13244 Ravenna Road**  
**Chardon, Ohio 44024**

**Christine Lakomiak**  
**Executive Director**

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**Board Minutes**

**SEPTEMBER 17, 2025**

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

**BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:** Douglas Lundblad, Mary Ruth Shumway

**STAFF PRESENT:** Christine Lakomiak, Jim Mausser, Michelle Maneage, Teresa Slater

**GUESTS:** Melanie Blasko, Lee Chen (Lake-Geauga Recovery Centers), Kathy Franz (Geauga League of Women Voters), Vicki Clark (Ravenwood Health), Newell Howard (GCTP), Jill Portman (Family Pride), Michelle Bertman (Catholic Charities), Brandon Lichtinger (Geauga Maple Leaf), Andrea Gutka (WomenSafe), Mary Wynne-Peaspanen (Signature Health), Ashlee Himes (NAMI Geauga), Tia Lawrence (Torchlight Youth Mentoring Alliance)

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

Chairman Oluic called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM. Mr. Holden called the roll for attendance, and the following Board members were present: Reba Dykes, James Lee Holden, Kathy Johnson, Steven Oluic, Michael Petruziello, and Patricia Varanese. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

**II. APPROVAL OF BOARD MINUTES FROM JULY 16, 2025**

Mr. Holden moved to waive the reading of, and approve, the Minutes as presented. Ms. Johnson seconded the motion. There was no discussion. **ROLL CALL VOTE: AYES-6; NAYS-0; ABSTENTIONS-0. MOTION APPROVED.**

**III. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

Dr. Oluic welcomed everyone and reported the following:

- As of August 31, 2025, two lives have been lost by overdose, and nine lives have been lost by suicide.
- The expansion of the Transitional Living Center is about five months from completion. It will be an incredible facility to have in the community.

**IV. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

Director Lakomiak gave the following updates:

*Mobile Response & Stabilization Services (MRSS):* This program was developed to ensure children and youth receive crisis services throughout the state. It was officially launched statewide on August 15, 2025. Ravenwood has provided this program in the community since 2022, before it became a statewide initiative. OhioMHAS and Governor DeWine prioritized making this service available. Ravenwood has received the contract for our service area, which encompasses Geauga, Ashtabula, and Lake counties.

*Suicide/Accidental Death Updates:* When the Board met in July, there had been zero overdose deaths in 2025. As of August 31<sup>st</sup>, there have been two overdose deaths and nine deaths by suicide. Representatives from many different systems are part of the Suicide Prevention Coalition in Geauga.

*Strategic Plan:* Board staff will evaluate progress toward the goals every three months.

Milestones and Achievements to Date include: 74 crisis response team members trained; GCBMHRS received three-year Culture of Quality certification; as of August 31<sup>st</sup>, overdoses are down 33% in 2025 compared to 2024; the HUB and Suicide Prevention Coalitions developed strategic plans; Geauga County formed overdose and suicide fatality review boards; more than 6,500 resource navigation giveaways were distributed during the summer; over 300 people and 38 vendors attended the LiveWell Festival.

Goal 1: Access to crisis hotlines and crisis services has been enhanced; continuing to educate the public on what crisis services are available; crisis response in the continuum of care has been strengthened; crisis response team cards were developed and distributed; received a grant to update/revamp the board website and craft a suicide prevention/information website.

Goal 2: Enhance support for residential treatment for recovery house programs – A \$9,000 grant was received to purchase hygiene products for local residential treatment facilities, shelters, and recovery housing.

Goal 3: Steps have been taken to enhance substance use disorder treatment services and increase community harm reduction strategies and community outreach.

Goal 4: Early intervention and community prevention programs have been developed to target high-risk populations, with a partnership with providers to establish an anti-stigma campaign.

Goal 5: Collection of systemwide data regarding trends and risk factors of those who have died by suicide; strengthening the Suicide Prevention Coalition's presence in the community.

*Culture of Quality:* This was a two-day review process with over 150 standards to ensure the Board's compliance with the Ohio Revised Code. The highest certification for three years was received. Many strengths were noted - ongoing training; monitoring of programs; community outreach; educating the public on what resources are available; implementation of the Stepping Up Initiative, sequential mapping, and ongoing projects; data review leading to new and

impactful programming; keeping board members informed about what is happening; good stewards of public funds; increased transparency; clinical/fiscal reviews.

*Live Well Festival:* The Suicide Prevention Coalition sponsored the event, which focused on seniors and was attended by over 300 people. The event will be held again next year at a different venue.

*Operation New Beginnings:* This new program is a partnership between boards and the Ohio State Highway Patrol, providing access to treatment options for individuals with repeat impaired driving violations.

*Planting Hope in Recovery:* The Board partnered with Lake-Geauga Recovery Centers to hold the event as part of Overdose Awareness Day. It was well attended and will hopefully be done again next year.

*Safety Planning Training* for providers and community members is set for this Friday, Sept 19. The training is hosted by Ravenwood Health and Family Pride. Eighty people are registered.

*Kick Ball Showdown:* This team-building event, featuring mental health professionals and first responders, will take place on September 20 at the Munson Community Center. The Crisis Crushers will face The Ballistics, and all are welcome to attend.

## **V. COMMITTEE DISCUSSION**

Chairman Oluic asked Board members for their thoughts on the need for committees, given the size of the Board. After a brief discussion, the consensus was to maintain the committees' current structure for now and meet only when necessary.

## **VI. BOARD REVIEW AND ACTION ITEMS**

### **A. Resolution 25-09-1 Specialized Docket Allocation to Geauga County Court of Common Pleas**

Mr. Holden moved to approve the Resolution. Mr. Petruziello seconded the motion. Discussion: Director Lakomiak explained that this is pass-through funding from OhioMHAS for the Drug Court New Leaf Program. **ROLL CALL VOTE: AYES-6; NAYS-0; ABSTENTIONS-0. MOTION APPROVED.**

### **B. Resolution 25-09-2 Permanent Supportive Housing Grant Award**

Mr. Holden moved to approve the Resolution. Ms. Johnson seconded the motion. Discussion: This grant, for \$189,676.00, is used for operating expenses, support services, and administrative expenses incurred at the Geauga Independent Apartments. The Board allocates \$30,000.00 as part of the grant's match requirement. Mr. Petruziello asked how many people had graduated from this facility. Director Lakomiak replied that the program was just audited last week, and the same individuals reside there as last year. The Board would actually be penalized if there is too

much turnover. **ROLL CALL VOTE: AYES-6; NAYS-0; ABSTENTIONS-0. MOTION APPROVED.**

**C. Resolution 25-09-3 Criminal Justice and Behavioral Health Linkages Grant Allocation for SFY2026**

Mr. Holden moved to approve the Resolution. Mr. Petruziello seconded the motion. Discussion: Director Lakomiak explained that for SFY 2026, OhioMHAS consolidated various funding streams to make funding more flexible for communities. There was once a specific allocation from the state for this service. This allocation did not go through the RFP process for this fiscal year; however, it will in the future. **ROLL CALL VOTE: AYES-6; NAYS-0; ABSTENTIONS-0. MOTION APPROVED.**

**D. Resolution 25-09-4 Medication Subsidy Allocation for SFY2026**

Director Lakomiak explained that this is the amount that will be set aside for medication from Ohio Pharmacy Services. Mr. Petruziello moved to approve the Resolution. Mr. Holden seconded the motion. There was no discussion. **ROLL CALL VOTE: AYES-6; NAYS-0; ABSTENTIONS-0. MOTION APPROVED.**

**E. Resolution 25-09-5 Criminal Justice System Therapist Allocation**

Ms. Johnson moved to approve the Resolution. Mr. Petruziello seconded the motion. Discussion: Director Lakomiak said there used to be a specific allocation from the state for this purpose also. See the above explanation. **ROLL CALL VOTE: AYES-6; NAYS-0; ABSTENTIONS-0. MOTION APPROVED.**

**F. Resolution 25-09-6 Board Facility Maintenance and Repair Allocation**

Mr. Petruziello moved to approve the Resolution. Ms. Johnson seconded the motion. Discussion: This allocation has existed for quite some time and needs to be replenished periodically. The staff conducted a walk-through of the building, and there are several items that need to be addressed. Quotes were received for some of the repairs, and additional funds will be required to move forward with the critical issues. A walk-around inspection was conducted by Millstone, who then provided a comprehensive list and quotes for the projects that needed to be done. \$25,000.00 would be added to the currently remaining amount (approximately \$8,000). The ice damage from last winter was discussed, which included a spot in the ceiling that will be repaired. It was suggested to reach out to Millstone to see if heater strips are needed. **ROLL CALL VOTE: AYES-6; NAYS-0; ABSTENTIONS-0. MOTION APPROVED.**

**G. Resolution 25-09-7 Problem Gambling and Addiction Services Allocation**

Mr. Petruziello moved to approve the Resolution. Mr. Holden seconded the motion. Discussion: These funds are received from OhioMHAS and are used to contract with Lake-Geauga Recovery Centers for a specialist in problem gambling prevention. Mr. Petruziello said this is a significant problem and would like Governor DeWine to consider abolishing gambling in Ohio. He will draft a resolution to this effect for review at the next meeting. Director Lakomiak wrote letters to

congressional leaders opposing the legalization of gambling on phones. Ms. Johnson feels a letter from the Board would be sufficient. **ROLL CALL VOTE: AYES-6; NAYS-0; ABSTENTIONS-0. MOTION APPROVED.**

#### **H. Resolution 25-09-8 Reimbursement to Geauga Safety Center**

Ms. Johnson moved to approve the Resolution. Mr. Petruziello seconded the motion. Discussion: This allocation is to reimburse the cost of psychotropic medication dispensed at the Geauga County Safety Center. County jails submit a reimbursement request to OhioMHAS and then receive a percentage of the total amount requested statewide. **ROLL CALL VOTE: AYES-6; NAYS-0; ABSTENTIONS-0. MOTION APPROVED.**

#### **I. Resolution 25-09-9 Regional Crisis Center Federal Grant Application**

Mr. Holden moved to approve the Resolution. Ms. Johnson seconded the motion. Discussion: Director Lakomiak read the Resolution in its entirety. Chairman Oluic explained that more than a year ago, there was a discussion about partnering with Lake and Ashtabula counties to purchase land and build a crisis center. Additional information was requested, and the matter was tabled. Unbeknownst to this Board, a federal grant application was completed and submitted on behalf of all three counties. This Resolution will serve to officially disengage the Geauga County Board of Mental Health and Recovery Services from this project. Other measures have been implemented in Geauga for this purpose. **ROLL CALL VOTE: AYES-6; NAYS-0; ABSTENTIONS-0. MOTION APPROVED.**

#### **J. Financial Reports**

Mr. Mausser reported on the following:

- 97.4% of the Board's SFY2025 administrative budget was expended.
- 15.1% of the Board's SFY2026 administrative budget has been expended through August.
- Geauga County calendar year expenses through August were just over \$5.03 million.
- The Auditor's Fund Balance at the end of August was just over \$2.82 million.
- Voucher Recap #709 for July: \$1,164,984.82.
- Voucher Recap #710 for August: \$380,114.44.

#### **VII. OLD BUSINESS**

There was no Old Business discussed.

#### **VIII. NEW BUSINESS**

##### **a. Digital Sign Quotes**

The Board has discussed obtaining a digital sign to promote community initiatives, along with other information that may interest the public. Three quotes were distributed for review and discussion. All of the signs are two-sided and can be digitally updated. The consensus is the current signage is inadequate; however, members were surprised by the cost of a new sign.

The matter was tabled for further discussion. It will be decided at the next meeting whether to proceed with the purchase of a digital sign or a different type of signage. The funds for any new sign would come from unencumbered reserves. Staff has included the purchase of a digital sign in several grants, and it has been denied.

The Geauga County Commissioners reached out to Director Lakomiak for guidance on how to best utilize the opioid settlement funds. Approximately \$100,000 will be available each year until the funds are exhausted. The Commissioners' office requested that the Board establish a process and propose allocations based on community needs and priorities each year for the Commissioners' consideration. The Prosecutor's Office drafted a resolution, and the resolution was given to board members. It will be presented for approval at an upcoming Commissioners' meeting.

## **IX. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Jill Portman from Family Pride invited everyone to an open house on September 18 at 4:00 at their new facility.

Mary Wynne-Peaspanen of Signature Health thanked the Board for supporting Dancing with the Stars, hosted by Signature and Lifeline, a Lake/Geauga community action agency.

Andrea Gutka of WomenSafe thanked the Board for supporting their golf outing this past July.

Kathy Franz from the Geauga League of Women Voters had information about the upcoming candidates' night, scheduled for the next few weeks.

## **X. ADJOURNMENT**

Mr. Holden moved to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Petruziello seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 7:02 PM.

**Respectfully submitted by:**

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**Teresa Slater**  
**Administrative/Office Manager**

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**Steven Oluic**  
**Chairman of the Board**

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**James Lee Holden**  
**Secretary of the Board**