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STATE ADVISORY COUNCIL ON MENTAL HEALTH  
*and Subcommittee on Children's Mental Health*

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State Advisory Council on Mental Health  
Thursday, April 2nd, 2026, 11am - 1pm  
In-Person and Virtual Meeting

**Attendance (bold = in-person)**

**Claudia Daml** – Chair, **Cici Hughes** – Subcommittee Co-Chair, **Sierra Grandy** – Vice Chair, Jen Springer, Alison Wolbeck, Sara Sundeen (DEED/VRS), Shanna Langston (DOC), Holly Hanson (MN DOC), Donna Lekander, Dr. Damir Utrzan, Suwana Kirkland, Jamie Hayes, Alyssa Greene (MDH), Tom Delaney (MDE), Rodney Peterson, Diane Neal (DHS/BHA Director of Mental Health), Wayne Garrett, Aaron Wittnebel, Wade Brost (MHSATS), Peter Fischer, Nicolee M. Holmgren, Dave Einzig, Elliot Butay (NAMI MN), Patrick Rhone, Anna Lynn (MDH), Sarah Driever, Dr. BraVada Garrett-Akinsanya, **Jade London**, **Pamela McCabe**, **Cheryl Lundsgaard**, Faith, Jeffry Lind, Susan Hosti, Erica Lammers, **Mary K**, Angie Laschinger, Britt Olean, Dianne Naus, Faith, Jessica Gourneau, Mike Gallagher (DHS), Sarah Driever,

**Other attendees:** Teresa Steinmetz, Mikki Maruska, Heather Ites, **Kari Irber**, **James Xiong**, **Devon Steen**

**AGENDA and NOTES**

**1. Opening & Meeting Guidelines**

- Meeting opened with reminders to mute microphones and use the **chat or “raise hand” feature** for discussion.
- **Respectful Meeting Guidelines** reviewed:
  - No verbal interruptions.
  - Use chat/raise-hand for engagement.
  - Hate speech or threats prohibited; violators will be removed.
- Participants introduced themselves with name, pronouns, affiliation, and workgroup.

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**2. Land Acknowledgement**

- Read by **Vice Chair Sierra Grandy**
- Acknowledged the nation’s history of colonization, slavery, and systemic racism.
- Reaffirmed the Council’s commitment to **diversity, equity, inclusion**, and dismantling systemic racism.

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**3. Attendance & New Members**



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- Members submitted attendance information via chat and signed in physically (for in-person attendees).
- **New Member Introduced: Returning:** Ellie Smith, Reappointment

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#### 4. Biennial Report Development

Facilitated by Lisa Hoogheem

##### Overview

Workgroups are developing recommendations for the SACMH Biennial Report.

##### Discussion Highlights (from transcript):

- Workgroups are at different stages of progress
- Some have clear draft recommendations; others are still refining scope
- Need to avoid duplication across groups

##### Key Priorities Identified:

- **Recommendations must be:**
  - Actionable
  - Measurable
  - Aligned with statewide priorities
  - Grounded in equity

##### Challenges Raised:

- Limited time to finalize recommendations
- Capacity constraints among members
- Need for stronger coordination across workgroups
- Difficulty translating broad issues into concrete policy recommendations

##### Guidance Provided:

- **Focus on impact and feasibility**
- **Ensure recommendations reflect:**
  - Community needs
  - Lived experience
  - System realities

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#### 5. Breakout Sessions

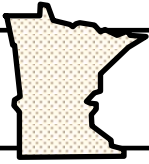
Facilitated by leadership to support workgroup progress.

##### Purpose:

- Assist groups lacking draft recommendations
- Clarify scope and direction
- Identify actionable next steps

##### Discussion Outcomes:

- **Improved clarity on:**
  - Priority focus areas
  - Desired outcomes



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- **Identification of:**
    - Gaps in data
    - Need for broader stakeholder engagement
  - **Recognition that some recommendations require further refinement before finalization**
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## **6. State Agency Updates**

**Facilitated by Cici Hughes**

**Major Cross-Agency Themes**

### **1. Workforce Shortages**

- **Persistent across all systems**
- **Impacting:**
  - Service availability
  - Wait times
  - Quality of care

### **2. Increasing Demand for Services**

- Significant rise in need, especially among youth
- Increased complexity of cases

### **3. System Access Challenges**

- Difficulty navigating services
- Lack of clear entry points
- Inconsistent availability across regions

### **4. Coordination Gaps**

- Limited integration between agencies
- Challenges in sharing information and aligning services

### **5. System Strain Post-Pandemic**

- Ongoing effects of COVID-19
- Increased behavioral health needs
- Pressure on crisis and emergency systems

### **6. Sustainability Concerns**

- Funding instability
  - Difficulty maintaining and expanding services
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## **7. Workgroup Updates (Detailed)**

**Integrated Care & Access (Mary Kjolsing)**

- **Focus: Improving coordination across providers and systems**
  - **Key barriers:**
    - Fragmentation
    - Lack of shared infrastructure
    - Limited data integration
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**Local Advisory Councils (Sierra Grandy)**

- **Emphasis on:**
  - Strengthening local engagement



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- Ensuring community voice informs state policy
  - **Identified need for:**
    - **Consistent communication channels**
    - **Better alignment between local and state efforts**
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**Juvenile Justice (Elliot Butay)**

- **Key concerns:**
    - Youth entering justice system due to unmet mental health needs
  - **Discussion emphasized:**
    - Prevention and early intervention
    - Diversion strategies
    - Cross-system collaboration
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**Mental Health in Schools**

- **Schools identified as critical access points**
  - **Challenges include:**
    - Staffing shortages
    - Limited funding
    - Increasing student needs
  - **Discussion reinforced importance of:**
    - School-based services
    - Early identification and support
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**Outreach to Diverse Communities (Dr. BraVada Akinsanya)**

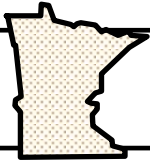
- **Strong emphasis on:**
    - Cultural responsiveness
    - Trust-building
  - **Key needs:**
    - Community-led approaches
    - Language access
    - Reducing systemic barriers
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**Mental Health Supports & Wellbeing (Cici Hughes)**

- **Focus on:**
    - Prevention
    - Whole-person wellbeing
  - **Emphasis on:**
    - Reducing stigma
    - Expanding community-based supports
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**Mental Health Awareness (State Fair Initiative)**

- **Planning ongoing**
- **Goal:**



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- Increase awareness
- **Improve public understanding of mental health resources**

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## 8. Member Discussion

### Key issues raised:

#### System Fragmentation

- Services remain disconnected
- Individuals face challenges navigating multiple systems

#### Access Inequities

- Differences across:
  - Rural vs. urban areas
  - Cultural communities

#### Communication Gaps

- **Need for:**
  - Clearer information for consumers
  - Better coordination among providers

#### Lived Experience

- **Strong emphasis on:**
  - Including lived experience in decision-making
  - Ensuring policies reflect real-world needs

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## 9. Public Comment

### Public participants shared:

- Difficulty accessing timely mental health services
- Gaps in crisis response systems
- Challenges navigating complex systems

### Key Takeaways:

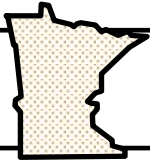
- Need for more responsive, accessible services
- Importance of listening to community voices
- Value of incorporating lived experience into policy

## 10. Key Themes Across the Meeting

- Workforce shortages remain a critical barrier
- Demand for services continues to grow, especially among youth
- System fragmentation limits access and effectiveness
- Equity must be central to all recommendations
- Prevention and early intervention are essential
- Coordination across agencies must improve

## 11. Closing

- Final reminders shared regarding next meeting and legislative follow-up items.



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- Meeting adjourned.
- Claudia thanks everyone for their time
- Send questions to Claudia or Council email
- Contact [mhadvisorycouncil.dhs@state.mn.us](mailto:mhadvisorycouncil.dhs@state.mn.us) with questions

**Thank You!**

The next State Advisory Council on Mental Health and Subcommittee on Children’s Mental Health meeting will be held on Thursday, May 7th, 2026 –  
 Split Meeting: Children’s Subcommittee: 9a-11a  
 Full Council: 11am-1pm

**Next Steps**

<b>Task</b>	<b>Who</b>	<b>By when</b>
Notify Chairs/Co-chairs of any issues requiring help or explanation	Members	As needed
Review workgroup descriptions to join workgroup <a href="https://mn.gov/dhs/mh-advisory-council/workgroups/">https://mn.gov/dhs/mh-advisory-council/workgroups/</a>	Members	Now and ongoing
If you are a person with a disability, or know a person with a disability, who needs an accommodation in order to participate in a work group, please let the chair of the workgroup know or send Tom Delaney an email <a href="mailto:thomas.delaney@state.mn.us">thomas.delaney@state.mn.us</a> to get you connected with what you need.	Members needing accommodation for workgroup participation	asap
Email Dr. B if interested in joining Outreach to Diverse Communities workgroup <a href="mailto:bravada.akinsanya@aacwi.org">bravada.akinsanya@aacwi.org</a>	Members	asap
Please send all invoices and new member paperwork to <a href="mailto:mhadvisorycouncil.dhs@state.mn.us">mhadvisorycouncil.dhs@state.mn.us</a>	Members/new members	Receipts due before 6/30/26