

**DBHDD**

Georgia Department of Behavioral Health &  
Developmental Disabilities

Kevin Tanner, Commissioner

Office of the Commissioner

**Behavioral Health Coordinating Council  
Meeting Minutes**

**Thursday, May 8, 2025, 2:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.  
(Hybrid Meeting)**

**200 Piedmont Avenue, S.E. West Tower, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor, Board Room 512  
Atlanta, GA 30334**

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**Meeting Called By:** Kevin Tanner, Chairman

**Facilitator:** Kevin Tanner, Chairman

**BHCC Liaison:** Chelsee Nabritt, Board and Special Project Manager

**Council Members:**

*In-Person:* Commissioner Kevin Tanner (*DBHDD*), Commissioner Kathleen Toomey (*DPH*), Nathan Call, Ph.D. (*Expert on Child & Adolescent Health*), Patricia Ross, Ed.D. (*GDVS*), Stanley Jones, Esq., (*Family Representative*), Representative Katie Dempsey (*District 13*), Senator Kay Kirkpatrick (*District 32*)

*Video Conference:* Brian Pettersson, Esq. (*DHS*), Commissioner Amy Jacobs (*DECAL*), Alexia Jones (*Adult Consumer*), Emily Yona (*DCH*), Sherri Bloodworth (*DCS*), Veda Johnson (*Pediatrician*), Ombudsman Jacquice Stone (*ODOS*), Shaun Owen (*DOE*), Joyette Holmes (*PAP*), Commissioner Shawanda Reynolds-Cobb (*DJJ*)

*Absent:* Director Jerry Bruce (*OCA*), Commissioner Greg Dozier (*TCSG*), Commissioner Christopher Nunn (*DCA*), Commissioner Tyrone Oliver (*GDC*)

**DBHDD Leadership:** Brandon Kenney, *Assistant Commissioner of Operations*, Monica Patel, Esq., *Assistant Commissioner for Agency Affairs and Chief Legal Officer*, Allen Morgan, *Deputy Assistant Commissioner, Field Operations North*, Jenniffer Dunn, *Deputy Assistant Commissioner, Field Operations, South*, Brenda Cibulas, *Director of the Division of Behavioral Health*

## **Agenda**

### **Call to Order:**

Chairman Kevin Tanner called the meeting to order at 2:01 p.m.

Chairman Kevin Tanner invited guest speaker Mr. Jerry Smiley from the Georgia Mental Health Consumer Network to the podium to share his story with the council. Mr. Smiley informed the council that Jen Banathy was unable to attend the meeting; however, he was grateful for the opportunity to share his recovery journey with the council. Mr. Smiley expressed to the council that his childhood was extremely traumatic, by describing how early exposure to drugs, guns, and violence, from lack of parental support, had a negative effect on him. He shared that he was incarcerated in one of the most violent youth prisons and spoke about how that experience impacted his childhood as well; After his release, he made the decision to turn his life around, but opportunities to change his circumstances were simply not within reach for him. However, today, Mr. Smiley is clean and has been able to embrace the many opportunities for growth from organizations like the Georgia Mental Health Consumer Network, and he now feels comfortable with sharing and owning his story. Mr. Smiley mentioned that his story is not a reflection of who he is, but a reflection of who he was. Mr. Smiley thanked everyone for the opportunity to speak and left the podium.

Commissioner Tanner thanked Mr. Smiley for sharing his journey with the council and turned the council's attention to the next section of the agenda.

### **Action Items:**

There was 1 item on the agenda that required approval.

*Approval of the February 11, 2025, meeting minutes:* Chairman Kevin Tanner asked for a motion of approval. Commissioner Kathleen Toomey, M.D., MPH, made a motion, which was seconded by Commissioner Patricia Ross, Ed.D. The motion passed unanimously.

Chairman Tanner informed the council members that the order of the agenda would be adjusted to accommodate Commissioner Kathleen Toomey, M.D., M.P.H., and her team, who needed to leave the meeting earlier than expected. As a result, he invited them to present first and the BHCC Initiatives would follow behind in the same order mentioned on the agenda. Commissioner Toomey greeted the council, apologized for any inconvenience the schedule change may have caused, and introduced Katie Kopp, M.P.H., Director of Maternal Programs in the Office of Women's Health at the Department of Public Health. Commissioner Toomey explained that Ms. Kopp and her team have uncovered a great amount of data linking mental health conditions with maternal health outcomes. Ms. Kopp presented findings on how pregnancy complications can contribute to postpartum mental health challenges, including increased risk of self-harm and

substance use. She described a series of factors that are among the leading causes of pregnancy-related deaths and highlighted gaps in current state policies and procedures aimed at supporting affected individuals. She also offered recommendations targeting prevention strategies, provider support, community engagement, and systemic improvements.

Chairman Tanner thanked the Department of Public Health for presenting on this topic because it is a topic that often gets overlooked and encouraged Ms. Kopp to connect with Brenda Cibulas, Behavioral Health Director at the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities, to explore partnership opportunities. He also expressed his willingness to assist in any way he can to support the initiative overall.

### **BHCC Initiative Updates:**

Chairman Tanner introduced Renee Johnson, Director of the Georgia Health Policy Center at Georgia State University, to provide an update on Mindworks Georgia. Mrs. Johnson gave a brief overview of the program and highlighted its core initiatives, which focus on equitable access, a sustainable workforce, purposeful funding, system evaluations and access to whole-person health. Mrs. Johnson shared that her team has been working collaboratively with multiple state agencies, using a data approach to align efforts toward a unified goal. Mrs. Johnson also mentioned that the next steps are ongoing, and that data is still being collected to enhance system improvements and to provide effective recommendations for decision-makers. Mrs. Johnson also noted that the Behavioral Health Reform and Innovation Commission included several recommendations in their report and discussed how the state adopted these recommendations and the effects of their implementation. Lastly, she mentioned that the implementation of the new three-year System of Care State Plan is scheduled to begin in 2026.

Chairman Tanner thanked Mrs. Renee Johnson and her team for their hard work and encouraged them to continue providing updates on the work that they do, and that he looks forward to seeing the new state plan next year.

Chairman Tanner introduced Heather Stanley, MATCH Program Director with the Office of Children, Young Adults and Families at the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities, to provide an update on the MATCH Committee. Mrs. Stanley gave a quick annual overview of the data the committee found and the current status of its work. She mentioned that the data from today's slides will be heavily influenced by the MATCH Clinical Team's action report and that due to time constraints she will not cover every slide in detail. Mrs. Stanley presented the number of youth currently utilizing services, by their demographics and county location and went on to cover their insurance provider, mental health diagnoses, and their program involvement. She then highlighted the pilot program data, mentioning the success and effectiveness of the initiatives, and identified opportunities for system improvement and growth. She

concluded her presentation by sharing the recommended findings and explained how it would impact the system.

Chairman Tanner thanked all the presenters for sharing their insights with the council. He acknowledged the collaborative efforts taking place across state agencies and encouraged continued partnership to support the initiatives discussed throughout the meeting. Chairman Tanner then asked if there were any questions or concerns regarding today's presentations.

**Adjournment:**

There was no further business for the day, Chairman Tanner asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. A motion was made by Nathan Call, Ph.D., which was seconded by Representative Katie Dempsey. The meeting adjourned at 3:34 p.m.

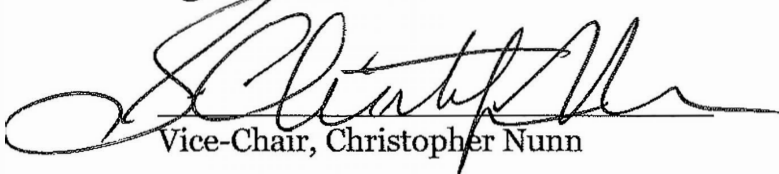
**Special Notes:**

The next scheduled meeting will be August 5, 2025.


**Respectfully submitted by:**

Chelsee Nabritt, Board and Special Project Manager

**Signatures:**



Vice-Chair, Christopher Nunn



Secretary, Stanley Jones, Esq.