



Georgia Department of Behavioral Health &  
Developmental Disabilities

Kevin Tanner, Commissioner

**DBHDD**

Office of the Commissioner

## **Board of Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities**

Thursday, April 10, 2025 1:00 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.

200 Piedmont Avenue, S.E.

West Tower, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor, Board Room 512

Atlanta, GA 30334

**This meeting was conducted in person and via WebEx for the public and Board Members.**

### **Meeting Called By:**

Lasa Joiner, Chair

### **Recording Secretary:**

Chelsee Nabritt, Board and Special Project  
Manager

### **Board Members**

- **In-person:** Lasa Joiner, Jimmy Thomas and Bill Slaughter
- **Virtual Conferencing:** Amanda Owens, Jan Ligon, Ph.D., and Jean Sumner, M.D.
- **Absent:** Bubber Epps, David Glass, Deb Bailey

### **DBHDD Leadership:**

Brandon Kenney, *Assistant Commissioner of Operations*, Brenda Woodard, General Counsel

## **Agenda**

**Call to Order:** Chair Lasa Joiner called the meeting to order at 1:00 P.M.

Chair Lasa Joiner welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked Chelsee Nabritt to conduct the roll call.

### **Recovery Presentation**

Chair Lasa Joiner invited guest speaker Ms. Jen Banathy, the organizational Developmental Coordinator for the Respect Institute of Georgia to the podium to introduce the recovery speaker for the day. Mr. Jerry Smiley approached the podium and expressed how grateful he is for the opportunity to share his recovery journey with the

Board members. He began by explaining that his childhood was extremely traumatic, because he was exposed to drugs, guns, and violence, at such an early age in life and how that had a negative effect on him and his childhood. He also 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. Lastly, Mr. Smiley spoke about how he is clean and has been able to embrace the many opportunities for growth from organizations like the Georgia Mental Health Consumer Network. Mr. Smiley thanked everyone for the opportunity to speak and left the podium.

Chair Lasa Joiner thanked Mr. Smiley for sharing his story with the Board and introduced two agenda items requiring the Board's action.

### **Action Items**

1. Board Meeting Minutes – February 27, 2025. Chair Lasa Joiner reminded the Board members that they received the Board Meeting Minutes in advance for review and asked for a motion to approve. Bill Slaughter made a motion, which was seconded by Jimmy Thomas. The motion passed unanimously.
2. Consideration of State Property Short Term Lease. Chair Lasa Joiner reminded the Board members that they received a copy of the Consideration of State Property Short Term Lease in advance for review and asked for a motion to approve. Jimmy Thomas made a motion, which was seconded by Bill Slaughter. The motion passed unanimously.

### **Commissioner's Report:**

Commissioner Tanner opened his report by awarding Greg Hoyt, Director of the Office of Hospital Operations, his certificate and pin for 25 years of service to the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities; Commissioner Tanner thanked Mr. Hoyt for his years of service and took a quick photo with Greg Hoyt and Chair Joiner.

Commissioner Tanner then invited Ansley Poythress, LCSW, the Transitional Services Manager at the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities to the podium to give an update on the Community Residential Alternative Transitional Homes. Ms. Poythress highlighted the difference in the behavior-focused community residential alternatives, intensive community residential services and the specialized transitional community residential alternatives for this population. She also shared a brief update on the specialized transitional community residential alternative homes located in Augusta, GA and shared the average length of stay and how many people we have served in those homes. Lastly, Ms. Poythress covered how effective these homes are within our

community. Ms. Poythress presented data showing that the use of the specialized transitional homes decreased the number of days individuals spent in local hospitals.

Commissioner Tanner then invited Rachael Holloman, Director of the Office of Federal Grant Programs and Suicide Prevention and Alesha Cooke Henderson, Youth Suicide Prevention Specialist for the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities to the podium to provide an update on the Office of Prevention. Ms. Holloman highlighted the primary purpose of presenting at the Pediatric Suicide Prevention Virtual Summit was to inform pediatric primary care providers, pediatric nurses and other clinical and non-clinical staff about how to look for warning signs and how effective it is to start prevention early to change the trajectory of the youth's future. The Pediatric Suicide Prevention Virtual Summit focused on enhancing the suicide specific continuum of care, with the goal of reducing the number and rate of suicide deaths and number of non-fatal suicide attempts among children and adolescents. The team also highlighted the Pediatric Zero Suicide Webinar Series. Ms. Cooke Henderson informed the Board that Suicide Prevention Day 2025 at the Capitol was a success. Over 400 people attended and student representation came from each region of the state. Ms. Cooke Henderson also informed the Board about Mental Health First Aid trainings for adults and youth and expressed that they will be training more staff soon. Commissioner Tanner informed the Board that if any Board member would like to get certified, to please reach out to Ms. Holloman and Ms. Nabritt to coordinate the dates.

Commissioner Tanner then presented the Fiscal Year 2026 budget adjustments. Commissioner gave a detailed overview of how the adjustments would affect the Department and mentioned that the Fiscal Year 2026 Appropriations Bill was released on April 4, 2025. He mentioned that the Department is very pleased with the results and how appreciative the Department is of the General Assembly and the Governor's Office. He also informed the Board that although adjustments were made, they have not been finalized. Thus, there may be more updates at the next Board meeting. Lastly, Commissioner Tanner mentioned that the Crisis Services Diagnostic Center in Macon will be opening on May 19, 2025, and he invited the Board members to the grand opening of the facility.

Commissioner Tanner closed his report.

### **Chair's Report**

Chair Lasa Joiner mentioned that she is so grateful that the Georgia General Assembly and the Governor's Office sees the importance of the Department's work and how she will continue to support the Department however she can. Chair Joiner encouraged the Board members to attend the Crisis Services Diagnostic Center's grand opening and to continue to engage with the Department as different events get added to Commissioner Tanner's

calendar. Chair Joiner thanked the presenters for presenting and thanked the guest speaker again for sharing his powerful story with the Board.

Chair Lasa Joiner closed her report.

**Public Comment**

There was 1 public comment at this meeting.

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**Adjournment**

Chair Lasa Joiner asked if there were any further business for the day, after hearing none, Chair Lasa Joiner asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. A motion was made by Jimmy Thomas, which was seconded by Bill Slaughter.

The meeting adjourned at 1:56 p.m.

**Special Notes**

The next scheduled meeting of the Board of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities will be held on **Thursday, June 12, 2025.**

**Respectfully submitted by:**

Chelsee Nabritt, Board and Special Project Manager

**Signatures:**

  
Chair

  
Secretary