



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, December 18, 2025 1:00 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.

200 Piedmont Avenue, S.E.

West Tower, 5th 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, Amanda Owens, Bill Slaughter, Bubber Epps, David Glass, Deb Bailey, Jean Sumner, M.D. and Jimmy Thomas
- **Virtual Conferencing:** Jan Ligon, Ph.D.
- **Absent:**

DBHDD Leadership:

Brandon Kenney, *Assistant Commissioner of Operations*, Monica Patel, *Assistant Commissioner for Agency Affairs and Chief Legal Officer*, Allen Morgan, *Deputy Assistant Commissioner, Field Operations North*, Jason McSwain, *Deputy Assistant Commissioner of Operations and Chief Information Officer*, Brenda Woodard, *General Counsel and Ethics Officer*

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 informed the Board members that we have a full agenda for the day, so we will not have a recovery speaker for this meeting.

Chair Lasa Joiner then introduced the agenda items requiring Board action.

Action Items

1. Board Meeting Minutes – October 23, 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 Amanda Owens. The motion passed unanimously.
2. Proposed 2026 Meeting Schedule. Chair Joiner mentioned that Chelsea Nabritt will place all of the meetings the Board member calendars after the meeting and that all dates looked as if they were close to the dates for the 2025 calendar year. After seeing there were no questions or concerns, Chair Lasa Joiner asked for a motion. Jimmy Thomas made a motion, which was seconded by Jean Sumner. The motion passed unanimously.
3. Cindy Levi Resolution. Chair Joiner mentioned to the Board members that we are presenting Cindy Levi with a resolution because of her great work and service as the Chief Executive Officer of Avita Community Partners. Chair Lasa Joiner asked for a motion. Bill Slaughter made a motion, which was seconded by Jean Sumner. The motion passed unanimously.

Commissioner's Report:

Commissioner Tanner opened his report by inviting Ron Wakefield, Executive Director for the Office of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, to the podium to introduce the first presenter for the day. Mr. Wakefield approached the podium and informed the Board members that the meeting would be heavily focused on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD) services. He explained that the Board would hear updates on Crisis Services, the Diagnostics Center, the IDD Workgroup, the Planning List, and additional related initiatives.

Mr. Wakefield then invited Beth Shaw, Director for the Office of Crisis and Transition Services for the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities, to the podium to present about the IDD crisis continuum and to provide an update regarding the new Community Residential Alternative placements for individuals with complex needs. Ms. Shaw spoke about the standard crisis residential alternatives, behavior-focused crisis residential alternatives, intensive crisis residential alternatives, and specialized transitional crisis residential alternatives. Through these residential alternatives, residents can have temporary placement for individuals with complex

needs, instead of taking up space in local hospitals and jails. Ms. Shaw shared that some homes are diagnosis specific and explained that individuals must meet certain eligibility criteria to reside in these homes.

Mr. Wakefield then invited Dr. Mercedes Brown, Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Crisis Stabilization Services Manager, to the podium to present the Crisis Services & Diagnostics Center Updates. Dr. Brown shared the updates on the Crisis Services Diagnostic Center, stating that the Center started accepting patients on June 16th, 2025 by using a “phased” implementation approach. Dr. Brown also stated that the Center has faced some staffing challenges limiting the Center’s ability to operate all 16 beds. They have had 12 total admissions and 4 total discharges, with the average length of stay being 77 days. The Mercer Center for Intellectual Developmental Disabilities Care opened December 2, 2025, and the Center is hoping to launch Dental and Therapeutic Services January 2026.

Mr. Wakefield then returned to the podium to provide an overview of the Intellectual Developmental Disabilities Workgroup and an update on the work related to the IDD planning list to the Board members. Mr. Wakefield started by sharing details about the Senate Study Committee on Individuals with Intellectual Developmental Disabilities and Waiver Plan Access, including its 2022 recommendations and their relevance to current initiatives. Mr. Wakefield then shared recommendations from the Intellectual Developmental Disabilities Workgroup, which he currently serves on, including long-term planning projects to better examine the challenges of the Planning List, new waiver requests, and enhanced criteria for planning list sub-populations. He further explained that the 2024-2025 Guidehouse Report recommends updates to the need-revised assessment tool, implementation of a multi-list model, and enhanced data analysis and reporting. Mr. Wakefield noted that the next presenters would share more details about the assessment tool and updates to the planning list; as they served on the subcommittees that developed strategies, steps and timelines for implementing additional recommendations from the Senate Study Committee and Guidehouse Report.

Mr. Wakefield then invited Rita Young, Executive Director for Participant Directed Advocates of Georgia and Bruce Lindemann, Chair of the Intellectual Developmental Disabilities Advisory Council to the podium to present the Assessment Tool and Planning List Overview to the Board members. Ms. Young shared that she served as Chair of the Assessment Tool Subcommittee. Through the subcommittee, members reviewed recommendations, developed new urgency criteria, and conducted focus groups to give feedback on their criteria. These next steps included collaborating to assist in the design of training and education for the IDD Planning List Navigators and staff, as well as assist in the development of a communication plan for individuals, families, providers, community partners, and stakeholders.

Mr. Lindemann then approached the podium to share updates about the Planning List Subcommittee. Mr. Lindemann shared that he served as Chair of the Planning List

Subcommittee and through their subcommittee they came up with the following recommendations: development a stronger planning list structure, modify planning list field requirements to help improve data tracking, integrity, and supporting data forecasting along with policy and system enhancements. The subcommittee's next steps include working with the Assessment Tool Subcommittee to develop the inter-related assessment and planning process, as well as designing communications for individuals, providers, stakeholders and staff.

Mr. Wakefield then invited Diane Wilush, Interim CEO for United Cerebral Palsy National Organization, to present the New Waiver overview. Ms. Wilush served as the New Waiver Subcommittee Chair, and through the subcommittee they looked at the number of individuals receiving family support services in fiscal year 2024 and 2025 on the planning list, cost of services, annual budget and funding source, and reviewed each service and determined whether it should be included in the new waiver services. They recommended that the state set aside a certain amount of state dollars to maintain the capacity to serve individuals who do not meet waiver eligibility requirements and criteria. Their next steps include working in collaboration with consultants to further evaluate this work, determining eligibility criteria for a new waiver, and considering service funding gaps for each service being offered.

Mr. Wakefield then asked the Board members to turn their attention to the screens in the Board room because the next presenter would be presenting virtually, he then introduced Jeff Case, National Director of Business Development for Therap Services, to present the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities and Therap Services Partnership to the Board members. Mr. Case started his presentation by introducing himself to the Board members and providing an overview of the partnership between Therap's and the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities. The partnership aims to modernize the system of care and provide better coordination of care, significant efficiencies and enhanced communication. Mr. Case shared that this collaboration would integrate a range of state and provider processes to create a simplified, unified structure designed to support quality service and deliver positive outcomes for individuals. Mr. Case acknowledged time constraints and informed the Board members that his contact information was included on the presentation slides, encouraging the Board members to reach out if they have any questions or concerns regarding his presentation.

Lastly, Commissioner Tanner presented a slide highlighting the Board engagement events for 2025. Commissioner Tanner reminded the Board members of some of the events they attended throughout the year and encouraged them to continue to stay involved in 2026.

Commissioner Tanner closed his report.

Chairman's Report

Chair Lasa Joiner thanked everyone for presenting and asked Cindy Levi to take a picture with the Resolution and the Board members after the meeting adjourns. Chair Lasa Joiner also thanked the Board members for attending the meeting in person and for continuing to engage with staff and the community outside of the Board meetings. She shared her desire to increase engagement in 2026 and encouraged members to reach out with any ideas they may have. Chair Lasa Joiner thanked Commissioner Tanner for presenting a full agenda focused on the topic of Intellectual Developmental Disabilities because there's so much movement and growth in this area and the partnerships prove that we are doing everything in our power to enhance the system to serve this population.

Chair Lasa Joiner closed her report.

Public Comment

There were 2 public comments at this meeting.

Adjournment

Chair Lasa Joiner asked if there was 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 2:30 p.m.

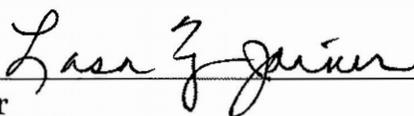
Special Notes

The next scheduled meeting of the Board of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities will be held on **Thursday, February 26, 2026**.

Respectfully submitted by:

Chelsee Nabritt, Board and Special Project Manager

Signatures:


Chair


Secretary

