

Georgia Department of Behavioral Health &
Developmental Disabilities

Kevin Tanner, Commissioner

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Office of the Commissioner

Board of Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities

Thursday, February 26, 2026 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, Bubber Epps, David Glass, Deb Bailey, and Jimmy Thomas
- **Virtual Conferencing:** Jan Ligon, Ph.D., Bill Slaughter, Jean Sumner, M.D.
- **Absent:** Amanda Owens

DBHDD Leadership:

Brandon Kenney, *Assistant Commissioner of Operations*, Monica Patel, *Assistant Commissioner for Agency Affairs and Chief Legal Officer*, 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 1:02 P.M.

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

Guest Presentation

Chelsee Nabritt approached the podium and informed the Board that Dr. Christy Doyle, Senior Director of the Office of Children, Young Adults, and Families with the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities, was in route to the meeting. In her absence, Chad Jones, Chief Community Engagement Officer for View Point Health, would introduce the guest speaker for the day.

Mr. Jones introduced guest speaker Charletta Bourne, an APEX Clinician, to speak about her experience in the school. Ms. Bourne briefly shared how the APEX program is a school-based mental health initiative funded and supported by the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities, through the Office of Children, Young Adults, and Families, and how its primary purpose is to expand access to behavioral and mental health services for students across the state of Georgia. Ms. Bourne further explained that she provides individual therapy sessions between classes, responds to crisis, offers administrative support as needed, and connects with parents and families, when necessary, to provide additional resources to ensure a continuum of care is available for each student. She briefly covered the types of students APEX clinicians serve, such as students who have been diagnosed with anxiety, depression, trauma and more.

Lastly, Ms. Bourne explained the positive outcomes achieved through the APEX program, stating that it decreases the need for higher-level care, significantly reduces the suicidal ideation, and builds healthier connections between the student, teacher, and their family. Ms. Bourne shared a few photos with the Board before thanking them for the opportunity to share her experience and then exited the podium.

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

Action Items

1. Board Meeting Minutes – December 18, 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. Bubber Epps made a motion, which was seconded by David Glass. The motion passed unanimously.
2. Augusta Cemetery Resolution. Greg Hoyt, Director of the Office of Hospital Operations, approached the podium and showed a picture of the property to be declared as surplus and described the building in detail before asking the Board for their consideration. Chair Lasa Joiner asked for a motion. Jimmy Thomas made a motion, which was seconded by Deb Bailey. The motion passed unanimously.
3. Augusta Specialized Transitional CRA Lease Resolution. Brenda Woodard, General Counsel and Ethics Officer approached the podium and informed the Board that the lease is relating to the Transitional homes located in Augusta, Georgia and that the

resolution is in reference to the lease renewal. Ms. Woodard asked for the Board's consideration and left the podium. Chair Lasa Joiner asked for a motion. Bubber Epps made a motion, which was seconded by David Glass. The motion passed unanimously.

Next, Commissioner Tanner introduced and invited Melissa Sperbeck, Director of the Division of Strategy, Technology, and Performance, to the podium to present on the licensure transition. Ms. Sperbeck introduced herself and informed the Board that she would provide updates regarding the Department's licensure authority and responsibilities, outline the rulemaking process, discuss the focus areas, and conclude by requesting approval to publish the proposed rules. Ms. Sperbeck explained that on January 1, 2026, Georgia House Bill 584 went into effect, transferring the licensing and oversight of several facility types from the Department of Community Health to the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities. This transfer resulted in a strategic realignment of Community Living Arrangements, Drug Abuse Treatment Programs, Adult Residential Mental Health Programs and the Narcotic Treatment Programs. Ms. Sperbeck further explained that the Department is updating the licensure rules to reflect the change in licensing authority and to make necessary modifications. She outlined that the Department has developed a strategic approach to rule revisions that balance modernization with operational stability and described what that process looks like. Ms. Sperbeck shared a timeline that reflects her presenting to the Board in February to discuss the Drug Abuse Treatment and Education Programs and the Licensure Enforcement and Sanctions, in April to discuss the Community Living Arrangements and Narcotic Treatment Programs and in June to discuss the Adult Residential Mental Health Programs. Ms. Sperbeck explained the many programs that fall under the Drug Abuse Treatment and Education Program and how the program rules provide minimal requirements for the licensing and inspection of programs covering comprehensive operational standards to Food and Nutrition, Physical Plant and Safety, Administration and Staffing and other operational areas. Further noting that the key changes included the licensing authority, clarification on the definition of DATEP Programs, and providing consistency with the Department's standards of practice and verbiage. The Licensure Enforcement and Sanctions Rules provide general licensing and enforcement action requirements by the Department, ensuring consistent oversight practices. Ms. Sperbeck thanked the Board members for allowing her to present and requested their support in continuing the rulemaking process.

4. Rules and Regulations for DATEP. Chair Lasa Joiner asked for a motion. Bubber Epps made a motion, which was seconded by Deb Bailey. The motion passed unanimously.
5. Rules and Regulations for Licensure Enforcement and Sanctions. Chair Lasa Joiner asked for a motion. David Glass made a motion, which was seconded by Jimmy Thomas. The motion passed unanimously.

Commissioner's Report:

Commissioner Tanner approached the podium and opened his report by stating that Dr. Christy Doyle was still in route to the meeting, so he will present first and asked Chelsee Nabritt to skip forward in the presentation to his slides. He started by updating the Board that the Amended Fiscal Year 2026 Appropriations Bill had passed both chambers and was awaiting Governor Brian Kemp's signature, and although Fiscal Year 2027 Appropriations Bill was in the early stages, the Department was not aware of any changes to the proposed budget in the Governor's Budget. Commissioner Tanner then went through the details of both the Amended Fiscal Year 2026 Budget and the Fiscal Year 2027 Budget. Commissioner Tanner was happy to inform the Board members that in the Amended Fiscal Year 2026 Adjustments the General Assembly decided to fund the construction of a new Georgia Regional Hospital on the Atlanta Campus to address the mental health and forensic bed capacity challenges. Commissioner Tanner also informed the Board that the Department was released from the Supported Employment segment of the Olmstead settlement agreement and further noted that this action marked a major milestone for the Department, as it reflects the State's progress in expanding community-based behavioral health services. Commissioner Tanner continued explaining line items within the budget before transitioning into Board Engagement.

Commissioner Tanner shared that Board member Bill Slaughter invited members from the Department to attend the Lowndes County Bird Supper at the Freight Depot, Board member Jean Sumner attended Mental Health Day at the Capitol and the Georgia Opioid Abatement Trust Contract Signing at the Capitol, and David Glass attended Operation New Hope Ribbon Cutting at West Central Georgia Regional Hospital. He then explained that the Department has built out their own police force, and he looks forward to Chief of Police Rus Drew presenting to the Board later this year to share more information about that. Dr. Christy Doyle then walked into the meeting room and Commissioner Tanner left the podium so she could present to the Board.

Dr. Christy Doyle apologized to the Board for running behind and explained to the Board that she was at the Co-Responder Conference and was stuck in traffic; nonetheless, she was happy to arrive at the perfect moment to present the Child and Adolescent Service Updates to the Board. Dr. Doyle shared that House Bill 268 mandates the creation of the Student Advocacy Specialist position in schools. It also directs the Department of Education to establish the position and provide funding to local school systems through grants; training for this position has been developed and will be administered by the Ralston Institute.

Dr. Doyle also stated that they are currently updating school safety planning guidance to include specific direction for addressing the behavioral health needs of both staff and students. She further explained that the code requires that Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities to review and approve the school safety plans, with assistance from Georgia Emergency Management and Homeland Security Agency (GEMA).

Dr. Doyle then transitioned to sharing some of the milestones the MATCH Committee achieved in the last quarter, including the completion of the 1st Cohort of the Social Communication, Emotional Regulation, Transactional Support (SCERTS) training level 1 and the launch of the 2nd cohort level 1 in January of 2026, an increase in referrals through Unite Us, and the introduction of new members to the MATCH State Committee and Clinical Team. Dr. Doyle reported the success and impact of the Hillside Intensive In-Home pilot program, explaining that it is designed to sustain stability and reduce hospitalization rates for youth with complex needs, by keeping them in their homes and out of the hospitals, crisis units, and psychiatric facilities. Before this pilot program 70% of the incoming clients had a history of hospitalization; during the pilot, 97% of the clients didn't need hospitalization during treatment, and 86% of the clients remained hospital-free for 90 days following service completion.

Dr. Doyle stated that she's received exceptional family satisfaction outcomes, with 100% of guardians reporting that they were treated in a courteous and friendly manner and 94% of families stating that they would recommend Hillside's services to others. She also reported that the Devereux STTP (MATCH) daily rate in Georgia is \$801.10, which is significantly lower than comparable Devereux programs in other states (\$1,543/day for non-school attendees and \$2,257/day for school attendees) and other out-of-state ASD residential facilities, which range from \$825 to \$3,000 per day. In-state MATCH placements support Georgia's commitment to family stability and system accountability by maintaining localized continuity of care, improving youth outcomes, and reducing long-term system costs. Mrs. Stanley then reported 58% of MATCH referrals involved individuals with ASD, many experienced worsening behaviors, lacked access to specialized in-state care, or were denied higher levels of treatment due to their diagnosis.

Lastly, Dr. Doyle presented an update on the APEX Program stating that it has been around for 10 years, and how it has completely transformed behavioral and mental health in the school system. She reported that 15,617 students received mental health support in the 2024-2025 school year, and how APEX expanded its impact, fostering a network of accessibility care for students in 868 schools across the state, further explaining that 83% of parents reported improved access to care for their students. Looking forward she is looking at how to slow the turnover rate for positions supporting this program, she stated that the Department has piloted a program to pay tuition for the second year of coursework for students in a clinical master's degree program in

exchange for a commitment to work for APEX following graduation. Dr. Doyle thanked the Board for the opportunity to present to them and exited the podium.

Commissioner Tanner closed his report.

Chairman's Report

Chair Lasa Joiner thanked Dr. Christy Doyle for her efforts to attend and present to the Board; and asked if the Co-Responder Conference was going well. Dr. Doyle stated that the conference was going exceptionally well and informed Chair Joiner that her session was full of law enforcement officers who were eager to learn more about how they can strengthen their presence within the community and overcome obstacles in the community. Chair Joiner responded by telling Dr. Doyle that this is excellent news and their partnership is invaluable as we continue to help those in need within our home communities. She also mentioned that Speaker Burns, Chairman Tillery, Chairman Hatchett, and many others at the Capitol were excited to fund the new hospital and expressed appreciation for the General Assembly's support, noting the urgent need for additional beds as capacity continues to be a challenge statewide. Commissioner Tanner informed Chair Joiner that he and the Department are thankful for the General Assembly's support. Chair Lasa Joiner thanked Commissioner Tanner for presenting the budget, congratulated him on the Department's release from the settlement, and encouraged him to continue leading the Department with great strength and vision.

Chair Lasa Joiner closed her report.

Public Comment

There was 1 public comment 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 Bubber Epps.

The meeting adjourned at 2:20 p.m.

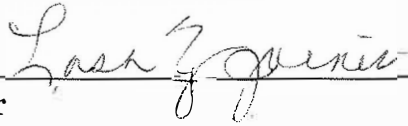
Special Notes

The next scheduled meeting of the Board of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities will be held on **Thursday, April 23, 2026**.

Respectfully submitted by:

Chelsee Nabritt, Board and Special Project Manager

Signatures:


Chair


Secretary

