

# State Mental Health Planning Council Meeting

April 3, 2025

38 Attendees

## 1. Announcements.

- There were no reported announcements.

## 2. Building Bridges: Co-Occurring Conditions/Dual Recovery Panel Discussion.

- The panel included the following experts:
  - o Dee Calvert, LICSW, Director of the Bureau of Substance Addiction Services, Department of Public Health,
  - o Noel Sierra, Executive Director of the Massachusetts Organization for Addictions Recovery
  - o Ben Mathews. LMHC, Clinical Director, Recovery from Addiction Program, Department of Mental Health
  - o Val Comerford, Director of Recovery and Employment Services, Central Mass., Department of Mental Health, and
  - o Julie Sprenkle, Psy.D. Dual Recovery Coordinator, Mass Clubhouse Coalition.
- Dee Calvert discussed Massachusetts Department of Public Health treatment and offerings in addressing substance use, barriers of integrative care, workforce development, peer support, and recovery coaching opportunities
- Noel Sierra discussed MORE activities and highlighted various points such as
  - o the importance of becoming active in the community, in addition to being vocal,
  - o encouraging folks in the mental health and substance use world to be intentional in working together,
  - o the impact of incorporating culture (Western and non-Western alike) to study and address mental health and substance use issues, and
  - o integrating the mind, body, and soul to address addiction, emphasizing you cannot abandon one without the other
- Ben Mathews discussed work in inpatient settings such as relapse prevention, dual recovery and other programs. He shared information on work dealing with the challenges of tying inpatient to community, work done with Val Comerford
- Val Comerford explained experiences in working with DMH, as well as highlighting the Dual Recovery Collaborative.
  - o The next Dual Recovery meeting is on Friday, April 11th from 2:30pm-4pm. Dr Karen L Fortuna, PhD, LICSW Assistant Professor of Community and Family Medicine and Co-Founder of the Collaborative Design for Recovery and Health (<https://collabr.org>). will be providing a seminar titled Strengthening the U.S. Response to the Opioid Crisis to Support Older Adults: The Role of the Interstitial Workforce and Dual Recovery Training.
  - o Link to Zoom Meeting:  
<https://zoom.us/j/92114985947?pwd=WUJPS3l2SXZnaGN1NGVxYzJQZFZEdz09>
- Julie Sprenkle provided information on the Massachusetts Clubhouse Coalition's Dual Recovery Anonymous (DRA) program, Benefits of DRA, information on DRA Certification

Program, and where to find a meeting (e.g. <http://www.massclubs.org/dra-overview>). Since 1989, this program has provided an opportunity for individuals to address both their mental health needs and addictions concerns. Based on the 12 Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous, DRA was for people identifying with any type of addiction (alcohol, drugs, smoking, shopping, food, gambling etc.) and any mental health challenge.

**Action steps:**

- Slide decks that were shared during the meeting will be uploaded to the SMHPC website.
- Information regarding the Dual Recovery Collaborative will be on the SMHPC website.

**SMHPC members received the Commissioner's Report.**

- Dr Amam Saleh provided the following updates:
  - DMH's highlighting efforts to approve care with people with mental health and substance use issues
  - Facilities are over capacity for the 4<sup>th</sup> year in the row at 107%
  - Consulting on behalf of acute care hospitals: there has been increased difficulty with lending resources to acute hospitals. Area medical directors are going to the hospitals in an attempt to reduce this information deficiency
  - DMH's efforts in managing aggression in facilities via creating pilot units in highlighted areas such as Taunton, Worcester Recovery, and Fuller. These pilots aim to represent the whole commonwealth and develop best practices as it is a national issue
  - Increasing training opportunities for DMH clinical and middle management personnel to better addiction training and treatment. This included:
    - Providing 10-day training on Dialectical behavior therapy for 40 DMH staff
    - Incorporating experts in the field to provide additional training and consulting
  - Streamlining DMH's process on boarding and discharging data through the ED-EPIA portal to increase transparency on capacity

**SMPHC Members received brief subcommittee updates from SMHPC Committee chairs.**

- Housing: Ben Bailey shared that the subcommittee merged two workgroups together (e.g. Barriers and Education for Stakeholders) to become the Housing Access Collaboration Workgroup. They had their first meeting on March 17<sup>th</sup>. The larger Housing subcommittee meeting is on April 12<sup>th</sup>.
- Peer Support Subcommittee: Amie Sica shared that the subcommittee had their most recent meeting on March 28<sup>th</sup> where new members are oriented. There was intentionality in starting small group of folks and will be looking to share upcoming goals in the coming months.
- SYAC: Anna Cady Clouse shared that they have identified a new co-chair. The subcommittee is also looking into identifying areas for advocacy plus planning for an upcoming in-person meeting sometime in June.
- Older Adult Behavioral Health Collaborative:
  - The annual conference, [Aging at Home](#): Older Adult Homelessness Housing Stabilization and Community Living will be held in Worcester on May 13<sup>th</sup>.

- On April 10 at 11:00-12:30pm: A free webinar will be held in partnership with MOAR and AARP titled: MA Older Adults in Recovery: We're Not Who We Used to Be
  - This will be a panel of older adults with lived experience will share personal stories of recovery, offering wisdom on how aging impacts the process, and how they continue to give back to the recovery community.
  - Learn more/register below or find more information on the attached flyer:  
[https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_ovVq2rcBSJS7XV6z1obf9A](https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_ovVq2rcBSJS7XV6z1obf9A)
- Employment: Stephen LaMaster: The subcommittee continued collaboration with Mass Ability (formerly known as Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC)) to inform how to improve quality and outcomes in regard to Community Integrated Employment Services (CIES).
  - They have recently explored clubhouses' ability to deliver on both housing and employment opportunities.