

## **State Mental Health Planning Council Meeting**

**January 8, 2026**

**46 Attendees**

**Committee members received the Commissioner's Report. Acting Commissioner Beth Lucas provided updates on the following:**

- The Governor's FY26 budget, also known as House 1, is expected to kick off budget proposal by the end of January.
  - Despite constraints at both state and federal levels, DMH continues to prioritize services and coordinate with agencies, providers, and advocates.
- DMH Rental Subsidy Program & Housing Plan: DMH suspended new rental subsidy leases for new applicants (a decision made from July) due to rising fair market rents and level funding. Suspension has both individual (housing/recovery) and system-level impacts (transitions from hospitals/group settings).
  - It is important to note that current recipients retain subsidies, including moves to new apartments.
  - Housing subcommittee finalized a housing plan (in inbox) pending review and implementation.
- Case Management Changes: There is a shift to prioritize Critical Need Case Management (short-term, intensive) while maintaining Extended Case Management for those needing longer-term support.
  - DMH is also introducing the Open Access Case management, which focuses on drop-in and team base supports.
  - Comprehensive case manager training rolling out in January–February; first phase of model changes begins in March with phased implementation.
- Office of Behavioral Health Promotion & Prevention: This office was launched in 2024, with Dr. Funmi Aguocha as Assistant Commissioner.
  - The office recently launched the “What’s on your mind” statewide campaign to spur conversations and awareness. The campaign is shown on billboards, transit, TV, and radio.
  - There is RFA for community grants. It produced about 240 applications with reviews underway. Awards will be announced at a later date.
- Federal Rural Transformation Grant: Massachusetts awarded ~\$162M (one-year, with expectations that it will be funded for multiple years to improve rural healthcare access and capacity.

- The Executive Office of Health and Human Services and other statewide partners are the leading implementation; community engagement plans forthcoming.

**Wendy Chow, Becca Millock and Lauren Ferridge from JSI Discussed Findings from the 2025 ACCS, PACT and Family Surveys.**

- This is an annual SAMHSA-based survey used since 2015. It measures nine satisfaction domains plus behavioral outcomes and demographics.
- Below are highlighted findings:
  - Response rates: ACCS: 26%, which equal to about 1,232 respondents), PACT: 24% ( about 297 respondents), Children/Family ~34% (~338).
  - ACCS (Adults) Findings:
    - Satisfaction Domains: Highest: Person-centered planning, Self-determination, Access to services ( $\geq 80\%$  positive); Lowest: Functioning and Treatment outcomes (~64%).
    - Themes: Most helpful—mental health care and staff support. Least helpful—quality of care for some; Improvements—access and quality.
  - PACT Findings:
    - Satisfaction Domains: Similar to ACCS Highest: Person-centered planning, self-determination; Lowest: functioning and treatment outcomes (~63–67%).
    - Themes: Most helpful: medication and staff; Improvements requested from survey participants in access to care and frequency of sessions.
  - Children, Youth & Family Survey Findings:
    - Outcomes: 90% living with caregiver; 89% attended school; low arrest rates.
    - Satisfaction Domains: High satisfaction ( $>90\%$ ) in sensitivity/flexibility, respect, safety; Lowest—outcomes for symptoms/functioning (~61%).
    - Themes: Most helpful: Access and quality of care;
    - Key barriers noted include staffing shortages and limited options; communication and team size were cited as improvement areas.
  - Survey Method & Follow-up Notes
    - There are additional geographic and demographic breakdowns available. The future analyses are planned, particularly by race, region, and age-group analyses.

**Margaret Guyer, DMH Director of Workforce Development and Research, provided a report on First Episode Psychosis. Margaret was also joined by Michelle Friedman-Yakubian and Kelsy Johnson from MAPNet at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, Emily Gargan, M-Path at The Brookline Center.**

- Highlighted comments included the following:  
Early Psychosis Initiatives & Strategic Plan and its overarching six-goal framework: individual/family support; community readiness; provider capacity; specialized CSC teams; statewide system; equity/access.
  - Progress highlights:
    - Expanded peer and family involvement (lived-experience committees, advisory boards, peer roles on teams)
    - Equity-focused workforce pipeline (“Building Bridges”) training underrepresented students; Salud Spanish advisory board; Spanish Youth Mental Health First Aid rollout.
  - Highlighted initiatives included:
    - **Massachusetts Psychosis Access & Triage Hub (M-PATH):** is a statewide referral hub that centralizes screening, referrals, consultation, and provides peer/family partner supports and outreach/training free for Massachusetts residents
    - **Massachusetts Psychosis Access Network (MAPNet):** online hub with a directory of early psychosis programs and resources
    - Involved in providing TA and training for Coordinated Specialty Care teams; efforts to make CSC billable and sustainably funded.
    - Ongoing priorities: sustainable financing for CSC, expand clinic availability, strengthen continuum from clinical high risk to recovery, deepen community engagement (youth/family voices).
  - Discussion, Questions & Community Feedback: There was a strong interest in clearer communications about rental subsidy impacts for recipients. There is an ongoing need for consumer-facing language.
    - There were also requests for sample survey items, focusing on domains such as functioning, parent social connectedness) and consideration of child-directed surveys.
    - M-PATH reported positive qualitative feedback on warm hand-offs, rapid responsiveness, and impacts of peer/family partners.
    - There were also increased calls for broader family-involvement measures, including families of adult service users.

**Due to time constraints, SMHPC Committee chairs were not able to report on Committee Updates. This will be prioritized for April 2026 meeting.**

**Presentation materials will be posted on the SMHPC Website.**

**The meeting was adjourned.**