

State Mental Health Planning Council Meeting

April 8, 2026

38 Attendees

Vesper Moore, Moderator, welcomed attendees and announcements.

Vesper reviewed the Planning Council chairs' letter to Bobbi Spofford, congratulating on her years working at DMH as she is retiring at the end of this month.

1. Commissioner's Report.

Acting Commissioner Beth Lucas provided updates on the following:

- DMH will have new Commissioner, Emily Bailey, starting in mid-April. Acting Commissioner Lucas will continue her role as Deputy Commissioner of Mental Health Services
 - o Announcement link: [Emily Bailey Appointed Commissioner of the Massachusetts Department of Mental Health | Mass.gov](#)
- FY27 Budget: \$1.34 billion dollars will be allocated to DMH. Due to rising costs, there will be a reduction. Particularly, in these three following areas:
 - o Jail Diversion: Rationale behind this est. \$15 million cut was due to duplicative programs exist elsewhere versus program specific reasons (as the program has been documented as successful).
 - o Community Partner Program at MassHealth:
 - o CYF: this cut is not focused on service reduction; rather, it was focused on plan capacity
- Mental Health Rental Subsidy Program: It currently has a deficit due to rental costs, population growth, and increased number of folks interested in applying. There is an active pause with no backfill and shared optimism in its reopening.
- Case Management: Expansion of critical care need is needed. The goal of moving forward is to formalize process and create pathways for extend case management.

2. SMHPC Committee Updates.

Housing:

Chair Katie Ryan provided following updates:

- Goals include:
 - Prioritizing Housing Access

- Tenancy preservation
- Membership
- Safe Havens
- Active engagement
- Advocacy support (looking into new ways to advocate for housing)

Older Adult:

- Chair Cassie Cramer provided the following updates:
 - Field advisory for social workers receiving internship opportunities and recruitment
 - The June meeting will focus on older adult peer support
 - Upcoming Conference Opportunity in May: Looking for recruitment of sexual wellness, older adult peer support, agism
 - Link to RSVP: <https://secure.everyaction.com/xNnygBD4dEC4nTFHrKc0rQ2>

Peer Support:

- Peer Subcommittee DMH Liaison Ashley Sproul shared updates regarding the overall focus of the subcommittee.
 - The subcommittee will lean toward informational and educational space. It will be open to peer support workforce.
 - The goal is to launch this collective focus in the Spring/Summer 2026.

SYAC:

- Youth Chair Anna Cady Clouse provided updates on the following items:
 - Subcommittee goals of prioritizing affordability and access
 - Have done advocacy work alongside of the Housing Subcommittee
 - Participation in Youth on the Hill Day
 - Looking for opportunities for advocacy and incorporating in the Youth voice
 - Plan to visit Young Adult Access Centers to promote SYAC

Employment:

Adult Chair Sarah provided the following updates on the Employment subcommittee's behalf:

- Updating the Employment Subcommittee page on the SMHPC page
- Evaluating employment data for Clubhouse and PACT
- Assessing training needs for ACCS clients and services

- Conducting an audit of employment training needs

3. Mental Health in Prisons

Joanne T Barros, Director of Jail and Arrest Diversion Initiatives at DMH, discussed mental health in prisons.

The presentation provided the following highlights:

- Provided an overview of correctional mental health care in the Commonwealth and Department of Corrections. The Department of Corrections is reporting more acuity in what they see with some locations having more clinical staff to meet needs of the population.
- Typical services provided by the Department of Corrections (e.g. mental health screenings, crisis services, psychiatry consultations, discharges, etc.)
- House of Corrections' mental health services delivery overview and function
- Intersection between Corrections and DMH
- Diversion cuts may impact CIT work

4. DMH's Office of Behavioral Health Promotion and Prevention (OBHPP) Activities and Initiatives

Dr Funmi Aguocho, DMH's Assistant Commissioner for Office of Behavioral Health and Promotion, provided a report on OBHPP.

Below are the following highlights:

- Provided an overview of OBHPP, which included the mission, vision, and health parity system.
- Shared the Office's core values, mission outcomes, and objectives for social impact
- Defined behavioral health promotion and prevention and its multi-level, data-driven approach to behavioral health prevention
 - o Shared Highlights from the "[What's on your mind?](#)" campaign: statewide campaign from October 2025-March 2026 to spur conversations and awareness. The campaign is shown on billboards, transit, TV, and radio in eight languages.
 - o Also shared impact statistics and community impact:
 - Four methods of community engagement, with an estimated reach of over 65,000 people statewide
 - Paid Media Data Points: 154 advertising assets, across 22 outlets, in 5 marketing channels, 5.9mil social media image and video

impressions, 33.5k clicks to site, 2.7mil OTT streaming video impressions

- Other OBHPP Initiatives with a special emphasis on RFA for Community Behavioral Health Promotion and Prevention Grants
 - New multi-year grant opportunity awarding 4.5mil to support CBOs statewide to develop new or expand existing programs while address priority areas defined by the Office
 - It produced about 246 applications with initial review completed and are in the final deliberation stages.

Next Meeting: July 9th