

State Mental Health Planning Council

July 16, 2026

46 Attendees

Meeting moderator, Anna Cady Clouse, welcomed attendees and announcements:

- Binah St-Loth, MHBG Project Coordinator, announced DMH must submit a SAMHSA Block Grant mini-application. The draft mini-application will be emailed and posted on the State Mental Health Planning Council and DMH websites. The public comment period will be open through July 30; links to be shared in chat as well.
 - SMHPC Website: [For Public Comment: FY2027 MHBG Application Draft – State Mental Health Planning Council](#)
 - DMH Website: [State Mental Health Plan & Satisfaction Reports and Results | Mass.gov](#)

SMHPC members received Commissioner's report from Commissioner Bailey.

Commissioner Bailey spoken about her career pathway to DMH. She has been in the role for 3 months and held 15 years in Massachusetts behavioral health leadership and was a former Chief of Behavioral Health at MassHealth; she comes from a clinical social worker background.

Part of her acclimation to the agency, the Commissioner described her initial listening tour to DMH sites, staff, and stakeholders.

Commissioner Bailey also provided the following budget updates:

- The FY27 budget was signed.
- Jail diversion funding was leveled and expanded to \$19 million.
- The DMH Rental Subsidy program increased by \$1 million. The expectation is that it will cover rent inflation for existing subsidies but not sufficient to expand subsidies/new enrollments.
- Loan forgiveness was funded at \$3M.
- Two statutory provisions were mentioned:
 - DMH and DOC are in progress of completing a study on transferring oversight of Bridgewater State Hospital to DMH. The study is scheduled to end due next June with implementation plan to transition operations by December 31, 2028.
 - A special commission will be created to improve transitional planning/service coordination for transition-age youth aging out of special

education. DMH will serve as a member (not chair) and collaborate across agencies.

- Some questions and comments were made regarding budget and housing. The chairs from the Housing subcommittee helped providing insight and the Commissioner was receptive toward collaboration.
- There were some questions raised about rental subsidy timeline. The Commissioner mentioned that the \$1M will primarily sustain existing program and cannot confirm whether expansion is feasible.
- The Commissioner provided insight on the broader priorities vision to DMH.
 - There was an emphasis on serving the Commonwealth and broadening engagement beyond DMH-eligible populations to prevention, promotion, and low-barrier services (e.g., youth access centers).
- Highlighted priorities included strengthening cross-agency collaboration (MassHealth, DDS, MassAbility, DCF, Housing and Livable Communities, Transportation), improving access across the continuum of behavioral health services, focusing on quality across systems, supporting judicial pathways and inpatient care, and strengthening DMH operations.
- DMH will participate and coordinate with internal transition-focused staff and external partners. Statewide Young Adult Council (SYAC) offered lived-experience support.

Subcommittee chairs reported on Committee Updates.

- Housing Subcommittee: Jill Gichuhi from the Housing Subcommittee provided the following updates:
 - The Subcommittee reviewed federal Continuum of Care funding changes and state rental subsidy;
 - Three active workgroups were highlighted:
 - Membership, which focuses on recruitment and orientation materials
 - Safe Haven providers' first meeting in May.
 - Housing Access Collaborative: developing training survey, and their next meeting in late August.
 - The next meeting in late July or early August
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- Peer Support Committee: Amy Sica from the Peer Support Subcommittee shared continued efforts regarding website updates, centralized email, establishing meeting cadence.
 - There are plans to alternate core meetings with larger, open meetings and quarterly program spotlights to share best practices.

- Older Adult Behavioral Health Collaborative: Cassie Cramer from Older Adult Behavioral Health Collaborative: shared that the subcommittee produced a ~5-minute outreach film that the collaborative produced, highlighting BH Outreach for Aging Populations (link to be shared)
 - The May 2026 conference had about 190 attendees connecting CBHCs and aging providers.
 - There are upcoming meetings to host LGBTQIA Aging Project director and discuss Reimagine Aging Plan/expanding older-adult MH access.
- Statewide Young Adult Council: Anne Cady and Micah Webster from Statewide Young Adult Council shared that the upcoming Young Adult Advocacy Day planned is at full capacity (registration full) at Place for Empowerment in Worcester.
 - There will be road trip listening sessions at access centers to gather youth input; leadership transition noted
 - Former SYAC chair Colby Mills stepped down and moved onto other endeavors.

Steven Noroian from the Northeast Area Office and Nikki MacNeil from Vinfen provided a presentation on their FY25 initiatives towards community expansion with Vinfen as highlighted provider.

The following items were highlighted:

- Northeast Area Expansion outcomes: About 100 placements via expansion:
 - 79 Supported Independent Environment (SIE) beds across multiple locations,
 - 17 GLE beds, and 10 IGLE beds;
 - total site residential capacity increased from 55 to 106 beds
- Models described:
 - Intensive Behavioral GLE (IBGLE): higher clinical staffing (master's-level clinicians, BCBA) for individuals with significant behavioral needs.
 - Supported Independent Environment (SIE): mid-level support between GLE and independent apartment: typical staffing covers 7am–11pm and has no overnight staff but on-call clinical/program director support available. Residents have private apartments, cook and manage home tasks; rent ~30% income.
 - Implementation challenges included rapid hiring and furnishing logistics, property rehab, community relations in some locales, and staff recruitment and retention,
 - Success stories of individuals were shared, touching on experiences relating to gaining medication self-management, job-seeking support, and transitioning to DMHRA apartments.

- Ongoing challenges included securing affordable apartments for graduates of SIEs (limited housing supply, set asides limited), community concerns in some locations.

Final Comments

- Presentation materials and slide deck to be posted on the Planning Council website.
- David reminded the subcommittee chairs to update their web pages with meeting/event info.
- The meeting was adjourned. The next meeting is in October 2026.