



**State of New Jersey**

PHILIP D. MURPHY  
*Governor*

TAHESHA L. WAY  
*Lt. Governor*

GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL ON ALCOHOLISM AND DRUG ABUSE  
PO Box 345  
TRENTON, NJ 08625-0345

NEIL VAN ESS  
*Acting Chairman*  
CELENA LEVY  
*Executive Director*

**MINUTES**

**Governor's Council on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse**

**September 19, 2023**

**Attendance: Neil Van Ess (Chairman), Celina Levy (Executive Director), John Armato (Public Member), Gregg Benson (Public Member), Donna DeStefano (Public Member), Sweta Kansagra (Public Member), Moira Nelson (Public Member), Gisele Pemberton (Public Member), Jeff Carrick (DCF) Michelle Graham-Lyons (DCA), Herb Kaldany (DOC), Luiz Pereira (DOE), Lashunda Harden (DOH), Annette Riordan (DHS), Rebecca Glinn, (DOL), Craig Sashihara (LPS), Chuck Robbins (DMAVA), Allison Samay (NJ President's Council)**

**Call to Order**

The three hundred and seventy forth regular meeting of the Governor's Council on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse was called to order at 10:00 a.m. by Acting Chairman Neil Van Ess.

**Open Public Meetings Act Statement**

Mr. Van Ess announced that notice of this meeting was provided in compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act (N.J.S.A. 10:4-6 – 10:4-21). In addition, Mr. Van Ess stated that public comments were to be provided electronically, through the GCADA website contact portal between the hours of 10am and 1pm on the day of the meeting.

**Roll Call**

Katelyn Assenheimer called the roll. Members present and absent were noted for the record.

**Chairman's Report**

Chairman Van Ess welcomed everyone to the meeting. He announced that GCADA funding has been stabilized and will no longer rely on projected DEDR collections. Starting in FY24, GCADA will be receiving an appropriation from the general fund. He expressed his gratitude to

the GCADA team, the Council members for their ongoing support and to the County Coordinators and Alliances for their continued work despite challenges faced.

Chairman Van Ess also took a moment to recognize DHS designee, Annette Riordan who was attending her last meeting. DMHAS Assistant Commissioner, Valerie Mielke will be representing DHS starting in October.

### **Approval of Minutes**

After a brief discussion, the minutes for June and July were approved.

- June (Y-11; N-0; ABS-6)
- July (Y-11; N-0; ABS-6)

### **Observance Day Proclamations and Resolutions**

Executive Director Celina Levy read proclamations from Governor Murphy recognizing Suicide Prevention Week and Overdose Awareness Day. She also read resolutions recognizing Suicide Prevention Awareness Month, Recovery Month and Overdose Awareness Day. The Council members agreed to bundle the resolutions and after a vote, they were approved. (Y-17; N-0; ABS-0)

### **Presentation: “Recent DCF Youth Mental Health Initiatives”**

Jeffery Carrick, Deputy Director for Administration, Children’s System of Care of the Department of Children and Families gave an overview of the some initiatives the Department is involved with in regards to youth mental health.

New Jersey Statewide Student Support Services (NJ4S) is network of supports for students and their families that is offered to all school districts. It is designed to connect students and their families with existing community resources to support the students’ academic achievements and emotional well-being. 15 hubs have been created throughout the state so that no one will need to travel to access help.

The Youth Suicide Prevention Advisory Council was established to examine existing needs and services within the state as well as to make recommendations for youth suicide reporting, prevention and intervention. An annual report was also compiled by this Council that includes data on youth suicide attempts and recommendations for legislation.

The Traumatic Loss Coalition was established to provide outreach, support and education to schools and other youth-serving community organizations after a traumatic incident. Services that are offered include mental health, trauma, suicide prevention and grief intervention. In FY23, 10,113 people were served during a traumatic response.

### **Executive Director's Report**

Executive Director Celina Levy thanked Jeff Carrick for his presentation and for the years of insight and consistent support he has provided to help support NJ suicide prevention efforts.

Ms. Levy again shared that GCADA's funding would now be coming from the general fund and would no longer be relying on projected DEDR fund collections which had been significantly and consistently decreasing. She emphasized that the current administration is fully invested in the long-term sustainability of this program. Deputy Director Rebecca Alfaro and Director of Prevention and Planning, Sara Thode will be presenting more information to the County Coordinator's at the quarterly meeting next week.

Deputy Director Rebecca Alfaro shared that Knock Out Opioid Abuse Day (KOOAD) would be taking place on Friday, October 6<sup>th</sup>. This is the 7<sup>th</sup> year that GCADA has been actively involved in this annual day.

The 2023 DMHAS Suicide Prevention Conference will be taking place virtually on Thursday, October 19<sup>th</sup>. Ms. Levy will be moderating a panel focusing on vulnerable populations.

### **Adjournment**

Mr. Van Ess adjourned the meeting at 12:28.