



State of New Jersey

GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL ON SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER

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MIKIE SHERRILL
Governor

DR. DALE G. CALDWELL
Lt. Governor

NEIL VAN ESS
Acting Chairman

CELINA LEVY
Executive Director

MINUTES

Governor's Council on Substance Use Disorder

May 19, 2026

Attendance: Neil Van Ess (Chairman), Celina Levy (Executive Director), Gregg Benson (Public Member), Donna DeStefano (Public Member), Eileen Fishman (Public Member), Sweta Neygandhi (Public Member), Gisele Pemberton (Public Member), Cornell Williamson (AOC), Jeff Carrick (DCF), Michelle Graham-Lyons (DCA), Herb Kaldany (DOC), Lu Pereira (DOE), Jessica Atkinson (DOH), David Kensler (DHS), Briana Menjivar (DOL), Katie Kurek (LPS), Noelle Lee-Turner (DVA)

Call to Order

The four hundredth and fourth regular meeting of the Governor's Council on Substance Use Disorder was called to order at 10:00 a.m. by 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 GCSUD website contact portal between the hours of 10am and 1pm on the day of the meeting and must state "Public Comment" in the subject line.

Roll Call

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

Chairman's Report

Chairman Van Ess thanked everyone for joining the meeting and attaining quorum to vote on the FY27 County Plan Resolutions.

He also acknowledged and thanked the County Coordinators for their hard work and dedication to the counties they serve.

Approval of Minutes

After a brief discussion, the minutes for January, February, March and April were approved.

January (Y-16; N-0; ABS-1)

February (Y-14; N-0; ABS-3)

March (Y-11; N-0; ABS-6)

April (Y-12; N-0; ABS-4)

Awareness Month Resolutions

Executive Director Celina Levy read a resolution recognizing May as Mental Health Awareness Month in New Jersey. The Council voted to bundle these resolutions as well as resolutions for Problem Gambling Awareness Month and Alcohol Awareness Month and they were approved. **(Y-16; N-0; ABS-0)**

FY27 County Plan Resolutions

Director of Prevention and Planning, Sara Thode explained to the Council that the FY27 Plans were reviewed by the Council Review Team and voted to present the County Alliance Plans for conditional approval.

Executive Director Celina Levy gave an overview of the voting process. The following Council members informed GCSUD of the need to recuse themselves from voting on the FY27 County Plan Resolutions:

Eileen Fishman – Essex County

After a vote, the plans were approved:

- **FY27 Joint County Plan Resolution (Bergen, Hudson, Middlesex, Monmouth, Ocean, Salem, Sussex) (Y-17; N-0; ABS-0)**
- **FY27 Essex County Plan Resolution (Y-16; N-0; ABS-0)**

Executive Director's Report

Executive Director Celina Levy thanked the Council members for attending the meeting today and attaining quorum and reminded everyone that we would be voting on the remaining FY27 County Plans for the June 16th meeting.

Ms. Levy thanked the Council members for their guidance and support, County Coordinators and Alliances for their good work in light of challenges faced, GCSUD staff for their strong work ethic and to Chairman Van Ess for his leadership.

Adjournment

Mr. Van Ess adjourned the meeting at 10:40.