



State of New Jersey

GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL ON SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER

P. O. Box 345

TRENTON, NEW JERSEY 08625-0345

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

February 17, 2026

Attendance: Celina Levy (Executive Director), John Armato (Public Member), Gregg Benson (Public Member), Eileen Fishman (Public Member), Sweta Kansagra (Public Member), Gisele Pemberton (Public Member), Jeff Carrick (DCF), Herb Kaldany (DOC), Lu Pereira (DOE), Harry Reyes (DHS), Briana Menjivar (DOL), Elizabeth Rebein (LPS), Noelle Lee-Turner (DVA), Allison Samay (President's Council)

Call to Order

The four hundredth and first regular meeting of the Governor's Council on Substance Use Disorder was called to order at 10:00 a.m. by 2nd Vice Chairman Gregg Benson.

Open Public Meetings Act Statement

Mr. Benson 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. Benson 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. Mr. Benson informed the Council that this meeting would be for informational purposes only due to the lack of quorum.

Presentation: "Partnership for a Drug-Free New Jersey: Where We've Been and Where We're Going"

Angela Conover, Director of Opioid Response and Prevention of the Partnership for a Drug-Free New Jersey gave an overview of the work PDFNJ has been doing to the Council.

PDFNJ has several awareness campaigns that target both parents and youth focusing on family time together, phone usage and potency of legalized recreational marijuana.

Community initiatives include a learning series with continued education credits with topics such as Opioids in Pregnancy, Pain Management, Public Health Risks of Counterfeit Pills and Effective Screening for Opioid Misuse and Addiction.

In September of last year, the Partnership offered a Healthy Aging Summit on Opioid Safety and Alternatives that was attended by more than 400 people. Topics discussed included the risks of prescription opioids, alternative pain management and the importance of staying physically and mentally active.

Knockout Opioid Abuse Day occurs on October 6th and was established in 2016. This is a joint effort between PDFNJ and GCSUD to spread community awareness regarding opioid misuse.

Executive Director's Report

Executive Director Celina Levy shared with the Council that she and Deputy Director Rebecca Alfaro will be working on scheduling two in-person meetings a year. Updates will be provided as the process moves forward.

Director of Prevention and Planning, Sara Thode shared with the Council that the County and Municipal Alliance Plans for FY27 are currently being completed and are due to GCSUD staff at the end of February.

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. Benson adjourned the meeting at 10:54.