



State of New Jersey

GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL ON SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER

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PHILIP D. MURPHY
Governor

TAHESHA L. WAY
Lt. Governor

NEIL VAN ESS
Acting Chairman

CELINA LEVY
Executive Director

MINUTES

Governor's Council on Substance Use Disorder

October 21, 2025

Attendance: Celina Levy (Executive Director), Gregg Benson (Public Member), Donna DeStefano (Public Member), Eileen Fishman (Public Member), Sweta Kansagra (Public Member), Gisele Pemberton (Public Member), Cornell Williamson (AOC), Jeff Carrick (DCF), Michelle Graham-Lyons (DCA), Herb Kaldany (DOC), Lu Pereira (DOE), Lashunda Omida (DOH), Don Hallcom (DHS), Briana Menjivar (DOL), Tiffany Wilson (LPS), Noelle Lee-Turner (DMAVA)

The three hundred and ninety seventh 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.

Approval of Minutes

After a brief discussion, the minutes for September were approved. (Y-10; N-3; ABS-0)

Chairman's Report

Mr. Benson welcomed everyone to the meeting. Celina Levy shared Chairman Van Ess's gratitude for the members helping attain a quorum, and to Gregg Benson for helping the meeting in his stead.

2025 GCSUD Master Plan

The 2025 Master Plan is document that provides representation of the Council's guiding values and the work that is done to honor these values. These guiding values are:

- Provide Community Prevention and Education
- Foster Stigma-Free Communities
- Empower Peers and Seek Guidance from Individuals with Lived Experience
- Recognize the Role of Mental Health in Substance Use
- Embrace Best Practices in Prevention

The Master Plan will serve as a blueprint for the Council and the Alliances to Prevent Substance Use Disorder and is to be implemented through the FY27-31 grant cycle.

After a discussion, the members voted to adopt the 2025 Master Plan. **(Y-14; N-0; ABS-0)**

Executive Director's Report

Executive Director Celina Levy thanked everyone for the efforts and input in producing the Master Plan including Master Plan Committee Members, Gisele Pemberton, John Armato and Moira Nelson.

The DMHAS funds have been closed out with 99.94% of the funding spent.

Sara Thode, Director of Prevention and Planning shared with the Council that 100% of the County Plans and 87% of the Municipal Alliance Plans have been approved by GCSUD staff. She also shared that the Volunteer of the Year Ceremony will be held at our December 9th meeting.

Ms. Levy thanked the Council members for their guidance and support, the County Alliance Coordinators for their good work, GCSUD staff for moving the office forward and to Neil Van Ess for his ongoing leadership and support.

Adjournment

Mr. Benson adjourned the meeting at 11:18.