



Behavioral Health Advisory Council Meeting Minutes June 12, 2025

Attended: Amanda Bialas, April Thompson, Ben Kifer, Brent Weaver, Caitlin Lyle, Cassie Crumpton, Donna Sedey, Dustin Brown, Jessi Westling, Jillian Zerkle, Jim Cowser, Katelyn Castaneda, Lana Mahoney, Michele Thompson, Rachel Collins, Rhianna Brand, Ivonne Chaves, Sheryl Foland, Sherry Mercer, Emily Quarterman-Genoff, Taylor Stokes

Attachments  Behavioral Health Advisory Council Meeting

Meeting records  Transcript

Summary

Jessi Westling (BHAC Chair) and Michele Thompson (BHAC Membership Rep) discussed membership updates. Jessi reviewed the updated strategic plan with its three primary duties aligned with SAMHSA guidance. Key talking points included the upcoming review of Wyoming's mental health block grant, advocacy for people with behavioral health needs, the updated BHAC website presented by Taylor Stokes, agency updates from Sheryl Foland, legislative updates on treatment courts and opioid settlement funds from Cassie Crumpton, and the Meals on Wheels Healthy Healing program shared by Rhianna Brand. The council will vote on the new strategic plan at the next meeting in August 2025.

Details

- **Introductions and Welcome** Jessi Westling, the chair, started the meeting with introductions, asking attendees to share their name, organization, and role on the council ([00:04:41](#)). Various members introduced themselves, representing

different organizations, lived experiences, and regions across Wyoming. Jessi Westling thanked everyone for attending ([00:19:57](#)).

- **Membership Updates** Michele Thompson, the Membership Representative, provided updates on membership renewals and vacancies. Taylor Stokes clarified that Brenda Stout, Ben Kifer, Sheryl Foland, and Wayne Graves had their memberships renewed ([00:20:57](#)). Michele Thompson noted existing family member and advocate vacancies, but the housing vacancy was filled by April Thompson ([00:22:10](#)). Jessi Westling thanked those who renewed and welcomed the new member. Michele Thompson and Taylor Stokes agreed to review the membership list further offline ([00:23:11](#)).
- **Approval of March Meeting Minutes** Jessi Westling asked for any edits to the minutes from the March meeting. Lana Mahoney moved to approve the minutes, and Sheryl Foland seconded the motion ([00:24:10](#)). The minutes were approved without edits.
- **Strategic Plan Update** Jessi Westling provided an update on the strategic plan, which the Governor and the Behavioral Health Division requested to be updated since it had not been done since 2021 ([00:25:18](#)). Jessi Westling shared the three main tasks from the old strategic plan, which align with the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA's) planning council guidance: reviewing the block grant, monitoring and evaluating behavioral health services, and advocating for people with behavioral health needs ([00:26:39](#)). Jessi Westling then presented the new strategic plan, highlighting the Behavioral Health Advisory Council's (BHAC's) mission, vision, and the three primary duties with key initiatives and supporting activities.
 - **Review of Wyoming's Mental Health Block Grant** Jessi Westling detailed the first primary duty: annually reviewing Wyoming's mental health block grant before its submission to SAMHSA in September ([00:30:32](#)). Taylor Stokes will provide the draft application to the council for review, and the council will meet with the state planner to offer suggestions based on statutory criteria ([00:31:40](#)). The behavioral health advisory chair will then submit a letter summarizing the council's review to SAMHSA ([00:33:04](#)).
 - **Advocacy for People with Behavioral Health Needs** Jessi Westling outlined the second primary duty: advocating for individuals with behavioral health needs by staying informed, educating others, and collaborating with advocacy organizations ([00:33:04](#)). Activities include

the council providing education to members, members informing officials, and encouraging advocacy membership, especially people with lived experience ([00:34:26](#)).

- **Monitoring and Evaluating Behavioral Health Services** Jessi Westling explained the third primary duty: monitoring, reviewing, and evaluating the adequacy of behavioral health services in Wyoming. Key initiatives involve the council staying informed about services through updates from the behavioral health division and presentations from public and private providers ([00:35:51](#)).
- **Distribution and Vote on Strategic Plan** Jessi Westling announced that the updated strategic plan would be emailed to the council for review. A vote on the plan is tentatively scheduled for the beginning of the August meeting, which will also involve the block grant review ([00:38:34](#)).
- **Updated BHAC Website** Taylor Stokes presented the updated the BHAC's website, consolidating information from two previous locations into one on the Department of Health's website ([00:39:44](#)). The new site includes upcoming meetings, meeting announcements, minutes, and quick links, aiming for better accessibility ([00:41:10](#)). Jessi Westling noted the website's user-friendly design and the inclusion of the public meeting link ([00:42:24](#)).
- **Agency and Community Updates** Jessi Westling opened the floor for agency and community updates ([00:42:24](#)). Sheryl Foland shared that No More Empty Saddles will launch an initiative next year providing mental health counseling treatment vouchers for uninsured or underinsured individuals in the rodeo community. They will also offer Mental Health First Aid, CALM, and QPR trainings at rodeos and events and will distribute gun locks and medication safes ([00:44:09](#)) ([00:47:50](#)). Jillian Zerkle offered to share resources for medication access ([00:45:34](#)).
- **Legislative Update on Treatment Courts** Cassie Crumpton provided an update on legislation passed in March that moved court diversion programs to the Supreme Court and updated treatment court standards. The changes include shifting the focus from sobriety to recovery, expanding to include mental health courts, and allowing individuals to apply for programs in different jurisdictions ([00:55:13](#)). The language was also updated to use "people with substance use disorders" instead of "substance abusers" ([00:56:22](#)).

- **Opioid Settlement Funds and Narcan Distribution** Cassie Crumpton reported that Sublette County received opioid settlement funds and plans to distribute Narcan at their summer soundcheck concert series as a harm reduction effort ([00:56:22](#)).
- **Meals on Wheels Healthy Healing Program** Rhianna Brand shared information about the Meals on Wheels Healthy Healing program in Laramie County, which provides up to a week of food and safety checks for individuals after a behavioral health stay ([00:58:21](#)). The program is available to anyone regardless of age or income ([00:59:17](#)).
- **Next Meeting and Adjournment** Jessi Westling announced that the next meeting is scheduled for August, with the exact date to be determined based on the block grant application timeline ([00:59:17](#)). The strategic plan vote will also take place at that meeting. Jessi Westling opened the floor for public comment, but none was offered. Sheryl Foland made a motion to adjourn, and Jim Cowser seconded the motion ([01:00:14](#)). The meeting was adjourned .