

Aug 11, 2025

Behavioral Health Advisory Council Meeting

Attended Amanda Bialas April Thompson brentwvr@gmail.com C. I. Chavez
dmsedey@hotmail.com Dustin Brown emily.quarterman-genoff@uhsinc.com
Erica Mathews Jim Cowser Jessi Westling Kristie Gordy
lanamahoney recoverwyoming.org legal@wypanda.com
Thompson, Michele (WYVA Teacher) Rhianna Brand Sheryl Foland Taylor Stokes
zerklejillian@gmail.com Shea Ward Samantha Robbins

Attachments 📎 Behavioral Health Advisory Council Meeting

Meeting records 📄 Transcript

Summary

Jessi Westling welcomed members including Amanda Bialas, Andrew Lemke, April Thompson, Brent Weaver, Claudia I. Chavez, Donna Sedey, Dustin Brown, Emily Genoff, Erica Mathews, Jillian Zerkle, Jim Cowser, Lana Mahoney, Michele Thompson, Rhianna Brand, Samantha Robbins, Shannon Hoffman, Shea Ward, Sheryl Foland, and Taylor Stokes. The council approved the June meeting minutes, with Jim Cowser moving to approve and Claudia Chavez seconding, and also approved the strategic plan, following a motion by Shea Ward and a second by Sheryl Foland. The council unanimously voted to recommend the block grant application draft after a review presented by Taylor Stokes, with Lana Mahoney moving to recommend and Rhianna Brand seconding.

Details

- **Welcome and Introductions** Jessi Westling opened the meeting, welcoming attendees and initiating an icebreaker for members to introduce themselves, their agency, and a final summer activity ([00:00:00](#)). Various members, including Amanda Bialas, Andrew Lemke, April Thompson, Brent Weaver, Claudia I. Chavez, Donna Sedey, Dustin Brown, Emily Genoff, Erica Mathews, Jillian Zerkle, Jim, Lana Mahoney, Michele Thompson, Rhianna Brand, Samantha Robbins, Shannon Hoffman, Shea Ward, Sheryl Foland, and Taylor Stokes, shared their roles and last summer plans ([00:09:42](#)). Jessi Westling concluded the introductions by sharing her own role as chair for the Behavioral Health Advisory Council ([00:23:29](#)).
- **Meeting Minutes Approval** Jessi Westling asked for any edits or changes to the last meeting's minutes from June ([00:06:38](#)). Hearing none, Jim moved to approve the minutes, and Claudia I. Chavez seconded the motion ([00:08:32](#)).
- **Membership Updates** Jessi Westling initiated a discussion on attendance policies and excused absences, indicating that an email to Taylor, herself, and Michele Thompson is sufficient for an excused absence. Michele Thompson explained that after three unexcused absences, the governor's office is notified for a discussion on council membership ([00:26:16](#)).
- **Bylaws Review and Council Vacancies** Jessi Westling highlighted that the council's bylaws need updating to reflect current federal executive orders, specifically the removal of the LGBTQ+ community representative position formerly required by SAMHSA ([00:27:23](#)). She noted that the officer team would lead this update, and mentioned open spots for representatives from the Eastern Shoshone and Northern Arapaho tribes, a potential adolescent spot, and two legislative positions for a senator and a representative ([00:28:36](#)).
- **Strategic Plan Vote** Jessi Westling noted that the draft strategic plan was reviewed at June's meeting and sent out a week prior to this meeting. Shea Ward made a motion to approve the strategic plan, which Sheryl Foland seconded ([00:31:40](#)). The council unanimously voted to adopt the new strategic plan ([00:32:58](#)).
- **Block Grant Application Review** Taylor Stokes presented the lengthy block grant application, offering to review any specific sections or tables members had questions about ([00:32:58](#)) ([00:35:23](#)). Lana Mahoney suggested acknowledging the Department of Health's funding for peer specialist training and certification as a way to address service gaps, which Taylor Stokes appreciated and noted for

inclusion ([00:32:58](#)). Jessi Westling also noted that the council met the requirement of having less than 50% state employees ([00:39:51](#)).

- **Block Grant Application Vote** Following the review, Jessi Westling called for a motion to recommend the block grant application. Lana Mahoney made the motion, and Rhianna Brand seconded it ([00:41:32](#)). The council unanimously voted in favor of recommending the block grant application draft, with Taylor Stokes to prepare a required letter to SAMHSA for Jessi Westling's signature ([00:42:46](#)).
- **Member Updates:**
 - **Better Wyoming** Jessi Westling inquired about Claudia Chavez's work with Better Wyoming ([00:42:46](#)). Claudia described it as a nonpartisan grassroots organization focused on civic engagement, education, and voter engagement, with main offices in Laramie and chapters across the state. She mentioned their focus on healthcare, education, and property taxes, and invited their executive director, Nate Martin, to present to the council in the future ([00:43:54](#)) ([00:47:27](#)).
 - **No More Empty Saddles Initiative** Sheryl Foland shared that No More Empty Saddles is shifting its focus from direct services to helping with medication assistance for the rodeo and agricultural communities ([00:49:24](#)). They plan to provide vouchers to approved pharmacy partners to help with medication costs, particularly for expensive psychotropic medications, as this demographic often lacks insurance ([00:50:43](#)).
 - **Meals on Wheels Services** Rhianna Brand provided an update on Meals on Wheels of Cheyenne, reminding members that they serve all ages and income levels in Laramie County, offering companionship and safety checks in addition to meals. They highlighted the "healthy healing" program for individuals discharged from hospitals, including behavioral health holds, and the "animal meals" program which now also offers up to \$300 in veterinary care for companion animals ([00:53:32](#)). Rhianna Brand also mentioned opportunities for community involvement, such as route sponsorships and a partnership with Laramie County School District for students with developmental disabilities ([00:55:29](#)).
 - **Cody Regional Health's Honor Recovery Event** Jillian Zerkle informed the council about Cody Regional Health's annual "Honor Recovery" event, scheduled for September 4th. She emphasized their need for mental

health and substance use support programs and resources like Narcan, encouraging interested parties to contact her or Michelle Brener ([00:56:25](#)).

- **Meeting Adjournment** Jessi Westling opened the floor for public comment, but there were no comments from Emily Gunoff or Shannon Hoffman. Rhianna Brand made a motion to adjourn the meeting, which was seconded by Claudia Chavez and Sheryl Foland. Jessi Westling then adjourned the meeting, expressing gratitude to all attendees and wishing them a good rest of their summer ([00:58:41](#)).

Suggested next steps

- ☐ Jessi Westling, Taylor Stokes, Lana Mahoney, and Michele Thompson will update the bylaws to align with SAMHSA and executive orders.
- ☐ The group will connect with their local senators or representatives from the Wyoming legislature and help recruit them to the council.

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