Apr 10, 2026

Behavioral Health Advisory Council Meeting

Meeting records Transcript

Summary

Legislative budget review highlighted Behavioral Health Division successes with substantial funding increases and focused bill tracking, followed by an Inseparable organization presentation regarding the effective investment of Rural Health Transformation Program funds.

Legislative Budget Session Review
The legislative budget session adopted Governor Gordon's budget totaling over $10 billion, closely aligning with the original proposal. The Behavioral Health Division secured key exception requests, including $21 million for the Early Intervention Education program.

Senate File 10 Implementation
Tracking 335 filed bills, the BHD successfully saw Senate File 10 approved, which appropriates $5 million for contracts to hold mentally ill detainees. The discussion confirmed that this initiative aims to implement restorative care before state hospitalization, utilizing existing successful county contracts.

Rural Health Funds Investment
Inseparable presented proposals for investing the $25 million in Rural Health Transformation Program funds, focusing on strengthening the 988

system and expanding the behavioral health workforce. Recommendations included joining national licensing compacts and investing in alternative transportation for mental health emergencies.

Next steps

- ☐ [Jim] Update Attendance List: Forward updated membership attendance list to Shay Ward after meeting concludes.
- ☐ [Kodi Johnson] Distribute Presentation: Share legislative budget session presentation slides with Taylor for distribution to attendees.
- ☐ [Kodi Johnson] Monitor Guardianship Bill: Watch for House Bill 101 regarding guardianship during next years session. Prepare necessary documentation and division positioning for discussion.
- ☐ [Emily Genoff] Share Contact Information: Provide contact information, including email and phone number, in the chat. Use for follow-up questions about Senate File 10 pilot programs.
- ☐ [Marianne Gibson] Send Resources: Share presentation slides and resources, including Montana patient-centered mental health program link.
- ☐ [Katelyn Castañeda] Share Shane Info: Put Shane Schulz contact information in the chat for accessibility by attendees.

Details

- **Member Introductions and Role Confirmation**: The meeting began with a round of introductions, noting new and returning participants and their current roles, including Dustin Brown who previously served as the Department of Education representative and Brent Weaver, an advocate working as a peer support navigator at Sheridan Memorial Hospital. Donna Sedey announced they will not be renewing their membership, making that consumer representative position open for new nominees. Shay Ward was confirmed as the membership chair (00:02:41).

- **Legislative Budget Session Overview Presentation**: Kodi Johnson from the Department of Health Human Services presented an overview of the legislative budget session, noting that this session was busy with many bills and discussions on budget cuts (00:05:53). Ultimately, Governor Gordon's budget was adopted, totaling a little over $10 billion, which Kodi Johnson shared was close to the original proposal (00:07:24) (00:11:15).
- **Behavioral Health Division (BHD) Budget Successes**: BHD was successful in receiving the exception requests they asked for, including the Early Intervention Education (EIE) program exception of about $21 million to support early child development. A major highlight was the $5 million appropriation for Senate File 10, focused on contracts for holding mentally ill detainees, which received solid, across-the-board support (00:08:40) (00:11:15).
- **Legislative Bill Tracking and Impact**: Kodi Johnson detailed the process of tracking 335 bills filed during the session, with 114 bills passing both chambers. BHD submitted bill reviews on five bills to assess their impact on programs, coordinating with program managers to provide feedback to the director's office (00:10:01). The governor signed the budget bill on March 5th, with time for overrides occurring on March 6th (00:11:15).
- **Specific Bills Tracked by BHD**: BHD tracked several specific bills, including Senate File 10, which was approved and is expected to have a medium impact on behavioral health and county detention facilities (00:11:15). Senate File 23, which passed, expands the list of those who can perform involuntary hospitalization exams and is expected to have a low positive impact by potentially speeding up patient assessment timelines. Other tracked bills included House Bill 69, which passed to transfer vacant land at a Lander facility to DOT, and the perpetually-tracked guardianship House Bill 101, which died in committee but is anticipated to reappear (00:12:44).
- **Senate File 10 Implementation Discussion**: Jessi Westling inquired about the details of Senate File 10, which Jim explained aims to implement restorative care before detainees go to the state hospital to promote recovery within the community (00:17:18). Emily Genoff added that Wyoming Behavioral Institute has successfully contracted with Laramie County for this service for a couple of years and recently added a second small county, noting the flexibility to refer individuals who are profoundly mentally ill even without a Title 7 commitment. Jim encouraged members to reach out to Emily Genoff for insights into implementing similar local agreements, emphasizing the importance of utilizing existing proof of concept for expediency (00:19:47).

- **Inseparable Organization Presentation**: Katelyn Castañeda introduced Marianne Gibson from Inseparable, a national mental health advocacy organization that works to improve mental health policy (00:22:09). Shane Schulz stated that Inseparable is focused on breaking down the stigmatization and barriers associated with mental health (00:24:15). Marianne Gibson, the Vice President of Youth, Crisis, and Workforce Policy, explained that Inseparable was founded on the principle that mental health is inseparable from physical health, driving transformative change at federal and state levels through bipartisan policy engagement (00:25:26).
- **Inseparable's Policy Pillars and State Work**: Inseparable's work is driven by four policy pillars: improving youth mental health, building a crisis response system focused on recovery, ensuring reliable and affordable access to care, and strengthening the mental health workforce (00:26:42). Marianne Gibson noted the organization's recent milestone of 100 state policy wins, including expanding the behavioral health workforce and strengthening insurance coverage. They prioritize partnering with community-level state partners to amplify messages and push state-level policy work (00:27:37).
- **Recommendations for Rural Health Transformation Program Funds**: Inseparable's presentation focused on how Wyoming could invest its $25 million from the first year of the five-year CMS Rural Health Transformation Program. They proposed three main areas for investment: strengthening the 988 system, enhancing care coordination for crisis services, and expanding workforce capacity (00:29:54).
- **Investing in 988 and Alternative Transportation**: Investing further in the 988 trust fund would protect the system, which currently has a 90% in-state answer rate, from budget volatility. Marianne Gibson also recommended investing in a behavioral health warmline for people with lower acuity needs to alleviate strain on crisis responders (00:31:10). Additionally, funds could support alternative transportation for people experiencing mental health emergencies, citing Oklahoma's successful "Ride Care" program, which saves law enforcement time and offers a more dignified option for the person in crisis (00:32:35) (00:41:59).
- **Crisis Coordination and Workforce Recommendations**: Inseparable recommended evaluating and potentially scaling the existing AVL e-care program, which connects law enforcement with mental health providers in five counties, and potentially expanding it to include other providers like EMS (00:33:39). Workforce recommendations included continuing to look at joining national behavioral health licensing compacts, such as the social work and

school psychologist compacts, which are helpful for rural areas (00:34:53). They also suggested investing funds to train primary care clinicians to better support people with behavioral health needs, citing the Montana Patient Centered Mental Health and Primary Care Program as an innovative model (00:36:06).

- **Streamlining Employment Pathways for Clinicians**: Inseparable advised resurrecting a previous working group focused on streamlining behavioral health credentials to align curriculum and training with viable employment opportunities in Wyoming. This effort would ensure that people graduating with credentials are connected to available jobs and that credentialed individuals can bill and be reimbursed for services (00:37:22) (00:44:30).
- **Recover Wyoming's Gambling Peer Support Services**: Recover Wyoming shared that they have begun providing peer support for gambling use disorders in partnership with Cheyenne Regional Medical Center, recognizing a high rate of co-occurring substance use and gambling disorders (00:47:31). They noted that peer specialists can relate to feelings of hopelessness even without personal experience with problematic gambling. Recover Wyoming hopes to establish a monthly statewide virtual meeting for people struggling with problematic gambling (00:48:53).
- **External Resource for Gambling Training**: Jim recommended that Recover Wyoming utilize Acorn, a group out of Oregon, which offers a free online training institute for gambling services, including technical assistance and online Q&A sessions. The training has been a useful curriculum and is seen as an important resource given the increasing issue of problematic gambling (00:48:53).
- **Upcoming Membership Renewal and Adjournment**: Anemoi DoP mentioned they need to reapply for membership and are awaiting a letter of recommendation. Following a brief discussion on public comment, the meeting was adjourned with a motion from NAMI Wyoming, seconded by Christin Covello (00:50:14).