

Alabama Department of Mental Health Board of Trustees Meeting

In-Person / Virtual

Friday, December 13, 2024

10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

DD Conference Room

I. Call to Order

Vice Chair, Donna Foster, called the meeting to order at 10:06 a.m.

II. Roll Call – Commissioner Kimberly Boswell, Board Secretary

Trustees Present:

Dave White (for Governor Kay Ivey)

Secretary Commissioner Kimberly Boswell

Dr. Cynthia Bisbee

William “Pete” Cobb

Rodney Barnes

Leslie Sanders

Judge Christopher Hughes

Vice Chair Donna Foster

Colin Harris (new rep for District 7)

Trustees Absent:

Larry Bailey

Judge Sherri Friday

Dr. Sandra Parker

Jess Skaggs (for Lt Governor Will Ainsworth)

Jade Wagner (for Speaker Nathaniel Ledbetter)

Interested Parties Present:

Collier Tynes, Chief of Staff (presenting)

LaVonda Blair, Assoc Commissioner for Administration (presenting)

Malissa Valdes, Director of Public Information

Amy Warren, Director of Community Programs for the Division of Developmental Disabilities

Tommy Klinner, Chief Legal Counsel

Dr. Christine Rembert (presenting), Director of Facility Services

Mary Ogden, Mental Health Administrative Assistant for the Commissioner

Alander Rocher, reporter for The Alabama Reflector

III. Review and Approval of the Agenda – Vice Chair Donna Foster

Ms. Foster asked if there were additions to the agenda. There were none. Pete Cobb motioned to accept as written; seconded by Rodney Barnes. The motion to approve was passed without discussion. (Attachment 1)

IV. Review of the May and August BOT Minutes – Vice Chair Donna Foster

Ms. Foster asked if there were additions to the minutes for May 10, 2024. There were none. Ms. Foster asked if there were additions to the minutes for August 16, 2024. There were none. Pete Cobb motioned to accept both meeting minutes as written, which was seconded by Dr. Bisbee. The motion to approve was passed without discussion. (Attachment 2)

V. Commissioner’s Report – Commissioner Kimberly Boswell

- Commissioner Boswell introduced a new member, Colin Harris. Donna Foster was moved to her correct district (District 4) and Colin is our new representative for District 7 in Birmingham. She also welcomed her new ASA, Mary Ogden, to the meeting.
- The Commissioner reviewed the budget requests for 2025 (Attachment 3).

Highlights:

- Child & Family Services
 - Asking for Education Trust Funds (ETF) for the School-Based Mental Health Services to reach the ultimate goal of having a mental health therapist in each school system in Alabama (currently 109 of 140).
 - Working with Gateway Family & Childhood Services in Birmingham on the Children's Services Pilot Project to help with trauma-based behavioral issues, which are commonly mislabeled as mental health issues. We are asking for funds to help pilot the "Never Look Away" project. We'd like to see this method be part of our certification process because we feel very strongly that this skillset is critical when working with kids. At the budget meeting, it was suggested to request this as an ETF supplement appropriation.
- Crisis Care Services & Jail and Hospital Diversion Programs
 - We've requested funding to reach our goal of having Crisis Services in all 67 counties; currently we have them in 22 counties. We have five (5) crisis centers open now, the sixth opening in Dothan on January 7th. We need 11 crisis centers to cover the state with those services.
 - We also want Stepping-Up in all 67 counties, which is basically putting a case manager in a jail to screen and identify individuals with mental health and substance use disorders. 47 counties on board right now (includes Tuscaloosa).
 - You've previously heard DD Associate Commissioner Kathy Sawyer speak about the complex cases we're seeing of individuals with Intellectual Disabilities, as well as a Mental Health diagnosis. Needing crisis services for those individuals, as well as medically fragile individuals having complex medical needs, the DD Emergency Crisis Services and Intermediate Care Facilities (ICF) are designed to address those issues.
- Civil Commitment & Residential Services
 - We haven't asked for money for Civil Commitment Beds in the last 15 years. A report out of the Advocacy Treatment Centers says we should have a minimum of 30 civil commitment beds per 100,000 population – Alabama has 14. We need funding to increase the number of new civil commitment beds, as well as raising the current residential programs and beds to a sustainable funding level. We work with community hospitals that are designated mental health facilities. Medicaid pays \$850/day (we're paying between \$400-600). We'd like to increase our rate to the Medicaid rate.
- Developmental Disability Services
 - We've been trying address the residential rates over the last year. Although we received an increase recently, we've seen a need for additional funding to recalibrate the residential rate.
 - Adult Day Habilitation Services - These programs have been serving individuals for many years and we want to continue to fund state programs that are not in compliance with HCBS.
 - Nurses are hard to find and we're asking for an increase to bring the rate up for the Nurse Delegation Program.
- Substance Use Services
 - Requesting funding to increase capacity for Medically Managed Detox Treatment Providers, we simply do not have enough detox beds in the state. We are funding Wellstone out of the Opioid Settlement funds, but we need to increase the number of detox beds.
 - We have Medicaid Providers being funded by the Opioid Settlement to provide match for those programs, but the programs run out of match for Medicaid-eligible

people in June. This increase in funding will help us have more substance use providers who are providing Medicaid-eligible services.

The General Fund does not look great this year.

GF \$68,591,827

ETF \$ 4,600,000

Total \$73,191,827

- We will be attending the 3rd Veterans Mental Health Steering Committee Meeting on 12/18/24. We want to provide the landscape of behavioral health services in the state, as well as a presentation on Veterans Employment First for veterans transitioning back into the community.

Dave White asked about substantial news from the Opioid Settlement meeting. The commissioner responded that they reallocated \$2.2 million to treatment services in the collaboration we're doing with the Alabama Association of County Commissions. They have agreed to match funds through local and city government. Dave asked when the next allocation tranche will be debated and how much will/we'll get; this year was \$28 million. Commissioner stated tentatively in January. At the Opioid Commission meeting Nathan Wilson presented on Drug Courts and asked for \$9 million to do national standards and best practices for all the accountability courts (total \$14 million). They have \$3 million out of the general fund now; we had \$1 million in our budget for specialty courts and we're going to transfer to them (we see now that money needs to go to their bucket not ours), so that leaves \$9 million. Not sure what the Administrative Office of Courts (AOC) will do with it but expect some really innovated things.

In addition, the AUM School of Pharmacy presented on Education Programs in schools.

VI. Divisional Reports

A. Chief Of Staff Report – Collier Tynes (Attachment 4)

- On November 1st, 2024, Commissioner Boswell submitted the Department's 2025 Legislative Agenda to the Governor's Office, as requested, which was supported by the ADMH Office of Legislative and Constituent Affairs. There are three anticipated bills that we will be watching closely:
 1. The Houston Hunter Act will allow gun owners to store their guns safely in gun store safes.
 2. Tax Credit for gun safety equipment, such as safes and gunlocks.
 3. Cell phone restriction Supported by ALSDE, which legislatures are already engaged in discussion.
- In October we held a legislative tour of Taylor Hardin's Secure Medical Facility. We received great feedback. There was \$83 million appropriated to the new Taylor Hardin Wing, and they were happy to see how impactful the funding is for improving care.
- The next Veterans Mental Health Steering Committee will be on December 18th, where we will develop a comprehensive plan that addresses the unique behavioral health needs of Alabama Veterans, as listed in the attached report.

B. Division of MHSU – Dr. Rembert for Nicole Walden, Assoc Commissioner (Attch 5)

Dr. Rembert spoke about a few highlights from the attached report.

- Child and Family Services awarded SAMHSA Strategic Framework Partnership PSF Grant which addresses marijuana use and negative consequences young adults (18-25yrs). (\$1.25 mil for five (5) years).
- Taylor Hardin held a ribbon cutting ceremony celebrating the expansion completion on October 16th.

- The MI Community Programs reports the First Episode Program (FEP) completed program development to expand the FEP Mobile team into Washington County, as well as development of a new FEP Team in Baldwin County. Both will be operational in FY25.
 - The Stepping-Up program has expanded from 17 to 47 counties beginning October 1st, 2024. Recently held a Stepping-Up Summit on December 3rd and 4th, 2024.
- C. Division of Developmental Disabilities – Kathy Sawyer, Assoc Commissioner**
AC Sawyer was not present. There are no highlights, but her report is attached. (Atch 6)
- D. Division of Administration – LaVonda Blair, Assoc Commissioner**
AC Blair shared highlights of the workforce initiative (Atch 7a and PowerPoint Atch 7b).
- The workforce initiative was implemented to stabilize ADMH facility staffing has seen a 24.5% increase since June 2022. As of September 2024, facility staffing is 856, which includes full and part time employees, but not contract employees.
 - The In-Hire Rate is in the \$5-10 range, and we can now offer more competitive salaries. We’ve established a pipeline from college for direct hires. The plan is to recruit highly valued staff. Commissioner Boswell stated she is grateful for the funding and retention is better. Taylor Hardin’s retention is still low, but the reno looks great and less like working in a prison. We hope by this time next year we’ll see improvement.
- E. Office of Public Information – Malissa Valdes, Public Information Officer**
Malissa shared highlights of her report (Attachment 8).
- Wrapped up a WSFA series, “Under Pressure”, an expose’ of mental health topics airing since September. We ended this series with a live phone bank for individuals to call in with questions and we offered resource needs hosted by partners and providers of the ADMH.
 - We’ve submitted our “Mental Health Matters” license plate design to the Dept of Revenue. We must obtain 1,000 pre-orders by 12/31/25 to have the plate produced.
 - The October Staff Conference was great. We plan to repeat every two (2) years.
- F. Board/Stakeholder Discussion – no discussion.**

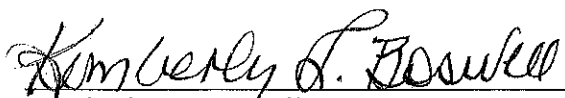
VII. Other Business

Dr. Bisbee spoke on the success of Operation Santa Claus and thanked the ADMH employees. ADMH had 75 cards, and the operation served over 400 consumers in group homes and target case management. She was greatly appreciative.

VIII. Adjourned

There being no further business before the board, the meeting adjourned at 10:55 a.m. The Board of Trustee Meeting dates for next year will be distributed via email.

Respectfully Submitted:



 Kimberly G. Boswell
 Secretary of the Board and Commissioner



 Date

Donna Foster

 Donna Foster
 Vice Chair of the Board

02/14/2025

 Date