



Niagara County Community Services Board
 Minutes
 Regular Meeting
 Date: Monday – January 26, 2026
 Time: 6:00 pm

LOCATION: Niagara County Department of Mental Health – 475 South Transit Street, Ste. 500
Lockport, NY 14094

ATTENDANCE:

	PRESENT	EXCUSED
Dr. Annette Dobrasz, Board President	<i>X - virtual</i>	
Robin Stevens, 1 st Board VP, 1 st Term	<i>X - virtual</i>	
Kelly Biehls, 2 nd Board VP, 1 st Term	<i>X - virtual</i>	
Stephanie Donovan, Board Member	<i>X - virtual</i>	
Ronald Barstys, PhD, Board Member	<i>X - virtual</i>	
Suzanne Diez, Board Member	<i>X - virtual</i>	
Richard Abbott (Leg.), Board Member	<i>X - virtual</i>	
Betsy Farkas, Board Member		X
Donald Jablonski, Board Member		X
<u>Niagara County Mental Health Administration</u>		
Laura Kelemen, LCSW-R, NCDMH Director	X	
Myrla Gibbons Doxey, LMFT, NCDMH Deputy Director	X	
Kimberly Hubert-Bickel, NCDMH Confidential Assistant		X
Tracey Zayac, Account Clerical III (covering for Kim H.-B.)	X	
Joe Chelales, Recovery Center of Niagara - Guest	X	

1) Dr. Annette Dobrasz, Board President, called the Community Services Board (CSB) Meeting to order at 6:07 PM.

2) Meeting Minutes:

- a. Robin Stevens motioned to approve the December 1, 2025 Minutes as presented, Kelly Biehls seconded the motion; the Minutes were unanimously approved by the Board.
- b. Informational – December 11, 2025 CSB Individual Subcommittee Meeting Minutes draft. Deputy Director, Myrla Gibbons Doxey provided clarification / discussion regarding items discussed at those individual meetings. Robin Stevens will provide flyer for posting for upcoming events and discussed logistics for access and inclusion for individuals with mobility impairments.
 - Robin Stevens suggested bringing Grief Support to Niagara County like there is for Erie County as this would be very beneficial for the community. Deputy Director Gibbons Doxey noted there is a newer Grief Center established in Tonawanda bordering Niagara County; she can assist in coordinating a potential presentation from the entity on their services and ways in which they may be able to serve in Niagara County.

3) Membership Review

a. Membership Review –

- New Applications: Presented application for James Muehlbauer, retired NT police lieutenant, who was recommended to the CSB by Legislator Andres. CSB typical process was not followed through what appeared to have been communication issues, as the Legislature has already done the formal appointment at the December 9th 2025 meeting and has been sworn in. Dr. Dobrasz spoke with him, discussed the board and its roles and functions. She expressed no concerns with his application. Board discussed how to proceed in these unusual circumstances. Board recommended formal vote – as this most closely mirrors our normal course of action. Board took a formal vote. Approved to accept James Muehlbauer as a new member to the Community Services Board. Motion approved by Robin Stevens and Kelly Biehls seconded. Unanimously approved by the Board. Dr. Dobrasz will send him a formal welcome letter inviting him to our next CSB meeting.
- Other discussion related to the above – Director Kelemen reiterated the official process for review of new Board members. Dr. Barstys asked about future applications and the need to avoid this in the future. Director Kelemen will check ByLaws and other documents to see if there is a formalized process. Dr. Dobrasz reinforced that there needs to be a formal written process.

b. Sub-committee Review –

- 2026 CSB Subcommittee Meeting Schedule – Per Director Kelemen, we have not received any applications related to outreach completed late 2025. One application for Laura Lloyd, MH Subcommittee had been sent over to the Legislature Clerk – it was not voted on during the January meetings. Director Kelemen will follow up with Legislative Clerk on this prior to next meeting. Robin Stevens will follow up with tentative subcommittee member. Per Deputy Director Gibbons Doxey, Confidential Assistant, Kim Hubert-Bickel did reach out to two applicants but has not heard back from them at this time.
- Discussed CSB leadership for each of the three subcommittees, the voluntary nature of individual CSB member participating as the meetings occur during business hours. Robin Stevens offered to be Board representative for Mental Health Subcommittee. Board agreed that they would ask James Muehlbauer to join MH Subcommittee also as he indicated interest on his member application that he would choose to serve for #1 – Mental Health Subcommittee. Deputy Director Gibbons Doxey reviewed some tentative dates in the near future for individual subcommittee and joint subcommittee meetings and will send dates to Board to get on calendars.

4) Director's Report

➤ **Correspondence – Review by Director:**

1. Letters, Memorandums & E-mails:

- Correspondence listed on separate page, attached - there were no questions from CSB members.

➤ ***Certificate of Need (CON) / Prior Approval Reviews (PAR)**

***CON** - Recovery Center of Niagara: Application for 12- swing beds between medically supervised and inpatient levels of care. Joe Chelales attended the CSB Meeting to answer questions for Board Members. Mr. Chelales spoke on the rationale and need for swing beds, Mr. Chelales explained he lack of waiting list data as he does not believe in waiting lists with the current crisis level of care, he wants to treat individuals at time of need and will refer elsewhere if needed. Census is roughly between 75-85 due to Practitioners, does not want to overburden current staff. They have recently hired additional staff and will be filling currently available but vacant beds. Swing beds would allow Recovery Center to meet need that arises, for example if they get a lot of detox referrals – swing beds would allow the admission even if detox specific beds are full. Anticipate a greater need moving forward. Fidelis (one of the larger Medicaid managed care companies) has stated that it will no longer pay for inpatient treatment out of state. So, people who right now go to White Deer Run in PA and other similar facilities will be referred in state. Mr. Chelales also discussed OASAS' intention to combine 816 and 818 services. Mr. Chelales indicated they are seeing an increase in referrals and admission, for example 14 intakes on the board for tomorrow, with 2 planned discharges. Discussed additional questions board had previously asked about funding. Detox pays about \$100/day more than inpatient. Detox 5-7 days is \$475/day, Niagara County inpatient Medicaid is \$386/day. Medical part for detox is more intensive, thus more expense. There will be separate units for swing beds for male and female patients. There will always be separate male / female beds, may go to groups together but otherwise are separated. Have over 25 women in building right now. Seeing increase in requests for female beds as well. Motion to approve CON and prepare Letter of Support, Kelly Biehls, Stephanie Donovan seconded motion. Board unanimously approved.

***EzPar** – None at this time

Informational –

- New View Alliance / Gateway / New Directions Merger: Per Laura Kelemen, received correspondence of three separate entities are moving forward with merger. Gateway and New Directions will merge into New View Alliance. Anticipate no reduction in services provided.
- Catholic Charities Monsignor Carr Institute Lockport site relocation: Administrative action to comment on, they are currently in Bewley Building but are planning to relocate to 81 Walnut Street where Save the Michaels originated on the corner of Pine and Walnut Streets. There is some build out they need to do to make the offices conducive for counseling services for children and families. Legislator Abbott gave some input on status of Bewley Building project – which remains uncertain – particularly around specifics plans and timeframes. A lot of tenants have already moved out of the building.
- Avi Israel has retired from Save the Michaels. The individual replacing Avi would like to meet with NCDMH regarding grant funds and working together.

- **Corporate Compliance** – No new business, Deputy Director Myrla Gibbons Doxey asked if any board members had any questions to review in an Executive Session regarding 4th quarter compliance report provided via email in December 2025. Board did not have any questions.

Program/Systems Updates

- Oxford House – they have identified a landlord and working thru the process for additional Oxford House in Lockport for women and children.
- Federal Grants and Actions – People reached out relating to notifications that went out suddenly where organizations being notified on Thursday that Federal grants were being rescinded and immediately losing

all of their funding, by Tuesday notification sent out rescinding that statement. None of our grants were impacted by this. Many grants 3-4 year cycle are coming up this Spring have not been announced yet.

- NCDMH Department 2026 Goals – Director Kelemen shared the document she put together showing the 2025 Accomplishments and 2026 Goals. Document was attached to e-mail with CSB meeting documents.
- Director Kelemen provided information related to OASAS withholding \$358,000 from Northpointe’s 2025 advances due to an error on Northpointe Council’s 2022 CFR that made it appear that Northpointe was underspent in 2022 and owed that money back to OASAS. Northpointe has since corrected their 2022 CFR to properly reflect all funds were spent. After considerable discussion with OASAS, OASAS provided a “temporary restoration of the 2025 funds” so that their 2025 contractual amounts could be fulfilled. Will continue to monitor.

5) President’s Report - No new business.

6) Executive Session – No Executive Session needed.

7) Additional Notes – None at this time.

8) Meeting Adjournment

Dr. Barstys motioned to adjourn the meeting; Rick Abbott seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned at 7:34 pm.

Next CSB Meeting Date: February 23, 2026

Future CSB Meeting Date: March 16, 2026 – may need to look for alternate date

***Voting Items**

Distributed Items at Meeting:

- a. Agenda
- b. *CSB Draft Meeting Minutes for December 1, 2025
- c. Individual Subcommittee Planning Meeting Minutes – December 11, 2025
- d. NCDMH 2025 Accomplishments and 2026 Goals
- e. Current 2025 CSB Membership Roster

Community Services Board Webex Meeting Recording can be viewed at
<https://niagaracounty.webex.com/niagaracounty/ldr.php?RCID=94f5627e540459522b9aa065f1b4e8e6>
Password: 9ZthgsPp