



Niagara County Community Services Board
Minutes
Regular Meeting
Date: Monday – September 15, 2025
Time: 6:00 pm

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

ATTENDANCE:

	PRESENT	EXCUSED
Burt Marshall, Board President	X	
Annette Dobrasz, EdD, 1 st Board VP	X	
Stephanie Donovan, 2 nd Board VP	X	
Thomas Gerbasi, MD, Board Member		X
Candace Butcher, Board Member		X
Ronald Barstys, PhD, Board Member	X	
Suzanne Diez, Board Member		X
Richard Abbott, Board Member	X	
Betsy Farkas, Board Member		X
Donald Jablonski, Board Member		X
Rev. Francis Kadryna, Board Member		X
Robin Stevens, Board Member	X	
Kelly Biehls, 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	
Cindi Wilkins, NCDMH Fiscal Administrator	X	
Kimberly Hubert-Bickel, NCDMH Confidential Assistant	X	

1) Burt Marshall, Board President, called the Community Services Board (CSB) Meeting to order at 6:01 PM.

Director Kelemen provided the Board a tour of the new administrative office and Lockport Clinic space at 475 S. Transit St., Lockport, NY.

2) Meeting Minutes

A. Dr. Annette Dobrasz motioned to approve the June 16, 2025 Minutes as presented, Stephanie Donovan seconded the motion; the minutes were unanimously approved by the Board.

3) Membership Review

A. Membership Review – No changes to general membership

Burt Marshall, Board President, Thomas Gerbasi, MD, Board Member and Candace Butcher, Board Member terms end this year. Members may take one year off prior to seeking to re-join the board presuming vacancies.

Board encouraged to identify potential members with leadership qualities, Niagara County residency, and connections to mental health, (lived experience or family connection), substance use disorder, and or I/DD. Individuals with lived experience and/or family experience bring a unique perspective and can be recommended.

Dr. Ronald Barstys asked if members could remain without a break if unable to identify additional candidates. Director Kelemen clarified the board is not required to maintain 15 members, only up to 15.

Robin Stevens suggested possible candidates; members asked to continue sharing names.

B. Sub-committee Review –

Membership Applications Reviewed:

Jeff Paterson (Developmental Disabilities Subcommittee)

Motion: Dr. Ronald Barstys

Second: Dr. Annette Dobrasz

Approved unanimously.

Cynthia Curione (Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Subcommittee)

Introduction and application presented by Dr. Annette.

Motion: Dr. Annette Dobrasz

Second: Dr. Ronald Barstys Approved unanimously.

Applications to be forwarded to Legislature (review expected in October).

4) Director's Report

- Director Kelemen noted highlighted Correspondences since last meeting.
 - Letters, Memorandums & E-mails: Correspondence listed on separate page, attached - there were no questions from CSB members.
 - Coordination with Kevin Schuler, Niagara County Public Information Officer, on planning an open house and ribbon cutting for the new Lockport location. A date to be determined.

***CON** – Incomplete for Board Review – **Recovery Center of Niagara** – Director Kelemen reports the agency submitted a proposal to use ‘swing beds’ for detox/inpatient services. However, the agency has not submitted any monthly reporting data to the LGU to date for 2025 despite outreach from Planning for oversight and monitoring of the programs’ data including but not limited to waitlists, capacity, etc. Data needed, not only for LGU oversight and monitoring responsibilities, but to assist with determining demonstrated need for this proposal. Additional follow up from the Planning team has occurred. Not ready for Board review.

Discussion: R. Abbott stated an awareness of increased ambulance calls to the Recovery Center of Niagara; topic flagged for future discussion.

*** EzPar** – No new business

Informational – Director, Laura Kelemen and Deputy Director, Myrla Gibbons Doxey reviewed:

- **Beacon Center EZPAR #4468 application** update to establish a NYS OMH MHOTRS clinic in Niagara Falls, NY is effective 7/14/25.
- **BestSelf Behavioral Health EZPAR application updates:**
 - EZPAR #4214 To establish a school-based satellite clinic in the North Tonawanda School District at Spruce Elementary is conditionally approved 8/27/25.
 - EZPAR #4329 To establish a school-based satellite clinic in the Niagara Falls School District at Cataract Elementary is conditionally approved 9/15/25.
 - EZPAR #4319 To establish a school-based satellite clinic in the Niagara Falls School District High School is effective 9/12/25.
 - EZPAR #4258 To establish a school-based satellite clinic in the Lockport City School District Aaron Mossell Junior High School is effective 9/5/25.
- **BestSelf Behavioral Health Administrative Action update:**
 - AA# 11223 Wheatfield Pediatrics Satellite clinic closure effective 7/15/25.
- **BestSelf Behavioral Health Change Request** – Specialty Mental Health Care Management Program Closure at 2201 Pine Avenue, Niagara Falls, NY effective 5/30/25 as program no longer operating out of this location. Services continue to be provided to Niagara County residents under the program code in Erie County as they are operating out of the Erie County care management program office.
- **Niagara County Department of Mental Health**
 - EZPAR #4473 application update to establish a school-based satellite clinic in the Lockport City School District High School –approval pending.
 - Administrative Action will be submitted to close the satellite clinic office located at Dr. Laurri's practice in Niagara Falls due to ongoing low referral volume that does not meet contractual obligations by the practice. Attempts made by Clinic staff to increase referrals without success. Contract termination in process with the assistance of the County Attorney's Office.
- **Transitional Services Inc. Change Request** - Specialty Mental Health Care Management Program Closure effective 6/30/24. Delay submission to OMH and notification to LGU; approved effective 6/23/25. TSI informed the LGU that the last Niagara County client served was in May 2023. Reason for program closure cited as lack of program viability.

Department Annual Report

Presented by Fiscal Administrator Cindi Wilkins.

Report included CSB and subcommittee membership, Department staffing changes, direct services summary, accomplishments (workforce stabilization, new EHR, opioid response, compliance updates), community outreach, staff development, and cost/revenue analysis.

Discussion:

- Stephanie Donovan inquired about benchmarking costs over time.
- Dr. Ronald Barstys inquired about how surplus funds are used by agencies without deficits.

Robin Stevens motioned to accept the report as presented, Dr. Annette Dobraz seconded the motion; the report was unanimously accepted by the Board.

Additional Discussion:

AI Policy Development: County exploring voluntary use of transcription software for client/therapist sessions. Participation will be voluntary for both provider and client.

2025 Department Budget

Presented by Fiscal Administrator Cindi Wilkins. Highlights shared; only notable change is continued increase in cost of CPL 730 Competency Restorations. Resolutions to increase fund related to CPL 730s for 2025 is expected tomorrow at the monthly meeting of the Niagara County Legislature.

Corporate Compliance

Deputy Director, Myrla Gibbons Doxey reviewed updates and revisions to the Compliance Plan which was distributed. Highlighted updates to administrative address change, email addresses changed from .com to .gov and clarified the positions that are members of the Compliance Committee to whom Compliance reports can be made.

The updated plan will be posted to the NCDMH webpage and made available to all affected individuals.

The CSB accepted these changes.

Program/Systems Updates

- **Community Missions Inc. Canal View Renovations Project:** Director Kelemen provided an update on this long-term capital improvement project. The program is transitioning from double to single room occupancy. Architectural drawings underway. Project expected to start March 2026, pending full state and local approvals. Relocation planning required. Department provided a letter of Prior Consult. An EZPAR will be submitted by CMI when the state and local permits are received.
- **Niagara County Suicide Prevention Month:** Deputy Director Gibbons Doxey provided highlights of several activities occurring this month organized by the Niagara County Suicide Prevention Coalition including the following:
 - Third Year of the “You Matter” Coffee sleeve campaign. Participation expanded beyond coffee stops and shops this year and further into the rural communities.
 - Week Long Lunch & Learn sessions held last week Monday – Thursday with various topics, ending in an in-person Summit with Garra Lloyd-Lester from the Suicide Prevention Center of NY as the Keynote Speaker.
 - Flag raisings at Newfane High School and Barker School District with student participation; seeking an additional school to participate.
- **Hope Speaks, Niagara:** Director Kelemen shared that the Department submitted a presentation for the 2026 National Council Conference in Denver, CO highlighting the innovative work the Department in partnership with others is doing for suicide prevention efforts.
- **Niagara/Orleans Trauma, Illness & Grief (TIG):** Deputy Director Doxey provided an update on TIG with 170 school and department staff being trained; expansion continues as another cohort of 50+ is scheduled to begin on 9/19/25. CLPS Threat and Behavioral Assessment Solution discussed as it is being adopted by several local districts to assist with organizing and coordinating threat and behavioral assessments.

5) President’s Report – No new business

6) Executive Session – Executive Session began at 7:47pm, ending at 8:05pm for NCDMH Third Quarter 2025 Compliance Program Report Out.

Dr. Annette Dobrasz motioned to begin the session; Stephanie Donovan seconded the motion. The session began at 7:47 pm.

Dr. Annette Dobrasz motioned to adjourn the session; Stephanie Donovan seconded the motion. The session adjourned at 8:05pm.

7) Meeting Adjournment

Dr. Annette Dobrasz motioned to adjourn the meeting; Stephanie Donovan seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned at 8:08pm.

Next CSB Meeting Date: Monday, October 20, 2025 at 6:00 pm

***voting items**

Distributed Items at Meeting:

- A. Agenda
- B. *CSB Draft Meeting Minutes for June 16, 2025
- C. Current 2025 CSB Membership Roster

Niagara County Community Services Board
Correspondence Listing, Agenda Item 4-1 - Director's Report
Meeting Date & Time: Monday, September 15, 2025 at 6:00 pm

A. Niagara County Community Services Board Meeting Notices:

- 1. Niagara County Community Services Board Monday, September 15, 2025 Meeting Notice - dated, September 8, 2025.
- 2. Notifications to two County Newspapers regarding September 18, 2025 Meeting scheduling Notice - dated, September 8, 2025.

- B. Correspondence Gina Bae, Director, Office of Mental Health, to Kristin Clamp, Director New View Alliance, Inc., regarding Administrative Action # 10866: Add youth peer support services., dated June 10, 2025.
- C. Correspondence from Kate Harlock, Licensing Director, Office of Mental Health, to Laura J. Kelemen, NCDMH Director, regarding Current and Valid Operating Certificates, dated June 20, 2025.
- D. Correspondence from Gina Bae, Director, Office of Mental Health, to Joseph Ruffolo, President/CEO, NFMMC, regarding Operating Certificate NFMMC Inpatient Program, dated June 25, 2025.
- E. Correspondence from Jennifer Lauer, Contract Specialist, State Comptroller's Office, to Nathalene Mosley, CFO, Community Missions regarding Grant Contract, dated July 28, 2025.
- F. Correspondence from Dena Holmes, Director, OASAS, to Erin DiGirolamo, CEO, Horizon Health Services, regarding Amended Operating Certificate # 280410821, dated June 18, 2025.
- G. Correspondence from Gina Bae, Director, Office of Mental Health, to Carolyn DeFranco, CEO New View Alliance , regarding Monitoring Outcome Report, dated July 9, 2025.
- H. Correspondence from Gina Bae, Director, Office of Mental Health, to Cindy Lee, CEO, Baker Hall, regarding Recertification of Licensed programs, dated July 8, 2025
- I. Correspondence from Kevin Kelly, APS2, OASAS, to Christine Wittenberg, Director of QI, Horizon Health, regarding Recertification Review Report, dated May 21, 2025.
- J. Correspondence from Gina Bae, Director, Office of Mental Health, to Laura Kelemen, Director, NCDMH regarding Administrative Actions # 10929, #11183(Relocation), dated July 15, 2025.

- K. Correspondence from Dena Holmes, Director, OASAS, to Laura Kelemen, Director, NCDMH, regarding Renewed Operating Certificate # 280612026, dated July 23, 2025.
- L. Correspondence from Jennifer Roll, Director of Lease Administration, Benderson Development, to Rebecca Wydysh, Chairman, Niagara County, regarding delivery & commencement date certification, dated June 25, 2025.
- M. Correspondence from Dena Holmes, Director, OASAS, to Erin DiGirolamo, CEO, Horizon Health Services, regarding Amended Operating Certificate # 270212159, dated August 6, 2025

Newspaper Articles:

- 1. Union Sun & Journal, "WNY Independent Living announces its new leader", by Stephanie Orlando, dated 6/13/25
- 2. Union Sun & Journal, "JFS receives \$400K for opioid use support program", by Robert Creenan, dated 6/13/25
- 3. Buffalo News, "New center aims to fill mental health system gaps", by John Harris, dated 6/13/25
- 4. Buffalo News, "State needs more work to address addiction", by Robert Kent, dated 6/25/25
- 5. Union Sun & Journal, "Rural schools feeling the pinch from cuts", by Annie Ma, dated 6/30/25
- 6. Buffalo News, "NF Schools feel sting of fed cuts in funding", by Ben Tsujimoto, dated 6/27/25
- 7. _Buffalo News, "Trump cuts \$3.5B grant to UB to help boost mental health", by John Harris, dated 7/21/25
- 8. Union Sun & Journal, "Mental health counselors are being pushed out", by Kayla Goodrich, dated 7/23/25
- 9. Union Sun & Journal, "Advocates criticize executive order on homelessness", dated 7/30/25
- 10. Buffalo News, "988 Lifeline provides a path forward", dated 8/4/25
- 11. Union Son & Journal, "Overdose awareness day ceremonies taking place locally", by Robert Creenan, dated 8/29/25
- 12. Buffalo News, "There is help for people who suffer from grief", by Michelle Shaw, dated 9/4/25
- 13. Buffalo News, "Addiction is a warning signal, not a choice", by Mildred Riffey, dated 9/4/25
- 14. Union Sun & Journal, "Ninth annual Overdose Awareness Day Rally coming up", dated 9/4/25
- 15. Union Sum & Journal, "Suicide prevention in focus in Niagara County", dated 9/8/25