



Niagara County Community Services Board
Minutes
Regular Meeting
Date: Monday – June 15, 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	X	
Robin Stevens, 1 st Board VP, 1 st Term	X	
Kelly Biehls, 2 nd Board VP, 1 st Term	X	
Stephanie Donovan, Board Member	X	
Ronald Barstys, PhD, Board Member		X
Suzanne Diez, Board Member	X	
Richard Abbott (Leg.), Board Member		X
Donald Jablonski, Board Member	X	
James Muehlbauer, Board Member	X	
Eric Zapalowski, 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	
Christopher Bopst, Esq (Asst. County Atty)	X	
Gillian Henry-Game, LCSWR NCDMH Home and Community Based Services Supervisor / AOT Program Coordinator	X	
Nick Kester, LMSW, NCDMH Senior Planner	X	

- 1) **Dr. Annette Dobrasz, Board President, called the Community Services Board (CSB) Meeting to order at 6:02 PM.**
- 2) **Meeting Minutes:**
Don Jablonski motioned to approve the April 20, 2026 CSB Meeting Minutes as presented, Kelly Biehls seconded the motion; the minutes were unanimously approved by the Board.

May 19, 2026 Draft CSB Individual Subcommittee Meeting Minutes – Brief discussion related to the minutes included highlights on transportation needs, outreach efforts to ensure families are aware of available services, and challenges related to siloed services.

3) **Membership Review**

a. **Membership Review**

Board membership will be reviewed in September 2026, including consideration of returning and prospective members.

CSB membership applications will be sent to Dr. Annette Dobrasz and Robin Stevens. Membership application will be converted into a fillable format.

CSB Board membership roster will be updated to remove Betsy Farkas (due to resignation).

b. **Sub-committee Review**

- No new sub-committee member(s) applications received.
- Subcommittee appointments were approved by Legislature on May 19, 2026 and appointment letters have been distributed. Recently approved subcommittee members include: G. Joshua Anderson (Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Subcommittee), Jenna Genova (Mental Health Subcommittee), Timothy Deeks (Mental Health Subcommittee) and Kevin Burgess (Mental Health Subcommittee).

4) **Director's Report**

- **Correspondence** (Letters, Memorandums, and Emails) – Review by Director Kelemen with no reported concerns. She highlighted the following:

The New York State Office of Addiction Services and Supports (OASAS) will be conducting an audit of BestSelf. The Department of Mental Health currently has no contracts with BestSelf. The audit is anticipated to occur in November 2026.

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

CON - No new business.

*** EzPar –**

- Child & Family Services Youth Assertive Community Treatment (YACT) - Niagara County Team Proposal – This proposal had previously been approved through an email vote and was re-presented for formal confirmation. The dedicated Niagara County YACT team is expected to strengthen collaboration with local hospitals, increase referrals, and help prevent residential placements and hospitalizations.

Robin Steven motioned to approve; Don Jablonski seconded the motion; unanimously approved by the Board, motion carried.

Informational – Review by Director Kelemen and Deputy Director Gibbons Doxey

- Community Health Center of Buffalo – Niagara Falls: Healthy Steps Niagara Falls – CHCB added the Healthy Steps programming which is funded through a NYS OMH grant to provide early intervention services through primary care.
- Gateway Longview School-Based Satellite Clinic Closures effective June 11, 2026 due to consistently unable to staff sites and provide services.
 - Maple Street Elementary School (Niagara Falls School District)
 - Niagara Street / Bloneva Bond Elementary School (Niagara Falls School District)
- Niagara Falls Memorial Medical Center – Maternal Collaborative Care Program – NFMMC received NYS OMH Collaborative Care grant funding to establish a psychiatric collaborative care model at their OBGYN/family practices in Niagara Falls to implement evidence-based integrated healthcare for their patients and decrease racial disparities. The Maternal Collaborative Care Program is anticipated to begin in 2027.
- Save the Michaels Newfane House of Hope transfer of ownership to Recovery Center of Niagara, LLC - Proposed transfer of ownership to Recovery Center of Niagara, LLC remains pending but is expected to move forward.

➤ **Corporate Compliance** - No new business

➤ **Annual Reports**

Home and community-Based Services (2025): Report overview and highlights presented by Gillian Henry-Game, NCDMH Home and Community Based Services Supervisor / AOT Program Coordinator.

No questions raised.

➤ **Program/Systems Updates:** Director Kelemen shared the following:

- **730 Competency Restoration legislation update:**
Discussion focused on two legislative initiatives related to competency restoration. Legislation aimed at reducing county financial responsibility after a specified number of days has passed both houses. Anticipated that the Governor may veto the bill. A second proposal would establish a statewide workgroup to study the issue and develop recommendations if vetoed.

Board members noted the positive progress being made on this issue.

- **Lockport Community Needs Assessment related to SUD:**
Final revisions are being completed on the needs assessment requested by OASAS following the closure of Save the Michaels Recovery Community Center.
On June 2, 2026 at Lockport City Hall, a community forum was conducted to gather stakeholder input. Major themes identified included:
 - Need for a centralized “one-stop-shop” service model for sober, recovery-oriented supports.
 - Increased awareness of community resources.
 - Improved coordination among providers and reduction of service silos.
 - Need for more certified peers and these peers at every day places to help individuals navigate recovery pathways at time of need.

It is hopeful that OASAS will consider releasing a Request for Proposals for a new Recovery Community Center in Niagara County.

2024–2027 Local Services Plan, 2027 Updates:

NCDMH Staff Social Worker in Planning, Nick Kester presented highlights and key updates in the Local Services Plan. Robin Stevens motioned to approve the 2024–2027 Local Services Plan, 2027 Updates; Don Jablonski seconded the motion; the plan was unanimously approved by the Board. Motion carried.

Workforce Initiatives and Opportunities: Director of Niagara County Employment and Training Don Jablonski

provided an update on workforce initiatives and opportunities for future collaboration among departments and community partners.

- 5) **President's Report** - Dr. Annette Dobrasz, recognized Director Kelemen and Deputy Director Gibbons Doxey for their dedication, service, and accomplishments. Dr. Dobrasz emphasized the importance of recognizing individuals for their contributions while they are actively serving rather than waiting until they leave their positions. Dr. Dobrasz reviewed several accomplishments and expressed appreciation for their continued commitment to the community. Donald Jablonski requested a summary of accomplishments that could be shared with the Chairman of the Legislature to increase awareness of the work being completed by NCDMH leadership and staff.

Director Kelemen expressed appreciation for the recognition and noted that the work is mission-driven and done in service to the community rather than for acknowledgment.

- 6) **Executive Session** for NCDMH Corporate Compliance Program second quarter 2026 report out - Executive Session began at 7:51pm, ending at 8:02pm.

James Muehlbauer motioned to enter Executive Session; Eric Zapalowski seconded the motion. Executive session began at 7:51pm.

James Muehlbauer motioned to adjourn the Executive Session; Eric Zapalowski seconded the motion. Executive session adjourned at 8:02 pm.

7) Meeting Adjournment

Eric Zapalowski motioned to adjourn the meeting; James Muehlbauer seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned at 8:05pm.

Future CSB Meeting Date:

- CSB Meeting: Monday, August 3, 2026

Niagara County Community Services Board
Correspondence Listing - Director's Report
Meeting Date & Time: Monday, June 15, 2026 at 6:00 pm

A. Niagara County Community Services Board Meeting Notices:

1. Niagara County Community Services Board Monday, May 18, 2026 Meeting Notice - dated, May 12, 2026.
2. Notifications to two County Newspapers regarding May 18, 2026 Meeting scheduling Notice - dated, May 13, 2025.

- B. Correspondence from Michael Hill, Chairman, Niagara County Legislature, to Niagara County Community Services Board, regarding Community Services Board appointments, dated March 24, 2026.
- C. Correspondence from Tammy Scherer, Acting Director, NYS OMH, to Laura Kelemen, Director, Niagara County Dept. of Mental Health, regarding administrative action-change hours of operation, dated April 16, 2026.
- D. Correspondence from Laura Kelemen, Director, Niagara County Dept. of Mental Health, to Michael Hill, Chairman, Niagara County Legislature, regarding subcommittee member appointment, dated April 30, 2026.
- E. Correspondence from Dr. Annette Dobrasz, President, Niagara County Community Services Board, to Mr. Eric Zappalowski, regarding appointment to Niagara County Community Services Board, dated April 30, 2026.
- F. Correspondence from Kevin Kelly, Regional Office Program Manager, OASAS, to Carrie Clare, COO, Northpointe Council, regarding Recertification review report, dated April 24, 2026.

- G. Correspondence from Courtney Eder, MH Program Specialist 2, NYS OMH to Brandy Vandermark-Murray, President, Horizon Health Services, regarding PIP- Baily Recovery Center, dated April 28, 2026.
- H. Correspondence from Courtney Eder, MH Program Specialist 2, NYS OMH to Brandy Vandermark-Murray, President, Horizon Health Services, regarding PIP- Baily Recovery Center-unsatisfactory action, dated April 24, 2026.
- I. Correspondence from Myrla Gibbons Doxy, Deputy Director, Niagara County Dept. of Mental Health, to Brittany Horan, Director of Clinical Services, Child & Family Services, regarding Prior consult Letter EZPAR application, dated May 18, 2026.
- J. Correspondence from Michael Hill, Chairman, Niagara County Legislature, to Community services Board, regarding appointees to Community Services Board, dated May 22, 2026.
- K. Correspondence from Laura Kelemen, Director, Niagara County Dept. of Mental Health, to G. Joshua Anderson, regarding subcommittee member appointment, dated June 3, 2026.
- L. Correspondence from Laura Kelemen, Director, Niagara County Dept. of Mental Health, to Jenna Genova, regarding subcommittee member appointment, dated June 3, 2026.
- M. Correspondence from Laura Kelemen, Director, Niagara County Dept. of Mental Health, to Timothy Deeks, regarding subcommittee member appointment, dated June 3, 2026.
- N. Correspondence from Laura Kelemen, Director, Niagara County Dept. of Mental Health, to Kevin Burgess, regarding subcommittee member appointment, dated June 3, 2026.
- O. Correspondence from Myrla Gibbons Doxy, Deputy Director, Niagara County Dept. of Mental Health, to Brittany Horan, Director of Clinical Services, Child & Family Services, regarding Letter of Support EZPAR application, dated May 18, 2026.
- P. Correspondence from Maria Torgalski, Director-Region 1, OPWDD, to Melissa Kumkey, CEO, NYSARC Wayne County Chapter, regarding proposal to close Article 16 Satellite Clinic, dated May 19, 2026.
- Q. Correspondence from Anton Mirtshev, Supervisor, NYS office of Addaction Services and Supports, to Elizabeth Woike-Ganga, CEO, BestSelf Behavioral Health, regarding scheduled on-site review of financial operations, dated May 21, 2026.
- R. Correspondence from Tammy Scherer, Director, NYS office of Mental Health, to Cynthia Voelker, President /CEO, Mental Health Services-Erie County SE Corporation V dba Spectrum Human Services, regarding Admin Action # 11916: Relocation, dated May 26, 2026.
- S. Correspondence from Dena M. Holmes, Director, NYS office of Addaction Services and Supports, to Kristi Yerger, CEO, Northpointe Council, regarding Operation Certificate # 290512374 (correction), dated June 3, 2026.
- T. Correspondence from Kate Harlock, Licensing Director, NYS office of Mental Health, To Carolyn DeFranco, CEO, New View Alliance, regarding Performance Improvement Plan-monitoring visit, dated June 9, 2026.
- U. Correspondence from NYS office of Addiction Services and Supports, to Northpointe Council, Inc., regarding recertification Review Report, dated June 9, 2026.

Newspaper Articles:

- 1. Buffalo News, “340B program is a vital need for patients”, by Mike Lee, dated 4/21/26
- 2. Buffalo News, “988 Shows its value”, by Devi Shastri, dated 4/27/26
- 3. Buffalo News, “Two nonprofits get millions to address mental health crisis”, by Jon Harris, dated 4/28/26

4. Niagara Frontier Publications, “Niagara County Recognizes Mental Health Awareness Month with launch of Hope Speaks”, dated 5/5/26
5. Niagara Frontier Publications, “NCDMH staff present at national conference”, dated 5/14/26
6. Union-Sun & Journal, “End the stigma of mental health treatment”, dated 5/8/26
7. Buffalo News, “RFK aides eyed antidepressant ban, sources say”, by Yasmeen Abutaleb, dated 5/12/26
8. Union-Sun & Journal “County Mental Health staff present at national conference”, dated 5/18/26
9. Buffalo News, “Teen lives can be saved through Narcan training”, by Maria Santa, dated 5/18/26
10. Union-Sun & Journal, “County to host addiction services forum”, by Heidi Truschel-Light, dated 5/22/26
11. Union-Sun & Journal, “Taking Mental health outreach beyond clinics”, by Heidi Truschel-Light, dated 5/26/26
12. Union-Sun & Journal, “Few answers on filling Save the Michaels void”, by Yasmeen Abutaleb, dated 5/12/26
13. Union-Sun & Journal “County Mental Health staff present at national conference”, by Buffalo News, “RFK aides eyed antidepressant ban, sources say”, by Yasmeen Abutaleb, dated 5/12/26
14. Union-Sun & Journal “County Mental Health staff present at national conference”, dated 5/18/26
15. Buffalo News, “Teen lives can be saved through Narcan training”, by Maria Santa, dated 5/18/26
16. Union-Sun & Journal, “County to host addiction services forum”, by Heidi Truschel-Light, dated 5/22/26
17. Union-Sun & Journal, “Taking Mental health outreach beyond clinics”, by Heidi Truschel-Light, dated 6/4/26
18. Buffalo News, “Taking the first steps toward mental wellness”, by Dr. Kathryn Diebold, dated 6/9/26
19. Union-Sun & Journal, “Youth mental health system is broken”, by Joe Summers, dated 6/10/26
20. Union-Sun & Journal, “Mental wellness journey starts with recognition”, by Kathryn Diebold, dated 6/20/26