Niagara County Community Services Board
Minutes
Date: Monday, September 21, 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, 1st Board VP, 1st Term	X	
Kelly Biehls, 2nd Board VP, 1st 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	
Niagara County Mental Health Administration		
Laura Kelemen, LCSW-R, NCDMH Director	X	
Myrla Gibbons Doxey, LMFT-D, NCDMH Deputy Director	X	
Kimberly Hubert-Bickel, NCDMH Confidential Assistant	X	
Christopher Bopst, Esq (Asst. County Atty)	X	
Cindi Wilkins, Fiscal Administrator	X	
Melissa Waller, Horizon Health – Director of Child Services	X	
Adam Smith-Perez – Investigative Post	X	

1. Dr. Annette Dobrasz, Board President, called the Community Services Board (CSB) Meeting to order at 6:06 PM

2. Meeting Minutes: Ronald Barstys motioned to approve the August 3, 2026 CSB Meeting Minutes as presented, Kelly Biehls seconded the motion; the minutes were unanimously approved by the Board.

3. Membership:

   A. Membership Review

   New Board Applications

   - **Burt Marshall** - The Board reviewed the application and voted to recommend Burt Marshall to the Legislature for appointment. Motion by Ronald Barstys; seconded by Kelly Biehls. All in favor.
   - **Dr. Thomas Gerbasi** - Dr. Annette Dobrasz reported that Dr. Gerbasi would like to return to the Board. An application will be provided to Dr. Gerbasi for completion.

B. Sub-committee Review

- No new sub-committee member(s) applications received.
- Robin Stevens asked whether a Board member may serve on more than one subcommittee. It was confirmed that members may serve on multiple subcommittees.
- Robin reported that William Krayss had expressed interest in serving on an additional committee. William will be provided with an application.

4. Director's Report:

- **Correspondence – Review by Director**:
  1. Letters, Memorandums & E-mails:
     - Correspondence listed on separate page, attached

- ***Certificate of Need (CON) / Prior Approval Reviews (PAR) -** Application summary presented by Deputy Director Gibbons Doxey

  - ***CON – Horizon Health Services - Application for expansion of space at 2400 Pine Ave, Niagara Falls, NY (dual application review under EZPAR#4971 below):** CCBHC Pine Ave, Niagara Falls space expansion. Project funded by Horizon and facility remains 100% operational during construction with security and safety measures implemented. Horizon is adding nine (9) offices in an expansion to the existing space already owned by the company. The offices are needed to support the staff increase from the 2025 CCBHC Demo launch. Recipients of service will have more space to meet with their treatment team onsite at the clinic location. No impact on staffing as place was updated for 7/1/25 when the site became a CCBHC demo. No change to budget as the CCBHC demo budget remains applicable. Of note, the original application for this space expansion was a CPAR. Because the project cost is $615k, it was determined by OMH Regional PAR team that they would accept this application as an EZPAR as OMH has regulatory authority to increase the threshold for capital projects to $1.2 million under current 14 NYCRR Part 551. Project is near completion.

    Motion to accept
    Motion by Ronald Barstys; seconded by Robin Stevens. All in favor.

*** EzPar** – Application summaries presented by Deputy Director Gibbons Doxey / Melissa Waller, Horizon Health was present to answer questions
:

Horizon Health Services

- **#4971 Application for expansion of space at 2400 Pine Ave, Niagara Falls, NY - (dual application review under CON above):** CCBHC Pine Ave, Niagara Falls space expansion. Project funded by Horizon and facility remains 100% operational during construction with security and safety measures implemented. Horizon is adding nine (9) offices in an expansion to the existing space already owned by the company. The offices are needed to support the staff increase from the 2025 CCBHC Demo launch. Recipients of service will have more space to meet with their treatment team onsite at the clinic location. No impact on staffing as place was updated for 7/1/25 when the site became a CCBHC demo. No change to budget as the CCBHC demo budget remains applicable. Of note, the original application for this space expansion was a CPAR. Because the project cost is $615k, it was determined by OMH Regional PAR team that they would accept this application as an EZPAR as OMH has regulatory authority to increase the threshold for capital projects to $1.2 million under current 14 NYCRR Part 551. Project is near completion.

Motion to accept
Motion by Stephanie Donovan; seconded by Kelly Biehls. All in favor.

- **#4930 Application to establish a school-based satellite in the North Tonawanda School District at Spruce Elementary School** – Melissa Walter, Horizon Health Services Supervisor, was present to speak on the application and answer questions from the Board.

  Proposal to operate one day per week (Tuesdays, 9am – 4:30pm) and serve ages 5-9. Identified clinician is a permit holder with experience working in school settings and serving high need populations in the agency's outpatient clinics. Supervision provided by appropriately credentialed licensed qualified health provider.

  Budget based on payer mix 65% Medicaid, 35% Commercial/Third Party with Net Surplus +$998. NYS OMH fiscal team will review and opine on submitted budget.

  District administration reports adding this school-based satellite will allow the District to build a more comprehensive continuum of mental health support in the students' and their families' community. Students' increasing complexity of needs exceed the capacity of school personnel alone. Need exists for this as the "school serves students and families experiencing significant social-emotional and mental health needs. The school has also experienced concerning levels of chronic absenteeism, with mental health, family stressors, and school avoidance contributing to attendance difficulties for some students. Greater access to clinical mental health services within the school would allow us to intervene earlier and more effectively with children and families."

  The agency revised their Crisis Policy as recommended by Deputy Director Gibbons Doxey following review to reflect current contractual agreement with Niagara County Department of Mental Health.

  Motion to accept
  Motion by Robin Stevens; seconded by Ronald Barstys. All in favor.

- **#4929 Application to establish a school-based satellite in the North Tonawanda School District at Drake Elementary School -** – Melissa Walter, Horizon Health Services Supervisor, was present to speak on the application and answer questions from the Board.

  Proposal to operate one day per week (Tuesday, 9am – 4:30pm) and serves ages 5-9. Identified clinician is a permit holder with experience working in school settings and serving high need populations in the agency's outpatient clinics. Supervision provided by appropriately credentialed licensed qualified health provider.

  Budget based on payer mix 70% Medicaid, 30% Commercial/Third Party with Net Surplus +$1,483. NYS OMH fiscal team will review and opine on submitted budget.

  District administration reports adding this school-based satellite will allow the District to build a more comprehensive continuum of mental health support in the students' and their families' community. Students' increasing complexity of needs exceed the capacity of school personnel alone. Need exists for this as the school, "serves young children at a developmental stage when early identification and intervention can have a profound long-term impact. Staff are increasingly supporting students whose anxiety, emotional regulation difficulties, family

stressors, and school avoidance interfere with their ability to fully access the educational program. On-site clinical services would provide an important additional layer of intervention for students whose needs extend beyond what school-based supports alone can reasonably provide."

The agency revised their Crisis Policy as recommended by Deputy Director Gibbons Doxey following review to reflect current contractual agreement with Niagara County Department of Mental Health.

Motion to accept
Motion by Suzanne Dietz; seconded by Stephanie Donovan. All in favor.

- **#4931 Application to establish a school-based satellite in the North Tonawanda School District at the Intermediate School**– Melissa Walter, Horizon Health Services Supervisor, was present to speak on the application and answer questions from the Board.

  Proposal to operate one day per week (Friday, 8am – 3:30pm) and serves ages 9-12. Identified clinician is a permit holder with experience working in school settings and serving high need populations in the agency's outpatient clinics. Supervision provided by appropriately credentialed licensed qualified health provider.

  Budget based on payer mix79% Medicaid, 21% Commercial/Third Party with Net Surplus +$1,012. NYS OMH fiscal team will review and opine on submitted budget.

  District administration reports adding this school-based satellite will allow the District to build a more comprehensive continuum of mental health support in the students' and their families' community. Students' increasing complexity of needs exceed the capacity of school personnel alone. Need exists for this as the school, "serves students in grades 4-6 during an important developmental transition. At this level, we continue to see anxiety, depression, emotional regulation concerns, school avoidance, peer and family stressors, and other mental health needs that can significantly affect attendance and educational functioning. Providing on-site access to a licensed clinician would strengthen the school's ability to connect students and families to appropriate treatment before these concerns become even greater barriers to success."

  The agency revised their Crisis Policy as recommended by Deputy Director Gibbons Doxey following review to reflect current contractual agreement with Niagara County Department of Mental Health.

  Motion to accept
  Motion by Ronald Barstys; seconded by Eric Zapalowski. All in favor.

<u>Informational</u> –
Best Self Behavioral Health

- **#12289 Administrative Action to change rooms for the school-based satellite clinic at the Niagara Falls School District Bloneva Bond Elementary School –** room change from the back of the school where there is access to a back door, to the front near administrative / support offices for easier collaboration with building office staff as needed. Pending OMH approval.

- **#12290 Administrative Action to change rooms for school-based satellite clinic at the North Tonawanda School District High School –** School requested change in room (in same vicinity) to meet school needs. The site serves both the

middle and high school students. OMH approved the change effective 9/14/26 and advised that a staff member must be present for all hours of operation listed on the operating certificate.

- **#12368 Administrative Action to close the school-based satellite clinic at the North Tonawanda School District Drake Elementary School** – School District notified agency they are pursuing partnership with another agency due to lack of BestSelf staffing of site. Site was conditionally approved 8/27/25 and the position remained vacant due to lack of staffing. No clients served at site. Closure approved by OMH effective 9/9/2026.

- **#12367 Administrative Action to close the school-based satellite clinic at the North Tonawanda School District Spruce Elementary School** - School District notified agency they are pursuing partnership with another agency due to lack of BestSelf staffing of site. Clients have not been seen on site since 11/2025 (satellite opened 9/2025). Caseload at the satellite was reported to be transferred to a clinic site at that time. Closure approved by OMH effective 9/9/2026.

- **#12267 Administrative Action to close the school-based satellite clinic at the Lockport School District Emmet Belknap Intermediate School** – School District notified agency they are pursuing partnership with another agency due to lack of staffing of site. BestSelf has not been able to fill the vacancy since October 2025. No clients have been served at the site since that time. Closure approved by OMH effective 9/1/26.

Buffalo Psychiatric Center –#60592 Change Request- Specialty Mental Health Care Management Program Closure (Program Code Change Only). Agency seeking effective date 9/16/26. Deputy Director Gibbons Doxey shared that NYS OMH indicated this is an administrative change for data reporting only. Historically, the providers had opened under a specific program code in every county they were providing the service in. When in actuality, one program code was designated to serve multiple counties. OMH is consolidating the counties into their respective programs to more accurately understand the data as its collected. OMH directed the providers to submit closures and consolidation requests in MHPD (state tracking system). Now, Niagara is a county served by the team that's stationed in Erie County. Both counties are covered by the same staff out of the same location. Deputy Director Gibbons Doxey provided feedback to OMH that by them consolidating the program under the primary county, it removes the Niagara County LGU from being able to monitor in the state system what services are open / active in the county. Requested more information on the impact for Niagara County LGU oversight when a provider seeks to change or close the service (i.e. how are we notified; how do we opine; etc.) We are awaiting a response to these questions.

New Directions Youth & Family Services – Prior Consult completed by Deputy Director Gibbons Doxey on September 10, 2026 with Sarah Taylor (NDYFS President), Kristy D'Angelo (President, Gateway-Longview) and Carolyne Defranco (New View Alliance (CEO) for Merger of New Directions Youth & Family Services and New View Alliance Inc with and into Gateway-Longview. Gateway-Longview will serve as the surviving entity and upon completion of the merger will change its name to New View Alliance; this is expected to occur simultaneously. Letter of support to proceed with submitting EZPAR application for LGU and CSB review will occur following this meeting.

- ***Department Annual Report – 2025**

Fiscal Administrator, Cindi Wilkins presented the 2025 Department Annual Report and provided an overview of the Department, Legislature, Community Services Board, committees, and Board membership.

Highlights of the 2025 report included:

- Stabilization of the Department workforce, including updated civil service job titles, contributing to improved staff retention.
- Implementation of a new electronic health record.
- Continued and expanded community coalition efforts.
- Continued development of the Department's compliance program and related responsibilities.
- Relocation of the Lockport Administration and Clinic from Shaw to 475 South Transit Street, Suite 500 Lockport**.**
- Review of 2025 conferences and staff training activities.
- Summary of direct service costs, revenues, and funding sources.
- Overview of contracted organizations.

Cindi also reviewed 2026 goals, including:

- Continued workforce retention efforts.
- Development and improvement of departmental workflows.
- Continued suicide prevention and overdose prevention efforts through Hope Speaks Niagara.
- Maintaining fiscal stability.
- Further development of the Department's compliance program.

Motion to accept the 2025 Department Annual Report.
Motion by James Muehlbauer; seconded by Suzanne Diez. All in favor.

- **NCDMH 2027 Budget -** Discussion of the 2027 NCDMH Budget was deferred to the next meeting due to changes received from the County.

- **Corporate Compliance –** Deputy Director Gibbons Doxey shared that the Annual Compliance Program Training and annual attestations are due with and from the Board in October or November 2026. The Board requested the this be completed at the October meeting. Deputy Director Gibbons Doxey and Confidential Assistant Hubert-Bickel will prepare to meet this request.

- **Program/Systems Updates –** Director Kelemen and Deputy Gibbons Doxey provided an overview of the following:

  - SAMHSA Adult Suicide Prevention Grant Award - The Department was awarded a SAMHSA Adult Suicide Prevention Grant, one of five such awards nationwide. The grant provides approximately $400,000 annually for four years. The award will go to the Legislature for acceptance, with implementation to begin September 30.

  - SAMHSA CCBHC Improvement and Advancement Grant Submission - The Department submitted an application and expects notification by early November; grant period begins November 30.

  - OASAS Regional Abatement Funds – RFP awards (pending) - RFP awards are pending. The Legislature is expected to consider awards to Peace Prints and Niagara County PATH and Community Missions, Inc.

5. **President's Report –** No report

6. **Executive Session to review NCDMH Compliance Program Report Out and Potential Employee Discipline**

   James Muehlbauer motioned to enter Executive Session; Eric Zapalowski seconded the motion. Executive session began at 6:59pm.

Robin Stevens motioned to exit the Executive Session; Kelly Biehls seconded the motion. Executive session adjourned at 7:39 pm.

7. Meeting Adjournment

Stephanie Donovan motioned to adjourn the meeting; Kelly Biehls seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned at 7:40pm.

Future CSB Meeting Date:

- CSB Meeting: Monday, October 19, 2026

Niagara County Community Services Board
Correspondence Listing, Agenda Item 4-1 - Director's Report
Meeting Date & Time: Monday, September 21, 2026 at 6:00 pm

A. Niagara County Community Services Board Meeting Notices:

1. Niagara County Community Services Board Monday, September 21, 2026 Meeting Notice - dated, September 14, 2026.

2. Notifications to two County Newspapers regarding September 21, 2026 Meeting scheduling Notice - dated, September 14, 2025.

B. Correspondence from Caitlin Cummins, Director of Outpatient Behavioral Health, Niagara Falls Memorial Medical Center, to Laura Kelemen, Director of Community Services, Niagara County Department of Mental Health, regarding intent to submit proposal for grant opportunity, dated November 19, 2025.

C. Correspondence from Annette Dobrasz, President, Community Services Board, to Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, regarding Niagara County Dept. of Mental Health application SAMHSA CCBHC_IA NOFO 26-015, dated August 3, 2026.

D. Correspondence from Myrla Gibbons Doxey, Deputy Director, Niagara County Dept. of Mental Health, to Elizabeth Mauro, President and CEO, Endeavor Health Services, regarding Letter of Commitment from NCDMH, dated August 12, 2026.

E. Correspondence from Dena Holmes, Director, OASAS, to Jacqueline West, CEO, Buffalo Beacon Corporation, regarding recertification of OASAS-Certified programs, dated April 21, 2026.

F. Correspondence from Paul Carver, Deputy Licensing Director, Office of Mental Health, to Brandy Vandermark-Murray, President, Horizon Health Services, Inc., regarding PIP Monitoring Visit, dated March 16, 2026.

G. Correspondence from Kimberly Benshoff, Upstate Regional Director, NYS OASAS, to multiple emails, regarding temporary management agreement for STM, dated March 27, 2026.

H. Administrative Services Agreement, between Recovery Center of Niagara and Save the Michaels of the World, House of Hope OASAS Operating Certificate # 270912378, dated April 10, 2026.

I. Correspondence from Megan Schmitt, Regional Coordinator, OASAS, to Kristi Yerger, Northpointe council, Inc., regarding request to "Not Apply" Surplus Revenue, dated September 4, 2025.

J. Correspondence from Kate Harlock, Licensing Director, NYS Office of Mental Health, to Robyn Krueger, President and CEO, Community Missions, Inc., regarding PIP Monitoring Visit- Niagara Visions Pros and various Community Missions residences, dated September 4, 2026.

K. Correspondence from Meredith Love, Mental Health Program Specialist 2, NYS Office of Mental Health, to Joseph Ruffolo, President and CEO, Niagara Falls Memorial Medical Center, regarding PIP- CMHC Inpatient Program, dated August 27, 2026.

L. Membership Application from Burt Marshall to the Niagara County Community Services Board and Community services board's Subcommittees, dated September 1, 2026

Newspaper Articles:

1. Buffalo News, "Save the Michaels sues founder, claims he stole $1M from group", by Jon Harris, dated 8/14/2.6
2. Lockport Union Sun & Journal, "From Loss to Hope", by Heidi Truschel-Light, dated 8/27/26.
3. Buffalo News, "Kaleida closing children's clinic, realigning psychiatric services" by Jon Harris, dated 8/31/26.
4. Lockport Union Sun & Journal "County announces 'You Matter!' coffee sleeve campaign", dated 9/4/26.
5. Buffalo News, "NY sees 45% drop in overdose deaths since 2022", by Staff Reports, dated 9/14/26.
6. Lockport Union Sun & Journal, "Suicide prevention training offered", dated 9/10/26.