

CSB Attendees: Cheryelle Cruickshank, Cheryle Hinds-Leslie, Karmita Morgan-Randall, Sarah Church, Sidney Hankerson, Stephanie LeMelle, Adrienne Abbate, Dwight Kemp, Asuna Osako, Miriam Prat Jerez

Action items/ Resources from DOHMH:

- NYC DOHMH's [site](#) on Peer services and resources; NYC DOHMH Supporting Peers and Community Health Workers in Their Roles Organizational Readiness [Toolkit](#)
- [Link](#) to NYC Mayors Office of Community Mental health Peer Support Workers (PSWs) and Community Health Workers (CHWs) Listening and Feedback Tour Report
- NYU's 4th Annual CHW Innovations Summit is on Zoom, April 9-10, 2025: CHW Reimbursement Mechanisms and Statewide Advocacy Efforts
- DOHMH, NYC Mayor's Office of Community Mental Health, and Families on the Move virtual symposium Integrating and Supporting Peer Support Workers in Behavioral Health Settings on March 26 - [registration](#)
- [Call for proposals](#) for 19th Annual Peer Specialists Conference- Recovering in Review: Building the Future of Peer Support on July 24, 2025

Call to Order: 10:35 AM

Welcome Remarks

- Dr. Hankerson, Chair of the CSB, called the meeting to order and led introductions.
- Dr. Wright, Executive Deputy Commissioner (EDC) of the Division of Mental Hygiene (DMHy) welcomed members and stated DOHMH's commitment to the health and wellbeing of NYC.

DOHMH and Bureau Updates

- EDC Jean Wright invited DOHMH Mental Hygiene bureau leadership to provide updates, namely Rebecca Linn-Walton, Assistant Commissioner (AC) of the Bureau of Alcohol and Drug Use, Prevention, Care, and Treatment (BADUPCT), Anastasia Roussos, Deputy Director of Systems Planning, Bureau for Children, Youth and Families and Developmental Disabilities (CYF-DD), Janice Chisholm, AC of the Bureau of Community Awareness, Action, Response, and Engagement (BCAARE), Cassiopeia Toner, Acting AC of the Bureau of Health Promotion for Justice-Impacted Populations (HPJIP), and Jamie Neckles, AC of the Bureau of Mental Health (BMH).
 - In response to a question from CSB Member Sarah Church on the reduction in overdose deaths in Q1 2024 vs Q1 2023, Rebecca Linn-Walton cited an influx of naloxone in high-risk spaces and better communication.
 - Anastasia Roussos described data parties engaging community members that participated in Centering Children and Families in NYC Systems of Care community forums in response to a question from CSB Member Adrienne Abbate on involving communities in action steps.
 - In response to a question from CSB Member Cheryelle Cruickshank, Anastasia Roussos shared that the Youth Committee on Mental Health has 17 members serving a 1-year term and next steps are being identified.
 - CSB Chair Sidney Hankerson suggested inviting a Youth Committee member to a future CSB meeting.
 - In response to CSB Member Karmita Morgan-Randall's request for a rep from BCAARE attend her community wellness event, Janice Chisholm agreed to follow-up to learn details on how to support.
 - CSB Member Adrienne Abbate requested a presentation on maternal mental health, and EDC Jean Wright seconded this for a future meeting.

Discussion on 2025 CSB Priority Areas

- CSB Chair Sidney Hankerson led the group in setting a second priority area for 2025, in addition to priority area one: youth mental health, developmental disabilities, and substance use.
- CSB Member Stephanie LeMelle advised Members to think about feasibility for DOHMH to address priority issues.
- CSB Member Cheryelle Cruickshank suggested priority area one include youth school refusal, especially for children with immigrant parents and disabilities.

- CSB Members Miriam Prat-Jerez, Cheryelle Cruickshank, Adrienne Abbate, and Cheryle Hinds-Leslie shared concerns on website navigation and language access for communications from NYC Public Schools on immigration/law enforcement visits, as NYC is traditionally a sanctuary city.
 - CSB Member Karmita Morgan-Randall added concerns on effective crisis alerts from schools.
 - Miriam added that school refusal will increase if children don't feel safe at schools.
- CSB Chair Sidney Hankerson shared the need to focus on LGBTQ+ youth who are at risk for suicide. He suggested inviting the Office of School Health to another meeting to share CSB concerns and understand DOHMH's scope.
- CSB Member Cheryle Hinds-Leslie suggested payment reform and workforce shortages, and CSB Member Sarah Church recommended brainstorming how NYC can support Medicaid services.
- CSB Member Sarah Church mentioned Nitrous Oxide and other easily available substances that are lesser-known and can cause neurological issues. CSB Members Stephanie LeMelle and Miriam Prat-Jerez suggested creating a public health announcement as these substances are not detected by screens and impact decision making for EDs.
 - CSB Member Cheryle Hinds-Leslie mentioned the importance of holistic care and shared the Peer Specialists approach "the conspiracy of hope."
- CSB Chair Sidney Hankerson suggested task-shifting with a focus on Community Health Workers (CHWs) and Peer Specialists in faith-based centers to address workforce issues and connections to care, especially for youth.
 - CSB Members Karmita Morgan-Randall and Adrienne Abbate described their existing programs with faith-based organizations to provide connections to mental health care and training.
 - EDC Jean Wright added the need to reimagine traditional spaces to provide services, connections, and a way for communities and youth to help.
 - Jamie Neckles mentioned that [NY Disaster Interfaith Services](#) is using underutilized church space for a Clubhouse location and is helping other agencies find and use similar spaces.
 - CSB Member Cheryle Hinds-Leslie shared the concept of dignity of risk and right to fail for youth.
- CSB Member Cheryle Hinds-Leslie said Peer Specialists have NPI numbers but are not reimbursed as independent providers due to clinic licensing issues.
 - CSB Member Stephanie LeMelle suggested finding new funding streams for Peer Specialists in non-clinical settings, including grants and startup money, and creative solutions for clinical settings with billing. She shared [Child Center of NY](#) and OMH's partnership embedding a small, billable clinic into the non-profit.
 - CSB Members Miriam Prat-Jerez, Adrienne Abbate, and Cheryle shared community funded opportunities like the [YEP program](#) and partnerships with school district Wellness Councils funded by the city.
 - Miriam suggested having CHW and Peer Specialists drive understanding and prioritization of social determinants of health to providers, and then arguing for case and reimbursement rates and staffing.
- CSB Members Karmita Morgan-Randall and Cheryle Hinds-Leslie emphasized creating paths for Peer Specialists to become social workers and psychiatrists through education and internships, without clinical degrees or medical licenses, while maintaining Peer Specialists' mobility and work.
 - Rebecca Linn-Walton added that tuition is reimbursable in NYS for those with need through a waiver, but advocating for tuition remission is important.
- Carlton Whitmore, Director of the Office of Consumer Affairs, agreed with concerns and shared that:
 - Peer Specialists are motivated and need corresponding payment for their necessary work. Task shifting is promising but we must ensure that we are not removing spaces and flexibility from Peer Specialists.
 - There are models on the West Coast in substance use where peers are independent contractors working with individuals and families.
 - There are many opportunities for alignment with CHWs for outreach and expansion but grant money funding leaves uncertainty for future work.
- In response to a question from CSB Member Miriam Prat-Jerez, Jamie Neckles said DOHMH requires Peers in nearly all contracted programs, including 988, Clubhouses, mobile crisis teams, etc. Deficit Funding is used for those services and to complement anything not billable by Medicaid.
 - Miriam mentioned that DOHMH RFPs require Peers and CHWs in staffing models and suggested expanding the use of deficit funding while advocating for reimbursement.

- Marnie Davidoff, AC for CYF-DD, shared that similar to adult programs, CYF-DD uses deficit funding for programs and is working on opportunities for Medicaid reimbursement in non-clinical settings, scalability, sustainability, and embedding Peers in youth crisis services.
- CSB Chair Sidney Hankerson reminded the Board of DOHMH's work on structural racism as a social determinant.
- CSB Members Karmita Morgan-Randall, Stephanie LeMelle, and Cheryle Hinds-Leslie discussed creating important and meaningful connections between youth and elderly in communities.
- CSB Chair Sidney Hankerson and CSB Member Adrienne Abbate created consensus on two priority areas for 2025:
 1. Addressing youth mental health, substance use, and developmental disabilities for high-risk populations in schools and community settings, including research and engagement.
 2. Bolstering Behavioral Health Workers to ensure sustainable task-shifting and engagement.

Additional Comments & Wrap Up

- CSB Chair Sidney Hankerson concluded the meeting and recommended future presentations on maternal mental health, school-based mental health services, and Division of Mental Hygiene's Youth Advisory Committee.

Meeting adjourned: 11:56 AM