

[Advisory Board on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse](#)
[Alaska Mental Health Board](#)

Approved Quarterly Board Meeting Minutes

Zoom Videoconference

January 10, 2024

Dually Appointed Members Present: Monique Andrews, Robert Dorton

Dually Appointed Members Absent: Emily Waters, excused

AMHB Members Present: Chair James Savage, Tonie Protzman, Jenifer Galvan

AMHB Members Absent: Karen Malcolm-Smith, excused; Tanya Hicks, unexcused; Jeanne Brady, unexcused

ABADA Members Present: Chair Renee Schofield, Anthony Cravalho, Katholyn Runnels, Philip Licht, Christine Robbins, Kara Nelson, MJ Thim

ABADA Members Absent: Kathleen Totemoff, unexcused

Ex-Officio Members: Tracy Dompeling, Carrie Collins, Sharon Fishel, Shannon Dilley

Staff: Stephanie Hopkins, Acting Executive Director; Charity Lee, Health Planner II; Kevin Holian, Administrative Assistant II

Minutes Prepared by: Paula DiPaolo, Peninsula Reporting

[Wednesday, January 10, 2024](#)

[CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL/ETHICS DISCLOSURES – 9:00 a.m.](#)

Chair Renee Schofield called the meeting to order. Roll was called, and ethics were disclosed as follows:

<u>Monique Andrews</u>	Employed by Providence Alaska Medical Center, which receives Medicaid funding and state grant funding.
<u>Anthony Cravalho</u>	Works for Maniilaq, a tribal health organization that has both state and federal behavioral and mental health grants and bills Medicaid.
<u>Bobbie Dorton</u>	Employed by Tanana Chiefs Conference in the tribal government and justice program.
<u>Philip Licht</u>	President and CEO of Set Free Alaska, which bills Medicaid and receives funding from the state and the Trust.
<u>Tonie Protzman</u>	Executive director for the National Association of Social Workers and has a private practice that accepts Medicare.

Jenifer Galvan

Works at Alaska Behavioral Health, which accepts all forms of insurance and utilizes several local and federal grant funding sources.

James Savage

Director of operations for True North Recovery, which receives state and Trust funding as well as Medicaid reimbursement. Current chair for the Mat-Su Opioid Task Force.

Sharon Fishel

Employed by the Department of Education which receives a SAMHSA grant; a grant from the Department of Health, Division of Behavioral Health Statewide Suicide Prevention Council; and funding from the Trust.

Kara Nelson

Chief operating officer for True North Recovery, which receives Medicaid reimbursement, state grants, and Trust grants. Chair for the Mat-Su Reentry Coalition and on the board of CareLine Alaska.

The other members of the boards had no conflicts to declare.

MISSION STATEMENT/LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Stephanie Hopkins reviewed the joint mission of the boards and respectfully acknowledged the lands of the traditional first people, Lingit Aani, in the Juneau area where the meeting is being hosted.

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA AND PAST MINUTES

Kara Nelson **MOVED** to approve the agenda and minutes from the July 2023 and October 2023 meetings as presented. Stephanie Hopkins noted some amendments to the minutes and highlighted that what they had been calling the Board Development Committee should henceforth be referred to as the Board Development Workgroup. Kara Nelson **ACCEPTED THE AMENDMENT**, and the motion was **SECONDED** by Anthony Cravalho. Hearing no objection, the motion **PASSED**, and the items were approved as amended.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Stephanie Hopkins reported that the Governor’s proposed budget came out on December 15th. She highlighted that the proposed budget includes a change to the base rate for foster youth, a pilot program through the Alaska Psychiatric Institute for competency restoration, as well as other exciting items. Staff are working on a contract with Teri Tibbett to do the full budget analysis that the boards have had in the past. The proposed budget is expected to be changed quite a bit when the amended budget comes out on February 15th.

Stephanie stated that this is the second year of the two-year session, so any bills that didn’t pass last year will continue with the progress they have made this year. Anything that doesn’t pass will need to be reintroduced next year.

Bills of Interest Vetted by the Advocacy Committee:

- HB 119 – to change and eventually decrease the state cannabis taxes. These taxes fund many prevention programs for marijuana treatment and prevention for youth as well as the reducing recidivism program within the Department of Corrections for sex offender

management, domestic violence, and substance use programs. Another portion of the funding goes to the Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault. The Advocacy Committee is working on a letter to Senate and House leadership asking for the bill to be heard in the Health and Social Services Committee.

- SB 89 – to raise the tobacco age to the federal age of 21 and to add a tax on e-cigarettes. Alaska’s non-compliance with the federal tobacco age can lead to a violation of the Synar Amendment, which jeopardizes Alaska’s ability to get SAMHSA block grant funds.
- SB 103/HB 15 – peer support for law enforcement officers. This creates not only a program and infrastructure, but it also creates a confidentiality provision.

Pre-filed Bills of Interest:

- Presumptive care for firefighters. Once the Advocacy Committee vets this legislation, it’s possible they may speak with the sponsors to include behavioral health care in the language.
- Add the presumption of compensability of PTSD for law enforcement officers who experience a post-traumatic stress condition as the result of their line of work.
- House and Senate bills to create a task force on psychedelic medication with the intention for use in mental health services. They will be working with the sponsors to get AMHB representation on the task force.

Stephanie Hopkins stated that the Advocacy Committee will be meeting every Monday at noon with a few exceptions because of holidays. The meetings are open to the public, and any board members are welcome to attend. All board members should be prepared to be proactive and call in to represent the boards when called upon.

RECRUITMENT UPDATE AND BYLAW REVISION

Stephanie Hopkins explained that the executive director position was overhauled and posted, and two rounds of interviews were held. A candidate was selected and forwarded to the commissioner’s office. The commissioner decided that she would like for the boards to hold another recruitment, which is outside of the boards’ statutory guidelines because it’s clear that the boards choose their executive director. Attempts to meet with the commissioner have been unsuccessful to be able to defend the candidate or explain how the Hiring Committee chose that candidate. Staff re-posted the position, which closed during December. They received two applicants from Juneau, and they will conduct interviews shortly. The hiring committee will choose between the last selection and the two new candidates.

Stephanie Hopkins stated that she has been counseled by Jeff Jessee regarding the bylaws revisions the Executive Committee voted on. Jeff Jessee noted that the change does not help the boards, and she recommends tabling the revisions.

Stephanie screen shared the boards’ statutes as they pertain to staff and highlighted that the statute language is clear that the executive director is directly responsible to the boards and is selected by the boards. The bylaws were revised in 2021, and one of the revisions was that the boards choose, solicit, and select an executive director who is then subject to gubernatorial

approval, and they also dropped language related to Administrative Order 201 that expired in 2003. The boards do not have a legal requirement, per the statutes and the expired AO, to go through the gubernatorial approval process. Although not required, the boards are trying to follow the rules by reopening the position and recruiting. Stephanie's recommendation is that even though the Executive Committee has already approved removing the language about gubernatorial approval, they table voting on the bylaw change today and perhaps address it in future bylaws revisions.

Board members were in favor of following Stephanie's recommendation to table the bylaw change. Renee Schofield expressed her appreciation to Stephanie Hopkins during the Hiring Committee process and thanked other members of the committee for their time and effort. James Savage also appreciated the efforts of staff and members of the Hiring Committee.

Board members and staff discussed that the successful candidate the Hiring Committee selected received excellent references about their ability to telework, and the ED would not need to be physically located in Juneau.

Philip Licht remarked that a challenge in recruiting the talent they are looking for is that the rate of pay is not commensurate with the job responsibilities. Stephanie Hopkins noted that the rate is 30 cents more an hour than she is making in her role as the advocacy coordinator, and the position has been reclassified to include the SSPC duties for basically no pay.

2024 PRIORITY AREAS AND ACTION PLAN

Stephanie Hopkins and Charity Lee reviewed the 2024 Priority Areas and Action Plan with board members as follows:

About the Boards:

- Authority
- Membership
- Mission/Vision

Principal Functions of the Boards:

- Planning and Coordination:
 - Suicide
 - Alcohol and Substance Use
 - Trauma, Health Equity, and Related Social Needs
- Advising and Educating
- Advocacy and Public Engagement

2024 – 2025 Board Priority Areas:

Empathy and Understanding

Goal: All Alaskans are provided with dignity and respect and are viewed as valued members of their families and communities.

Activities:

- Adapt S.4301 to remove stigmatizing language from Alaska statutes.
- Behavioral Health Awareness Media Campaign.
- Create or adapt media guidelines for reporting on individuals with behavioral health conditions.
- Create or adapt an employment toolkit for individuals with mental health conditions to pair with the Office of Substance Misuse and Addiction Prevention's.
- Addiction and the Workplace Toolkit.
- Create and publish a 2025 desk calendar for legislators with stories and pictures of people with lived experience.
- Advocate for legislation addressing barrier crime issues with peer support.

Evaluation

Goal: Alaska's behavioral health services are routinely evaluated for efficacy through a comprehensive process which includes input from persons who have lived experience.

Activities:

- Participate in the development of the 2025-2026 combined Mental Health and Substance Use, Prevention, Treatment, and Recovery Services (SUPTRS) block grant, and solicit public comment from behavioral health consumers.
- Conduct an evaluation of state-funded behavioral health services for publication in an annual report.
- Conduct a survey of youth services in the host community for the fall 2024 meeting.
- Present emerging and relevant data to the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority.
- Monitor relevant state and federal legislation and take action as needed.

Consumer Engagement

Goal: The boards will amplify the voices of individuals and families with behavioral health conditions as well as service providers and communities.

Activities:

- Create a landing page of the AMHB/ABADA website with instructions on how to file a grievance with inpatient/residential behavioral health providers.
- Host monthly listening sessions for individuals interacting with the state behavioral health system.
- Create a method to solicit public comment from consumers outside of quarterly meetings via the website.

Stephanie Hopkins stated that the intent is to do an annual report at the end of this one-year action plan that may help inform the boards' priorities for the next year. She noted that they would like to do a five-year plan next year following this similar structure.

James Savage offered a huge thank you to staff on behalf of AMHB. Even though they are sorely short staffed, the boards continue to receive quality content and information from staff. A heartfelt thank you to the staff for doing all this work. Kara Nelson echoed her appreciation for their incredible staff, and she is proud to be a part of the work.

Tonie Protzman asked about the position of the boards on the various compacts happening around the state. She noted that something needs to be done to expedite licensure in Alaska, and she asked what they can do to support providers that want to come to Alaska to work. Stephanie noted that there are always more than 10 licensing bills online in BASIS, and the boards advocate for the bills as appropriate. More consumer engagement to hear about the issues facing Alaskans will help the boards prioritize areas to strongly advocate for that directly affect their constituency.

Philip Licht **MOVED** to approve the priority areas as presented, **SECONDED** by Anthony Cravalho. A roll call vote was taken as follows:

- Monique Andres – yes
- Anthony Cravalho – yes
- Bobby Dorton – yes
- Philip Licht – yes
- Christine Robbins – yes
- Katholyn Runnels – yes
- Renee Schofield – yes
- Kara Nelson – yes
- Tonie Protzman – yes
- Jenifer Galvan – yes
- James Savage – yes

The motion **PASSED** by unanimous consent.

PUBLIC TESTIMONY

Public testimony was received, and a full transcript was prepared.

COMMITTEE SEATS

The following board members volunteered for the following seats:

- SSPC – Tonie Protzman
- Legislative Advocacy Committee – Jenifer Galvan
- Executive Committee At-Large – Jenifer Galvan
- Board Development Workgroup – Kara Nelson

- Alaska Psychiatric Institute Governing Body – James Savage

SOUTHCENTRAL MEETING UPDATE

Charity Lee shared that the spring meeting will be in Wasilla April 16 – 18 at the Mat-Su Resort. Public comment will be held at the public library in an effort to make the venue more accessible to the general public.

Monique Andrews asked how board members can suggest presenters for inclusion in the quarterly meeting agendas. Charity stated that board members can e-mail her and Stephanie directly or suggest it aloud during quarterly meetings.

HISTORY OF AMHB, ABADA, AND THE TRUST – JEFF JESSEE

Jeff Jessee shared his background, education, and work experience prior to becoming the CEO of the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority.

In the mid 1980's, controversy developed over who the beneficiaries of the Trust really were. In 1983 the court decided the Trust had been breached by the state, and the state had essentially removed a number of beneficiary groups from the Trust. The only group that remained as beneficiaries were people who experienced mental illness. Jeff was approached by the Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education when he worked for Alaska Disability Law Center (DLC), and they asked DLC to intervene. Nugen's Ranch hired another attorney, Philip Volland, to represent their interest as beneficiaries. The court agreed that everyone who went to the former institute Morningside was, in fact, a beneficiary and added that the state might be able to add beneficiaries to the Trust, but they can't reduce the beneficiaries below the groups that were sent to Morningside. Those beneficiaries included people with developmental disabilities, people with dementia, people with alcohol or drug-induced psychosis, and people who experience some mental illness.

Jeff Jessee explained that in the '70's and '80's, federal policy was developing around giving consumers more voice, and there was federal legislation that required every state to have a planning council for people with developmental disabilities. That became the Governor's Council in 1987. The same was also done for the AMHB that same year. ABADA was formed in 1988, and this combined the Review Board on Alcoholism and the Advisory Board on Drug Abuse. The idea was to try to integrate advocacy and planning so people would be working together.

Jeff explained that when the federal government enacted the Trust, they made the legislature the trustee. He and Philip Volland pushed very hard for the removal of the legislature as trustee and the creation of an independent board of trustees that could watch over the Trust's assets as well as spend income from the Trust for the benefit of the beneficiaries. They determined a board of seven trustees that came from a variety of experience in financial management, resource development, and asset management, which didn't leave much room for representation of the beneficiaries. The boards were the logical choice to be able to provide the Trust with grassroots information from beneficiaries. The four beneficiary groups were AMHB, ABADA, the Governor's Council, and

the Alaska Commission on Aging (ACoA). These boards have a critical role to play in informing and advising the Trustees to keep them focused on the needs of the beneficiaries.

In the 2000's, there was a fairly significant schism between the mental health advocates and advocates for alcohol and substance use, and the groups didn't get along. They never met at the same time in the same place, and they never communicated. The alcohol side felt their system was more of a peer support model, where the mental health field was a medical model where people had degrees and were licensed.

In 2005, Trustee John Malone saw no reason why there should be a separation between mental health and substance use when they knew that the co-occurrence and interrelatedness of those issues was critical. More than a year's worth of effort was spent trying to get the boards to meet together at the same time in the same town. They met in Fairbanks with one of their three days overlapping, and it did not go well. The Trustees decided that instead of pushing the boards together, they would integrate the staff. This method proved much more successful.

Jeff Jessee noted that the idea of integrating rather than siloing continues. The boards have joined with the SSPC, and the Governor's Council has the Special Education Advisory Panel. He was recently pondering if it would be a violation of the settlement if the administration tried to, by Executive Order, merge the board members into one board. Although he has not researched it, his gut feeling is that it would not violate the settlement if the functions of the two boards to represent the needs of their beneficiaries to the Trustees is not impaired by the merger.

Jeff Jessee emphasized that the role the boards play in informing the Trustees about the needs of the beneficiaries is essential. The Trust does not belong to the Trustees; it belongs to the beneficiaries, and the boards should not underestimate their role and responsibility in advocating for the beneficiaries.

While the board members and Jeff Jessee were discussing the recent legislative audit of the Trust because of improper investments by Trustees, Brenda Moore remarked on the recent process Trustees are engaging in to redo all of their governance documents. When they started the process, they went into executive session with their attorney, which didn't feel right to some meeting attendees. It gave the appearance that Trustees were going behind closed doors to rewrite everything. Jeff noted that when he was CEO, the Open Meetings Act was also an issue and was part of the findings of the legislative audit.

CLOSING COMMENTS

Closing comments are summarized as follows:

- Appreciate Jeff Jessee coming and presenting to the boards.
- A lot of information was presented during this meeting. Thanks to staff for their efforts.
- This is a working board, and all members need to be sure to step up and help out during the legislative session.
- Thanks to everyone for attending. Great energy from the boards.

- Excited to see the direction of the boards in the coming years with the Board Development Workgroup.
- Very impressed with what staff has accomplished during this time of the executive director transition.
- Excited about the action plan. The materials are clear and concise with objectives and tasks. Impressive document given the staffing shortfall.
- Have felt much more positive about the boards since the Valdez meeting. Looking forward to a productive 2024.
- Looking forward to being fully staffed.
- Honored to be a new member of this group.
- Thankful for Renee Schofield's clear direction and leadership.
- Excited for the April meeting.
- Thank you to Anthony Cravalho and Brenda Moore for encouraging reupping on the board.

ADJOURNMENT

Bobby Dorton **MOVED** to adjourn, **SECONDED** by Kara Nelson. Hearing no objection, the motion **PASSED**, and the meeting adjourned at 12:03 p.m.

MOTIONS

Renee Scholfield **MOVED** to approve the agenda as presented, **SECONDED** by Tonie Protzman. Hearing no objection, the motion **PASSED**. Page 1.

Katholyn Runnels **MOVED** to adjourn, **SECONDED** by Renee Schofield. Hearing no objection, the motion **PASSED**, and the meeting adjourned at 12:56 p.m. Page 31.