



CMHI Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

DATE: May 13, 2025 TIME: 9:00AM-10:30AM FACILITATOR: Ben Kolendo

Advisory Committee Members Present

Ben Kolendo – Youth Voice, CMHI Advisory Committee Chair
Dr. Laura Brunner – Fairbanks Pediatrician
Tina Voelker-Ross – Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority (AMHTA)
Dustin Larna – Residential Youth Care, Inc. (RYC) Ketchikan
Pat Sidmore (Sharon Fishel) – Dept. Of Education & Early Development (DEED)
Kermit Wilson (New ED) – AMHB/ABADA/SSPC
Rick Rau DBH – CMHI Grant Project Lead (DBH)
Courtney Yemiola – Lead Family Coordinator and CMHI Advisory Committee Member (UAA CHD)

Advisory Committee Members Absent

Jenna Wiersma – New Summits ABA. LLC
Ronto Roney – Maniilaq Association
Kim Swisher – Office of Children Services (OCS)
Shannon Cross-Azbill – Division of Juvenile Justice (DJJ)
Tasha Yatchmeneff – Indian Child Welfare

Other Attendees

Tracy Dompeling – Director, Division of Behavioral Health (DBH)
Nicole Lebo – Department of Health (DOH) Commissioner's office
Leah Van Kirk – DOH Commissioner's office
Erinn Barnett – UAA CHD
Chris Sturm – UAA CHD
Jenn Carson – DBH

Jessica Harvill, UAA
Stefanie O'Brien, DBH
Kristina Welztin, DBH
Tandra Thompson, Community Connections
Maria Del Rosario, Division of Behavioral Health
Jack Byrnes, Community Connections
Joanne Singleton, DPH
Emily Urlacher, DPH

Call to Order – Ben Kolendo

Roll Call

Welcome Message

CMHI Advisory Committee Chair, Ben Kolendo provided opening remarks to welcome participants, review the agenda for the day and note that his hope for the committee is to move the committee toward more discussions in the meeting.

CMHI and Behavior Health Roadmap Alignment

Jenn Carson reviewed the Advisory Committee's Charter noting that the mission of the Advisory Committee (AC) is to offer informed recommendations for the direction and execution of CMHI project activities along with integrating related elements from the Behavioral Health Roadmap. She reiterated the following responsibilities of the AC and its members:

- Meeting quarterly
- Oversight & Accountability – Provide oversight of the CMHI project, ensuring alignment with state & federal requirements goals of the System of Care (SoC)
- Collaboration – Facilitate cross-agency partnerships and collaboration to enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of the SoC
- Guidance – Guide Division of Behavioral Health (DBH) to implement CMHI activities that are culturally responsive and family-friendly
- Reporting – Support DBH in reporting outcomes and progress to SAMHSA and other stakeholders as required
- The AC also has a role in the State of Alaska's Behavioral Health Roadmap (BHR) for oversight, accountability and guidance for DBH in the implementation of the Behavioral Health Roadmap.

Leah Van Kirk provided an update to the Behavioral Health Roadmap (BRH) noting that the DOH's websites have been updated. Website pages are being built to share documents with the public noting that nearly 50% of the action items from the BHR are being worked on (21 out of 47). Other highlights include:

- With SB 240-HB 343 passed, DBH is currently working with DEED on regulations for this.
- DOH is also offering 2.5 million dollars over 3 years to inform them of what can be supported and what are barriers there are to schools to be a Medicaid provider.
- Site visits to school districts billing Medicaid have also started.
- Step down services for individuals with complex needs are occurring through DCFS and DOH's collaboration on the Complex Care Committee and Crisis Response Team. They are working to address gaps when an individual doesn't qualify for additional support, but needs residential
- HB 73 is one facet of this support where small, home-like settings will be tailored to individuals with specific needs, such as youth, dementia, etc.
- 988 utilization has increased by youth in the past year (as well as all ages)

CMHI Updates

DBH CMHI Project Director, Rick Rau, provided an overview of CMHI grantees focus on building a local system of care so that children and youth can be retained in their community and the state. He noted there are almost 30 new youths since the previous quarter report, with 257 unduplicated new clients in total for the current fiscal year. Two of the youth needed a higher level of support outside of their communities.

Erinn Barnett summarized the current CMHI ECHO series through Center for Human Development (CHD) and discussed DBH Mental Health Clinician, Kristina Weltzin's, upcoming session on Youth ISA funds. Erinn highlighted feedback from participants thus far:

- Barriers to implementation, needing more technical assistance
- Need for more training
- Need for more support in partnering/collaborating

Understanding CMHI – Grantee Presentation

CMHI Lead Family Coordinator Courtney Yemiola provided updates on the successes, impacts, and barriers experienced by CMHI grantees. She then introduced a grantee representative to present directly to the advisory committee.

Megan Spencer, Executive Director and Children's Mental Health Clinician gave a presentation on Railbelt's CMHI work. This also included an overview and history of the agency. Megan shared a visual of their System of Care model as well as of their school partnership using MTSS. Highlights from their work are the increase in children being served through that partnership (up 40% from last fiscal year) as well as establishing a Wellness Room in the school. From their data, they see that family members are referring to other family members for support and some children and youth are self-referring. She ended her presentation noting "James'" story and how he went from residential to being a thriving member of the community.

It was noted that the school-based social worker is from a DEED grant.

See *CMHI Advisory Meeting 5.13.25 PowerPoint slides* for more details on grantee successes, impacts and barriers

Public Comment

There were no public comments.

Moving Forward- Closing

Members noted that hearing about the work done so far was inspiring and exciting to hear about. In particular, Dustin noted it was great to see Railbelt engaging youth and families in unique ways. Others noted that they enjoyed hearing about the details and stories of success as well as the overall figures.

Ben posed questions to answer as the AC moves forward:

- How are grantee projects connecting and meeting the youth who need them?
- What barriers (funding, policy, logistics, etc.) should the AC address?
- Where, as a committee, do we need to step in to see if CMHI needs adjustment or change?

Next Meeting

- August 12, 2025, from 9-10:30 AM

Adjourn

Adjourned at 10:14 AM

Acronym Dictionary

AC	Advisory Committee
ABA	Applied Behavior Analysis
AMHB	Alaska Mental Health Board
AMHTA	Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority
BHR	Behavioral Health Roadmap
CHD	Center for Human Development (at UAA's College of Health)
CMHI	Children's Mental Health Initiative
DBH	Division of Behavioral health (at DOH)
DEED	Department of Education & Early Development
DFCS	Department of Family and Community Services
DOH	Department of Health
DJJ	Division of Juvenile Justice (within OCS at DFCS)
DOH	Department of Health
ECHI	Extension for Community Healthcare Outcomes\
MTSS	Multi-Tiered Systems of Support
OCS	Office of Children's Services (at DFCS)
RYC	Residential Youth Care
SAMHSA	Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
SoC	System of Care
UAA	University of Anchorage Alaska