

Governor's Commission on Alcohol and Other Drugs
Meeting Minutes 02/23/2024
9:30am- 11:30am
NH State House
Executive Council Chambers

Attendance: James Boffetti , Alex Casale, Matt McKenney, Katja Fox, Chuck Lloyd, Lt. Ben Williams, Peter Ames, Heather Clogston, Annette Escalante, Traci Fowler, David Mara, Lori Weaver, Helen Hanks, Seddon Savage, Jess Edwards, Timothy Lena, Robert Quinn, Patrick Tufts

Approval of Minutes (Vote), Patrick Tufts

Patrick called the meeting to order at 9:35 and asked for a vote to approve the 12/15/23 minutes:

First: James Boffetti

Second: Timothy Lena

Three abstentions: Peter Ames, Chuck Lloyd, Seddon Savage. All else in favor. Motion carries.

Patrick explained that the two letters of support included in the packet were written on behalf of the Opioid Abatement Committee. He wanted to share them with the commission and ask for any questions.

Guest speaker(s)- NH National Guard Counter Drug- Major General Mikolaitis, CW2 Rossetti, ISG Rodriguez, SFC Frost

General David Mikolaitis and his team from the NH National Guard presented next. The National Guard does many things that people do not know about. They run a program called Starbase, which provides 5th grade STEM classes to underprivileged kids in Pembroke, NH. They also run a counter drug program, which is funded by Congress. Nicholas Rossetti, Juan Rodriguez, and Richard Frost spoke about the program, which supports state and local law enforcement agencies in different capacities, including supply and demand reduction. Their overall mission is to support agencies in the disruption of addiction and drug trafficking activities. They provide training and support to law enforcement agencies and any group that has a drug prevention nexus. They are good planners, which are sorely needed in the prevention field, and employ military specific training. Many communities throw darts at a board when figuring out what to do. The National Guard wants to put that into a bigger, strategic level plan.

They are also adept evaluators and share those experiences with their coalitions. They are skilled at identifying goals, objectives, tactics, and resources that a coalition might need to address their problems and building a map for all of those things. They are coaches, so when they work with a community, they build plans and also do prevention work as force multipliers, working with police and the Department of Safety in classrooms with the DARE program. Some even work as fitness coaches for kids. Every day, there are 10-12 people from the NH National Guard working to keep drugs off the streets.

They follow some military practices that they align with civilians and have brought in several million dollars in funding. Jess Edwards asked to what extent they might be coordinating the STEM education piece with Civil Air Patrol, as years ago, they were trying to take their STEM curriculum and get it shared into schools. Frost said they host Civil Air Patrol, but have not specifically coordinated with them, since the work they do with the 5th graders is different. Timothy Lena thanked Frost for all the help he has offered to his organization, with planning, demand reduction, and ensuring youth operators are making the right decisions.

If people want to get in touch with their team, they should use the contact information at the end of the packet. They also do open houses twice a year. These are typically for law enforcement to come in and see their capabilities and how they can help, but they would be more than happy to have commission members at the next open house as well.

Commissioner's Update- Lori Weaver

On January 31st, Lori received confirmation that she will be Commissioner for 4 years. Last year, they discussed a road map and strategic planning at a macro level, and they are now doing the year-end report for 2023 and transitioning to roadmap 2.0. They will be lifting and transitioning things that were not fully in the business plan. They are down to a 15% vacancy rate and moving in the right direction with retention.

Mission Zero, the department's effort to eliminate Emergency Department boarding, launched last summer. The last 5 months of 2023 were about securing funding and getting out the message. This year is more about standing up and focusing on key strategies. One of those is setting up crisis stabilization centers where people can have their needs met without going to the ED. They spent 6 months working with all stakeholders involved to create one system with a bird's eye view for every facility that has a DRF, so hospitals can talk about patient placement and see who is in the beds. This is the most significant progress that has been made. It is a hard process because people have to change the way they are doing things by working with the state and not fighting against it. The hospital association has helped a lot, along with community health centers.

As far as the DRF beds at NH Hospital, while several things with the construction have gone wrong, there is a goal to have all of those beds back online by the end of 2024, and hopefully sooner. By the end of 2024, there will be 5 more DRF beds at Dartmouth. Solution Health is in the process of building their hospital by 2026. This is not something that can happen overnight, but they are making progress and are grateful for all the stakeholders who have come together to make this work. Jess Edwards added it has been great to watch the leadership of DHHS over the last few years. The management team has gotten stronger, and the new hires have been great.

Timothy Lena asked about adolescent intervention. Lori said they have been running Hampstead now for almost 2 years. They have recently put out a permanent RFP to run that, which they are working on now. Construction on some of the units is being done, and beds will be coming back online. The psychiatric treatment facility has been open since last May. They are at 93% of capacity, but there have been some issues with staffing. Even though the ED boarding doesn't cover adolescents, they do have a priority of announcing a new vendor soon. Lori said she will give updates when they get there. Peter Ames said he appreciates the partnership, and in particular the care traffic control piece. His agency is optimistic about where that is going to lead them.

Directors Report- Katja Fox

Jill Burke provided the dashboard update, which can be viewed in the packet. She introduced Kimberly Waif, the Operations Administrator, who has a rich background in prevention and the hospital system. Jill pointed to the dashboard next. In years past, they have not done two state fiscal years, but this year, they were able to get two years together with Matt and Traci's leadership. The contracting process can be 6-9 months, so this is really helpful. As an aside, she added that they do not know what the alcohol

profits will be in 2026, so that number should go up. Without knowing how the services are doing, it is hard to vote on what is and is not effective. They are working with task force members to develop that. Trish Kelly is the new associate overseeing behavioral health. Morissa Henn was promoted to Deputy Commissioner, and Trish stepped into her position. Trish is overseeing Morissa's previous DCYF portfolio and is also the associate commissioner for Public Health. This brings a new opportunity for further integration with Public Health, and they are excited to have her on board.

Patrick asked Chief Mara to address the 2023 NH Overdose stats. The total OD confirmed deaths that occurred in the report dated 2/13/24 is 50 down from last year's number of 487, but the final number is not out yet. There could be cases that were deemed medical issues that could end up changing when toxicology results come back. Still, this is the second report in a row that has shown promising results. They dug into actual cases with police officers, medical personnel, and others, and have come up with some recommendations that will be listed in the report by the end of the year. They are having great discussions and learning a lot. Maine, who had over 700 last year, is going to see a decrease.

Seddon Savage said the numbers in 2023 seem to be decreasing, and asked what was responsible for the increase in 2020-21. David said several factors could have contributed. The Doorway system and other things have started to kick in, along with recent flooding the state with Narcan. In 2020, Fentanyl was just hitting the country. There was a lot of isolation during Covid while people were indoors. The availability of fentanyl is higher now. It is also cheaper and there is a lot of competition now to sell it. Compared to the rest of the nation, NH is doing very well.

Jess Edwards asked if we are able to see into this population and whether or not the decreased deaths are because we have fewer people taking the drug, if they are doing it smarter, or if it correlates with Narcan giving us time to prevent deaths. The response was that it is tough to quantify Narcan's effect on deaths, but we did have a drop when we started flooding the state with it. When ambulances go to a scene, they do see empty bottles of Narcan, so they can see that people are using it.

Traci said progress is being made, and asked about how Vermont was doing when compared with other New England states. David said he hasn't communicated with his contacts there since the fall, but he will send the report to Patrick if they have one out. Patrick said to email kim.fallon@doj.nh.gov, who has all the data available. Robert Quinn said that Fentanyl and the majority of drugs are coming into the crime lab. Those who think they are buying cocaine should be aware that it probably has fentanyl in it. Fentanyl is deadly and until it comes to the crime lab, you don't know what you are buying. Meth also continues to be on their radar. 146 people were killed in 2022, and 130 in 2023. We need to focus on those and if their toxicology comes back. Sometimes people on drugs will get behind the wheel and innocent people will die. David said in a recent study, they found the majority of overdose deaths are not injected, but are from means like smoking, snorting, or pills. Many of those people don't realize they are taking fentanyl.

Alex said the decrease in OD deaths could affect funding and asked if there was an update on that. Katja said when they submit their application on March 15th, they will be able to see those allocations, but they will not know what the funding formula will be until that time.

Helen Hanks spoke about why the numbers have improved, citing addiction treatment medications, and partners through Medicaid ensuring what is covered. They have been doing a lot of work since 2018 to support community resources. There has also been a lot of great work on Crosswalking, which should make that question easier to answer as well.

Public Comment:

Susan Michale, who facilitates a family support group for adults with a loved one with SUD, asked how old the kids are at the Hampstead hospital. The response was that it ranges from kids as young as 5 (although that is rare) up to 21. They do have a separate unit for the older patients. Susan also asked if the new version of Narcan, which she has heard is more potent, is available through Doorways. Katja said a drug similar to Naloxone is on the market, and that it is very effective. Seddon Savage added that the drug is not exactly like Narcan, but it is a different drug that reverses the effects of opioids. It is not clear in what context it will be more or less effective than naloxone, or if there is any data on it being better at reversing the effects of Fentanyl than Naloxone. Patrick said he will track down the press release and send it out. It is not yet available through Doorways, but it is something they are looking at.

A member of the public asked if drug related traffic fatalities are being tracked, and if perhaps Maine is higher because of their marijuana policies. He also asked if we are tracking down fentanyl dealers by tracking down marijuana dealers. The response was that as far as traffic accidents, the commissioner gets a report weekly, and toxicology is looked at in these cases. We are aware and pay close attention to why people are dying on the highways. Often times, it is a criminal case or poly drug use, but toxicology is always taken when we have fatal accidents.

Task Force Updates- Task Force Chairs

When comparing Maine's high rate of overdose deaths with ours, it is important to note that they were getting less than \$10 million in SOR funding, while we were getting much more. We are keeping track of the different buckets of funding that might be timing out or reducing, and trying to get ahead of that so we are not losing ground on some of the good work that has been done. Patrick congratulated them on getting two years' worth of funding done.

Dr. Savage said in order to develop measures and metrics that can track any progress on substance use harm in the state, they are working with the inventory of known databases with state level data on substance use and substance use harm. This was a huge task due to the large amount of data out there. There is no one place to go, so the goal is to continue to get inventory to a point where it could be 1 page of data. They are looking at which measures the dashboard might include, along with the objectives of the state plan, such as reducing substance use death and harm in the state and access to treatment. Lastly, they are trying to measure which strategies we are doing the best with, and looking at the data at a more granular level to measure strategies that are evidence based such as Prevention, Treatment, and Harm Reduction. The hope is to reorganize current metrics, not to abandon them. They are also looking at metrics for all the funded projects to make sure they are used in decision making. If we know the outcomes of where our money has gone and whether it has been successful, this will help inform our decisions moving forward.

Helen Hanks said there has been a lot of great dialogue, and there have been many opportunities for marketing across the state. Patrick said we need to be telling more of the good stories. There are so many good things going on that can debunk myths and get people to the right information quicker. We need to start focusing on some of these outcomes and make people aware of the great work being done.

Reports- Amy Daniels

Amy started with the Annual Progress Report. Links to this are included and are available as slides on the website. There is also a QR code that will take you to the Governor's Commission site. All the work has been done since the commission adopted the updated plan, which is cross referenced in the other documents. To understand how they fit with the commission, understanding the document is helpful. Amy's presentation includes highlights from all of the terrific taskforce work and is intended to be a snapshot of what the task force work looks like. It is critically important that the Public Input Document is read as a summary of what the folks wanted to say to the commission. This is peoples' opinions and feelings. For instance, if someone says something about access to treatment, even if it isn't really the case, it is important to know that is being said out there.

The investment workbook is a pdf of an excel workbook on key pieces of information about contracts in the funding dashboard. It describes what strategy the investment relates to, how it is named on the dashboard, and a brief description of the scope of work (some of these scopes of work are 10 pages or more.) The commission used the action plan as a guiding document. They intentionally worked synergistically with the task forces of other commissions, such as opioid abatement, along with the public and with DHHS, who has been an incredible partner.

There are a number of funded initiatives. Two funding sources are in one contract sometimes. Some contracts have a host of funding sources, while others have one. The department tried to be intentional in what they funded. Patrick pointed out there is a lot of info which most are seeing for the first time. He asked people to review it between now and the next meeting and email him about anything they want to take a deeper dive into.

Patrick thanked Amy for the tremendous amount of work by her and her team. He asked that everyone read the public comment section, as he learned a lot from that.

Patrick announced the commission will meet again on April 26th and adjourned the meeting at 11:03 AM.