

S. C. MENTAL HEALTH COMMISSION MEETING
SCDMH Administration
2414 Bull Street, Columbia, South Carolina 29201
January 3, 2025

A Business Meeting of the S.C. Mental Health Commission was held in Room 320 at the S.C. Department of Mental Health Administration Building on Friday, January 3, 2025, at 10:30 a.m. The meeting notice and agenda were posted prior to the meeting and notice made to all individuals and news media who requested information in accordance with State law.

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Levy called the meeting to order at 10:30 a.m. Chaplain Kynan Robinson provided the invocation.

SPECIAL RECOGNITIONS

Ms. Louise Johnson

Dr. Robert Bank recognized Ms. Louise Johnson and on behalf of the Department of Mental Health and the Commission presented her a resolution honoring her for 46 years of service to the Department, and congratulated her on her upcoming retirement. Ms. Johnson's resolution read as follows:

- Whereas:** The South Carolina Mental Health Commission and the State Director of the South Carolina Department of Mental Health recognize the retirement of Louise K. Johnson; and
- Whereas:** Mental health is critical to the well-being and vitality of all South Carolinians; and
- Whereas:** Ms. Johnson has improved the lives of individuals living with mental illness, serving in various roles during her 46-year career with SCDMH, including her current position as Child/Adolescent/Family Services director, and leading multiple collaborative efforts, including the Afterschool Alliance, the Joint Council on Children and Adolescents, and others; and
- Whereas:** Ms. Johnson has dedicated her career to improving the lives of children and their families, via her work in School Mental Health, the FOCUS grant, the No Wrong Door Initiative, Youth Suicide Prevention grant, and a multitude of other programs and services; and
- Whereas:** Ms. Johnson has shown outstanding leadership in advancing the child and adolescent field through pursuing and obtaining funding opportunities of more than \$50 million to improve services for the underserved, targeting rural communities; and
- Whereas:** Ms. Johnson has been recognized for her dedication and skill, as SCDMH's employee of the year and an Equity Leaders Action Network fellow, among other awards; and
- Whereas:** The South Carolina Mental Health Commission and the State Director of the South Carolina Department of Mental Health recognize and thank Ms. Johnson for her devoted service to the South Carolina Department of Mental Health; and
- Now, therefore:** We express our profound appreciation to Ms. Johnson for her steadfast service to the mentally ill and her invaluable service to the South Carolina Department of Mental Health; offer her our sincere gratitude and best wishes in her retirement; and order that a copy of this Resolution be made a part of the Commission's permanent records.

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Ms. Avis Buchanan

Dr. Robert Bank recognized Ms. Avis Buchanan and on behalf of the Department of Mental Health and the Commission presented her a resolution honoring her for 46 years of service to the Department, and congratulated her on her retirement. Ms. Buchanan's resolution read as follows:

- Whereas:** The South Carolina Mental Health Commission and the State Director of the South Carolina Department of Mental Health recognize Avis Buchanan for 46 years of service to the SCDMH and congratulate her on her retirement; and
- Whereas:** Mental health is critical to the well-being and vitality of all South Carolinians; and
- Whereas:** Ms. Buchanan has improved the lives of individuals living with mental illness for 46 years, serving the Agency in multiple capacities, most recently as nurse administrator at Columbia Area Mental Health Center, a position she held for 11 years; and
- Whereas:** Ms. Buchanan has shown enduring dedication to and concern for the wellbeing of SCDMH patients throughout her tenure, displaying an exemplary work ethic in essential roles, including nurse supervisor and director of nursing at the Crafts-Farrow State Hospital, nurse administrator/manager at Bryan Psychiatric Hospital, and nurse administrator for Columbia Area Mental Health's Quality Improvement, Link Program, and the Center itself; and
- Whereas:** During her career with SCDMH, Ms. Buchanan served the United States as a Battalion Commander for the United States Army Reserves for 30 years, including deployment during Operation Desert Storm; and
- Whereas:** The South Carolina Mental Health Commission and the State Director of the South Carolina Department of Mental Health recognize and thank Ms. Buchanan for her steadfast service to the South Carolina Department of Mental Health; and
- Now, therefore:** We express our profound appreciation to Ms. Buchanan for her dedicated, long-term service to the mentally ill and her invaluable service to the South Carolina Department of Mental Health; offer her our sincere gratitude and best wishes in her retirement; and order that a copy of this Resolution be made a part of the Commission's permanent records.

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APPROVAL OF AGENDA

There being no amendments or corrections to the agenda, the agenda was approved as presented.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

There being no amendments or corrections to the minutes of the Berkeley Community Mental Health Center's presentation, the Commission meeting of November 1, 2024, and the Called Commission meeting of December 4, 2024, the minutes were approved as presented.

2025 COMMISSION MEETINGS AT CENTERS/FACILITIES

A motion was made and duly seconded to amend the 2025 Commission schedule to hold three Commission meetings onsite as follows:

- *February 7, 2025 – Morris Village Alcohol & Drug Addiction Treatment Center, 610 Faison Drive, Columbia, S.C.*

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- *June 6, 2025 – Spartanburg Mental Health Center, 250 Dewey Avenue, Spartanburg, S.C.*
- *October 3, 2025 – Patrick B. Harris Psychiatric Hospital, 130 Highway 252, Anderson, S.C.*

All voted in favor to the above motion; the motion carried.

MONTHLY/QUARTERLY INFORMATION REPORTS

On behalf of Ms. Elizabeth Hutto, General Counsel, Mr. Logan Royals, Attorney, Office of General Counsel, presented the items listed under Monthly/Quarterly Informational Reports, copies of which had been provided to the Commission.

Mr. Royals reported the following:

- For the Office of Public Safety, there was one pending investigation for the month of November 2024 and one pending investigation for the month of December 2024.
- There were 17 pending SLED investigations for the month of November 2024 and 14 pending SLED investigations for the month of December 2024.
- There were 11 cases assigned to the Long-term Ombudsman Office in December 2024.
- There was one case assigned to local law enforcement in December 2024.

Mr. Royals highlighted the following from the Patient Advocacy Report:

- 35 calls to patient advocacy in October 2024; a total of 1,489 year to date. Ms. Hutto noted that one patient repeatedly called the toll-free line in excess of 250 times during the month of March and two patients repeatedly called the toll-free line in excess of 100 times during the months of June and July. Therefore, data for calls in 2024 will be skewed.
- 70 complaints were resolved in October 2024; a total of 886 year to date.
- The number of complaints by category resolved in October 2024 is 84 (*complaints are broken out by category, a single patient complaint may have more than one category*).

BULL STREET BID

Mr. Alex Pate, Attorney, Office of General Counsel, reported the property owned by the Department along the west side of Bull Street is not currently in use by the Department. Along the eastern side, the Department has its Central Administrative offices at 2414 Bull Street. Based on directives from the South Carolina General Assembly and the South Carolina Department of Administration (SCDOA), the offices currently in Central Administration are slated to move to Cayce, South Carolina in early-to-mid 2025. The SCDOA is prepared to begin marketing efforts for the sale of the property located at 2414 Bull Street, but any sale agreement(s) would be contingent on court approval of the agreements as well as DMH completing its use of the Central Administration Building. Appraisals and surveys for property along either side of Bull Street are pending. The appraisals and surveys are necessary to seek court approval.

Mr. Pate stated DMH recommends approval and a record in the Commission minutes of the resolution to classify the property as surplus contingent on the cessation of use of the Central Administration building by the DMH and approval of final sale by the court. There was discussion.

By motion duly made and seconded, the Commission approved the request as presented.

All voted in favor to the above motion; the motion carried.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Dr. Bank gave an update on the Slighs Avenue property. He said the process for the sale of the 15-acre Slighs Avenue tract adjacent to the C.M. Tucker, Jr., Nursing Care Center, to the University of South Carolina (USC) began over a year ago, in 2023. The Circuit Court granted approval in November 2024, and the State Fiscal Accountability Authority

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granted approval in December 2024. The proceeds from the sale of the property must remain in trust for the benefit of DMH for the care and treatment of the mentally ill. A closing date on the property sale is forthcoming.

Dr. Bank announced the following:

- The South Carolina General Assembly will convene on January 14, 2025 to begin the first year of its 126th legislative session. They will adjourn on May 8, 2025.
- The Ways and Means Budget Subcommittee chairman is Representative Lee Hewitt from Georgetown, S.C. A new member, Representative Brandon Newton, from Lancaster joins the subcommittee along with previous members, Representatives Bill Clyburn, Lonnie Hosey, and Todd Rutherford.
- DMH budget presentation to the Ways and Means subcommittee is scheduled for Wednesday, January 22, 2025.
- Two restructuring bills have been introduced:
 - H.3613 - the House version, would establish the Executive Office of Health and Policy, with multiple component departments under it: The Department of Health Financing, the Department of Public Health, the Department on Aging, the Department of Intellectual and Related Disabilities, the Department of Behavioral Health, by abolishing and combining the functions of the Department of Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Services (DAODAS), the Department of Disabilities and Special Needs (DDSN), the Department of Public Health (DPH), Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), DMH, and the Department of Aging. The Governor would appoint a Secretary of Health and Policy with the advice and consent of a majority of the Senate, and majority of the House. The Commission becomes an advisory board, comprised of a member from each Congressional district. The Secretary would appoint a Director of Behavioral Health which would combine mental health and substance use services. A Long-Term Care Council would also be created. This act takes effect upon approval by the Governor.
 - S.2 - the Senate version, would establish the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities, comprised of the Office of Intellectual Disabilities, the Office of Mental Health, and the Office of Substance Abuse Services by abolishing and combining the functions of DDSN, DMH, and DAODAS. The Governor would appoint a Department Director with advice and consent of the Senate. Each office would be led by a director appointed by the department Director, with the current office directors serving as interim unless otherwise removed by the department Director. The Commission would be abolished. The bill mentions the Secretary of Health and Policy in one section, using language from last year's bill, but uses it nowhere else in the bill so it appears to be an oversight. The bill also cleans up some language that previously listed DHEC's duties. The legislation would take effect upon approval by the Governor.

DEPARTMENTAL OVERVIEW AND UPDATE

Administrative Services & Financial Status

Ms. Debbie Calcote, Deputy Director, Administrative Services, presented the Administrative Services and monthly financial report, copies of which had been provided to the Commission. The November 30, 2024 budget report reflects a projected deficit balance of approximately \$10.7 million. This is a slight increase from the last report. The majority of the changes primarily relate to personnel resources and expenses.

Ms. Calcote reported DMH is working with managed care organizations to clarify and correct administrative issues with regard to rejected claims and billing concerns. She said this should be resolved by the end of the month.

Dr. Jones asked what could be done to mitigate the projected deficit. Dr. Bank said the deficit mainly falls on inpatient services. He said inpatient hospital costs have been steadily rising with significant increases in recent years. Over the past several years, DMH has utilized non-recurring cash reserves to fund the current operations of inpatient services while it reviewed the processes and procedures used to operate them. The FY26 budget request details the forecasted cost associated with maintaining the services provided, and if these requests are not funded, the agency will continue to operate, but will be required to reduce services to meet budgetary limitations.

Ms. Calcote gave an update on the electronic health records (EHR) system. The go-live of the community Netsmart EHR was scheduled in October 2024 but was postponed due to the aftermath of Hurricane Helene. During this pause, an option

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was identified that would allow DMH to ultimately integrate both inpatient and outpatient health records into one (currently, they function independently). The Avatar Netsmart serves as a dedicated EHR platform and is designed for organizations that provide behavioral health services in community-based and inpatient facilities. It will take a couple of years to fully integrate both health records into one. She noted the healthcare accrediting bodies, the Joint Commission and the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF), are different in their requirements. She anticipates the first go live for outpatient services will happen in July 2025. The cost to integrate is capped at \$500,000.

Ms. Calcote announced she is leaving DMH and her role as Deputy Director of Administrative Services in April 2025. The Human Resources Department has advertised the position for internal applicants only.

Psychiatric Inpatient Services & Medical Affairs Update

Dr. Chad Pollock, Deputy Director, Medical Affairs presented the Inpatient Services report, copies of which had been provided to the Commission.

Dr. Pollock introduced Dr. Eman Sharawy. In addition to her duties as Medical Director at the Beckman Center for Mental Health Services, she began her duties as Assistant Deputy Director of Medical Affairs on November 18, 2024.

Dr. Pollock reported that on he, Dr. Bank, Ms. Deborah Blalock, Mr. Allen McEniry, and Ms. Robin Crawford met with Senators Danny Verdin, Billy Garrett, and Michael Gambrell on December 16, 2024, in Anderson for a tour of Patrick B. Harris Psychiatric Hospital (Harris). The Senators got a sense of how passionate the employees and staff are for the mission of taking care of individuals with mental illness. It was a great opportunity for the Senators to see and get an understanding of the need for funding to operate our facilities and to assure the highest quality of services possible for the benefit of each patient.

Dr. Pollock announced The Joint Commission (TJC) conducted the triennial, unannounced survey November 11-15, 2024 at G. Werber Bryan Psychiatric Hospital (Bryan). There were some deficiencies cited, most of which were related to physical plant. TJC returned on December 30, 2024, for the 45-day review. The citations were cleared with the exception of one broken shower tile, which was repaired by the end of the day. Bryan is awaiting the official accreditation letter.

The November 2024 overall average daily census (ADC) for Bryan Civil and Harris was 228, with 105 ADC at Harris and 123 at Bryan. Dr. Pollock reported efforts continue to increase Harris' ADC to 115. Today's census at Harris is 108. Staff at both facilities are working hard to turn beds over more quickly and to make room for the forensic patients who could not be restored but still have inpatient psychiatric needs. Almost all of the beds in forensics are being converted into restoration beds as opposed to chronic psychiatric care. As of December 13, 2024, there were 134 on the forensic ready for admission waitlist.

Dr. Pollock recognized Ms. Tracy Richardson, Director, Office of Transition Programs (OTP). Ms. Richardson presented the OTP report, copies of which had been provided to the Commission. Following are highlights from the report.

- Olmstead spending through December 16, 2024
 - Amount paid to CRCFs on behalf of the patients: \$5,110.68
 - Amount reimbursed back to DMH: \$25,637.27
 - Number of patients assisted: 3
- Transition Specialists (TS) Program
 - Number of patients discharged through October 2024: 107
 - 30.84% of patients were discharged to CRCFs
 - 46.73% of patients were discharged back home with families
 - 14.02% of patients were discharged to sober living homes
 - 9% of patients were discharged to independent living or supervised apartments
 - Average length of stay: 8 months, 2 days
- DMH CRCFs
 - Two DMH CRCF Administrators are assisting with the monitoring of two Patriots Living CRCFs, one in Sumter and one in Taylors.
 - DMH CRCFs have 71 patients in 7 facilities.

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- Brookpine CRCF closed on November 20, 2024.
- The average length of stay for residents who are currently living in DMH CRCFs at discharge is 1.73 years.
- Clinical Care Coordination (CCC)/Community Long Term Care (CLTC)
 - There are 24 statewide CCC with 1196 cases.
 - There are 14 CLTC case managers with 990 cases.

Long-Term Care

Dr. Versie Bellamy, Deputy Director, Division of Long-Term Care (LTC), was absent, excused. On behalf of Dr. Bellamy, Dr. Bank presented the LTC report, copies of which had been provided to the Commission.

Dr. Bank announced that effective July 1, 2025, Stone Pavilion and its operations will transfer to the Department of Veterans Affairs. It is anticipated that a vendor will be awarded the operational contract for Stone by March 1, 2025. Human Resources are State HR are working closely with regard to employees who work at Stone who want to remain with DMH.

Dr. Bank said that the Roddey Pavilion is the only nursing home facility in the state that emphasizes behavioral healthcare. Patients there have nursing home needs as well as psychiatric needs, and some neurological needs. The continuing goal is to have the patients at the proper level of care.

Community Mental Health Services

Ms. Deborah Blalock, Deputy Director, Community Mental Health Services (CMHS), presented the CMHS report. Following are highlights from the report:

- Ms. Blalock announced effective January 17, 2025, Ms. Tamara Starnes will assume the role of executive director of the Berkeley Community Mental Health Center.
- Interviews are scheduled next week for the executive director position at the Spartanburg Area Mental Health Center.
- The Duke Endowment Grant for the development of a therapeutic farm program for the treatment and housing of DMH patients was submitted in December. The farm would be a transitional independent living skills and employment program to help individuals transition effectively back into society and continue their recovery journey.
- The state's second Crisis Mobilization Unit (CSU) is on track to open this month, pending the Department of Public Health inspection. The CSU is an outpatient program and will be located on the Morris Village Campus and will provide 24/7 residential stay in hopes of avoiding a psychiatric hospitalization.
- Interviews begin next week to fill the position of Director of Children Adolescents and their Families previously held by Ms. Louise Johnson who recently retired.
- Ms. Blalock announced The Aiken Barnwell Recovery Foundation, Mental Health America SC, Mental Health Heroes, and the National Alliance on Mental Illness SC are hosting a legislative breakfast on Wednesday, February 5, 2025, at the Blatt Building from 8 a.m. until 10 a.m. This event will afford an opportunity to dialog with the legislators regarding issues of concern to the mental health community.
- The Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF) will visit the mental health centers throughout the spring and summer of this year to conduct their every 3-year CARF accreditations.
- The Anderson-Oconee-Pickens (AOP) Mental Health Center will host a grand opening for their new building located at 1 Linwa Blvd., Anderson, S.C. on March 28, 2025.
- Ms. Blalock presented the CMHS Trends and Transparency Monthly Indicators (TMI) spreadsheets, copies of which had been provided to the Commission.

OTHER BUSINESS/PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no public comments.

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ADJOURNMENT

At 11:50 a.m. by motion duly made and seconded, the Commission adjourned the business meeting and entered into Executive Session to discuss pending litigation and potential sale of real estate. Upon convening in open session at 12:50, Chairman Levy noted that only information was received; no votes or actions were taken.

At 12:50 by motion duly made and seconded, the Commission adjourned the business meeting.

All voted in favor to the above motion; the motion carried.

ATTENDANCE

Commission Members

Dr. Elliott Levy, Chair,
Dr. Carl Jones, Vice Chair

Mr. Bobby Mann

Dr. Crystal Maxwell, virtually via Zoom

Visitors/Staff

Dr. Robert Bank
Avis Buchanan
Debbie Calcote
Melanie Gambrell
Louise Johnson
George McConnell
Alex Pate
Vincent Patterson
Valarie Perkins
Dr. Chad Pollock
Tracy Richardson
Logan Royals
Dr. Eman Sharawy
Gwen Watson
Brett Williams

present virtually via Zoom

Janet Bell
Deborah Blalock
Lee Bodie
Mirtha Brown
Jennifer Brush
Mary Cauthen
Akiko Dettorre
Susan Feigin
Dr. Eve Fields
Andrew Fowler
Beth Franco
Dr. Ebony Gaffney
Dr. Kelly Gothard

present virtually via Zoom

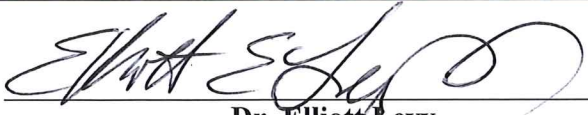
Jeffery Ham
Dr. Maryjane Hicks
Kathy Hugg
Keith Jackson
Charice Jones
Bill Lindsay
Elinor Lister
Kathleen Martin
Allen McEniry
Wanda McMichael
Margaret Meriwether
Denise Morgan
Sylvett Porter

present virtually via Zoom


Vicki Redding
Chaplain Kynan Robinson
Eric Turner
Susan von Schenk
Lindsay Walker
Kevin Woods

Visitors: Visitors present were: Bill Lindsey, Executive Director, NAMI SC; Beth Franco, Executive Director, and Kathy Martin, Attorney, Disability Rights South Carolina; Susan Feigin, Physician/APP Recruiter, and Wanda McMichael, Program Manager, Liberty Healthcare Corporation; and Susan von Schenk, Capital Information Affiliates (CIA).

APPROVALS



Dr. Elliott Levy
Chair



Kim Ballentine
Recording Secretary