Behavioral Health Commission- Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, November 4, 2026 - 2:00 p.m.
General Assembly Building

Members Present

Senator Creigh Deeds, Chair
Senator Lashrecse Aird
Senator Barbara Favola
Senator Russet Perry
Delegate Patrick Hope
Delegate Adele McClure
Delegate McClaughlin
Delegate Marcia Price
Delegate Vivian Watts
Delegate Rodney Willett

Members Absent

Senator Tara Durant
Delegate Wren Williams

Call to order and opening remarks- Senator Creigh Deeds, Chair

Roll Call – Agnes Dymora

Executive Director Nathalie Molliet Ribet provided an overview of the agenda.

BHC Associate Analyst, John Barfield, presented findings from the staff study on substance use supports and services in Virgina schools. John provided some background on the trends in adolescent substance use, its challenges, and the impact of school-based services. He gave an overview of the types of substance use prevention and education services offered in Virginia schools and how those differ based on schools' resources. John also discussed early intervention in secondary schools and the obstacles some schools face in meeting students' needs. He also described the different disciplinary paths that schools use when students are caught with illegal substances at school. He discussed referrals to clinical treatment and the barriers that many students face in accessing services in the community. Lastly, John provided four recommendations to help schools provide comprehensive and effective substance use services to students.

BHC staff summarized the recommendations and options from each of the following studies completed in 2026:

1. Substance use supports and services in Virgina schools
2. Project BRAVO/ Behavioral Health Redesign
3. Behavioral health care in Virginia jails

After options and recommendations were presented for each study, members asked questions and engaged in a discussion. BHC members:

- voted unanimously to adopt all four recommendations from the substance use supports and services in schools study (with an amendment to recommendation 1); and
- voted unanimously to adopt all options and recommendations from the BRAVO / Behavioral Health Redesign study (with Option 2 selected in lieu of Option 3)

During the presentation on the recommendations pertaining to behavioral health services in Virginia jails, members discussed how to hold the Board of Local and Regional Jails (BLRJ) accountable for fulfilling its statutory mandate. Members expressed an interest in learning about the findings and recommendations from a workgroup report (due November 1, 2026) on changing the governance structure of BLRJ. After some discussion, members elected to delay voting on the options and recommendations from the study until the December 8th BHC meeting in order to consider the workgroup report's findings. Chairman Deeds invited Brian Flaherty, Executive Director of the Board of Local and Regional Jails (BLRJ), and Michelle Lewis, President of the Virginia Association of Regional Jails (VARJ), to provide some comments regarding the study. Voting on re-introducing certain recommendations that did not pass the General Assembly in 2026 was also postponed until the next Commission meeting.

Nathalie Molliet-Ribet briefly summarized the 2027 workplan, which was approved during the December 2025 meeting.

Meeting adjourned.

Next Commission meeting will be held virtually on December 8, 2026.