

Meeting Minutes of the Governor's Council on Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment Community Engagement and Supports Subcommittee Housing Workgroup Tuesday March 4, 2025, Approved

Attendees:

Workgroup Members Attending: Emily Birkhead, Danny Hale, Bob Hansen (chair), Matt Johnson, Joey McComas, Jay Phillips, Kristin Tiedeman, Dave Sanders, Josh Sapp, Nick Stuchell, Kristen Tiedeman

Not Attending: Amber Blankenship, Julian Levine, Jessica Smith, Jana Stoner, Krista White

ODCP: Dr. Loyd, Lauren McGuire

Marshall University Staff: Rachel Bledsoe, Bradley McCoy

Opening:

Bob Hansen (chair) provided welcome and opening remarks for this meeting of the Governor's Council on Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment, Community Engagement and Supports Subcommittee - Housing Workgroup. The meeting was called to order on Tuesday, March 4, 2025, and was conducted by Zoom conference. A quorum was present to approve February 2025 meeting minutes. Matt Johnson made a motion to approve without changes, and Emily Birkhead seconded with all in favor. There was no further discussion. The motion passed with all in favor. The purpose of this meeting was to have a discussion and review of the 2025 Housing Plan with Dr. Stephen Loyd, Director, Office of Drug Control Policy (ODCP).

Agenda Items:

Guest Speaker – Dr. Stephen Loyd (ODCP Director)

- Dr. Loyd complimented the efforts of the Fletcher Group, Inc. Dr. Loyd praised the group for the continuing efforts in working cooperatively, as community is reliant on relationships that assist in finding recovery.
- Dr. Loyd stated that housing is the most important social determinant of health. Recovery houses must be reliant on a certifying body which matches the client's/patient's needs.
- West Virginia Alliance of Recovery Residences (WVARR) has a certification program in place already. The Office of Health Facility Licensure & Certification (OHFLAC) has a list of data points being measured for the legislature and these should be added to what is already being done with WVARR.
- The group discussed how to best advocate for recovery housing in accordance with geographic need so there are no deserts or areas with an overabundance in the state.
- Recovery housing relies on program fees. The program fees allow providers to have checks and balances. However, the group would like to advocate for a steadier stream of funding. Dr. Loyd recommended the Subcommittee should consider proposals to the WV First Foundation as a viable means for funding to increase available housing.

- Emily Birkhead spoke about new legislation that supports recovery housing and clarifies the differences between residential treatment and recovery housing. This needs to be clearly defined and education must occur moving forward.
- There is a new legislative requirement for a high percentage of people who leave treatment to go into recovery housing. The Subcommittee needs to look at all aspects of the recovery housing ecosystem to be able to understand the capacity to accommodate the increased need.
- Recovery residences must report data to the WVARR system.
- 112 residences are certified.
- The Subcommittee discussed difficulty in the timeline between funding and certification. They are required to get certified in such a short amount of time after receiving funding that there is little latitude. New legislation should allow a grace period so that they do not have to certify residences that do not even have hired staff yet.
- Dr. Loyd asked, "How can recovery houses move past the provisional certification to reinforce the need? Are there agencies to assist with grant writing?" Emily Birkhead replied that "there is a grant resource center and nonprofit 411 which provides regional trainings. There is something needed to allow new organizations to get off the ground. Especially with the Fletcher Group, who have helped us so much. There is no legal pathway for a new organization to get off the ground. There is a learning process (and a vetting process), and this is the reason for the high level of requirements."
- The group discussed that there is not a group in the state that will write grants for you. There is an ARC grant teaching people to write better grants for successful funding given the confusing systems and application expectations.
- The group discussed the need for a stronger technical assistance component for those applying for and receiving these grants.
- The SAMHSA gap assessment is at a standstill due to the federal pause so funding for it is being redirected towards places like the WV First Foundation. Emily Birkhead is meeting with the Fletcher Group, Inc. to determine what data points would be included in the gap analysis.
- The group discussed how to contact and educate the WV First Foundation about the need for recovery residences. The group also discussed how to determine what data points they would include in this proposal. The group agreed that there needs to be unified messaging with the legitimacy of WVAAR as a key competent.
- The group discussed organizational capacity to run recovery houses, as businesses, well and experience needed in grants and knowledge of organizational standards.
- OHFLAC has been trying to remove data complications with a bill going to legislature about data expectations.
- Nick Stuchell advocated the use of WVAAR's voucher program to show the effectiveness of housing as it allows for background data and support. There is a voucher program that shows results and tracks the outcome measures. There needs to be a dataset like Jobs and Hope has for their transportation resources and employment.
- Dr. Loyd advocated for the use of the Fletcher Group, Inc.'s Recovery Ecosystem Index as a starting point for data collection.

Adjournment:

Bob Hansen closed the meeting by thanking all the workgroup members for their attendance and participation. The next meeting will be on Tuesday April 1, 2025, at 1:00 PM.