Metropolitan Human Services District
Board of Directors Meeting
Wednesday, June 25, 2025|9 AM

2020 St. Charles Avenue, New Orleans, LA 70130 – 4th Floor Conference Room

MHSD fulfills its statutory role as the planning body for the behavioral health, addiction and intellectual/developmental disability services for the residents of Orleans, Plaquemines and St. Bernard Parishes by ensuring that eligible residents in these parishes have access to person centered and recovery focused supports designed to optimize their role in the community.

Minutes

I. Call to Order

Meeting was called to order at 9:16 AM by Chair Michael Pechon and it was determined that a Quorum was present.

II. Attendance

A. The quorum present consisted of Michael Pechon, Tenisha T. Stevens, Leslie Prest, Stuart A Simon, Charles D. Jackson, Robert Kimbro, and B. Gerard Woodrich.
B. Absent from the meeting were Mike Miller, Taslim van Hattum, Denise Dugas and Dr. Brian L. Turner
C. Other individuals in attendance were Steven Farber, MHSD Deputy Director of Administration and General Counsel, Traci Brown, MHSD CFO; Brittany Howard, MHSD Director of Advocacy and Karen Canales, MHSD Executive Staff Officer and Director of Compliance.
D. Virtually attended the meeting Mr. Reginald Vicks from Crescent Care and Dr. Kashunda Williams, Deputy Director of Behavioral Health and Data.
E. Mr. Pechon introduced Mr. Matthew M. Woodward who has been appointed to serve St. Bernard Parish starting in FY26.

III. Divisional Presentation: Ms. Brittany Howard, Director of Advocacy.

Ms. Howard explained the role of the Resource Coordination Unit, which helps individuals get back on track by providing financial assistance, connecting them to services like food pantries, and offering budgeting programs. Ms. Howard, as the advocacy director, recommends and facilitates connections to necessary classes and services, such as budgeting skills classes, to support individuals in need and the unit is managed by one person who supports all individuals across five clinics, ensuring comprehensive coverage and support.

Ms. Howard introduced the new Street Outreach Program, which has been in operation for about four months. The program includes a clinician, a medical doctor, and a peer specialist with lived experience of being unhoused. They have met 80 people so far.

Ms. Howard emphasized the importance of getting individuals connected to the HMIS system as early as possible to document their homelessness and facilitate their placement in housing through the COC. She mentioned that each clinic provides shelter vouchers to individuals who do not have anywhere to go, allowing them to stay at a shelter and build their HMIS documentation. She also discussed the Shelter Plus Care Program, which provides 121 beds and pays for the rent of those they serve. The program aims to help individuals graduate out of the program to open slots for others in need. Ms. Howard mentioned recent efforts to revamp the program to encourage individuals to graduate and make room for others, ensuring the program's sustainability and effectiveness.

Ms. Howard described the partnership with Hotel Hope, a shelter for women with children. A peer specialist visits the shelter weekly to connect the residents with services provided by the advocacy division.

IV. Monitoring Reports

A. CCBHC Advisory Council Report: Dr. Williams provided an update on the CCBHC Advisory Council, mentioning that they are delivering the nine core services and working on capturing the voice of more persons served through needs assessments and surveys.

B. AI Committee: Dr. Williams shared information about the AI Committee established in 2024, which focuses on integrating AI technologies to improve efficiency and service delivery at MHSD.

C. Compliance Division: Ms. Canales reported on the establishment and progress of the Compliance Division, which includes a team of 17 people working on risk assessments and ensuring staff compliance with regulations. The team includes members from various divisions, including the executive team, and directors from different departments, ensuring comprehensive compliance coverage. The team is working on creating a risk assessment to be reported by the end of the year, ensuring all compliance items are addressed. Staff has been trained on compliance procedures, and the department is working on making compliance information accessible and clear to all staff members. The division has established a hotline and incident report system, encouraging staff to report issues confidentially and ensuring prompt resolution.

D. Fiscal Report: FY 25 Analysis as of May 31, 2025
Ms. Brown provided a summary of the fiscal reports as of May 2025. She reported that the budget was delayed from the State, the fiscal report highlighted challenges faced in the current fiscal year, including significant federal funding cuts and unexpected facilities expenses. The team is working on realigning budgets and making hard decisions for the upcoming year.

E. Monthly Dashboard & Utilization Reports:
The monthly dashboard showed steady trends in the number of services rendered, with a slight decline in the number of persons served across the agency. The utilization reports indicated a slight decline in the number of persons served, but the number of services rendered remained steady.

F. Periodic Reports to Review:
The FY25 3rd Quarter Ends Policy Report and 3rd Quarter Incident Report were reviewed by the attendees and Dr. Williams fielded questions from the Board members.

Minutes from the June 25, 2025, meeting and all monitoring reports were reviewed and approved by motion of Mr. Kimbro, seconded by Mr. Simon, all voted in favor.

VI. Decision Information
No decision items were presented.

V. Consent Agenda.
No consent agenda items were presented

VI. Self-evaluation: Board Performance Review
Board Self-Assessment: Mr. Pechon discussed the board's self-assessment, which showed that most members felt comfortable with their positions and identified areas for improvement, such as attendance and compliance reporting.

Board Elections: Mr. Pechon presented a slate and no new nominations came from the floor. The board elected new officers, with Brian Turner as chair, Taslim Van Gerpen as vice chair, and Leslie Prest as secretary.

The outgoing chair Michael A Pechon expressed his gratitude for the opportunity to serve on the board and praised the agency's work and staff.

Ms. Canales presented the vacancies to be noted by the Board and Ms. Stevens will assist in getting Mr. Reginald Vicks approved by the City Council for the board position.

VII. Adjourn
A motion to adjourn the meeting was made at 10:17 AM by Mr. Simon, seconded by Ms. Stevens; all in favor, motion passed.