

**COUNTY OF MORRIS**  
**DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES**  
**DIVISION OF COMMUNITY & BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES**  
P.O. Box 900  
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Board of County Commissioners

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**MENTAL HEALTH ADDICTION SERVICES ADVISORY BOARD (MHASAB)**  
**Thursday, November 14, 2024, 5:15 PM – Hybrid**  
**Meeting Minutes**

**I. Call to Order and Attendance**

Mr. Chernick, Chair, called the meeting to order at 5:26 PM. A quorum was established and attendance was as follows:

**Board Members:**

Gregg Benson, Citizen Representative  
Chris Chernick, Citizen Representative - Chair  
Linda Csegento, Citizen Representative  
Victor DeVito, Citizen Representative  
Julian Hill, Esq, Morris County Prosecutor's Office (virtual)  
David Martinak, Citizen Representative  
Amy Villano, Acenda Integrated Health (virtual)  
Chelsea Whiting, Morris County Sheriff's Office (virtual)

**Board Liaisons:**

Michelle Borden, NewBridge Services, Inc.  
Rose Brown, Mental Health Association of Essex and Morris, Inc.  
Cynthia Gatica, NJ DHS Division of Mental Health & Addiction Services

**Morris County Staff:**

Amy Archer, Division of Community and Behavioral Health  
Kasey Errico, Division of Community and Behavioral Health  
Kensie Fosko, Division of Community and Behavioral Health  
Anna Marie Hess, Division of Community and Behavioral Health  
Louise Lichtenberg, Division of Community and Behavioral Health  
Cherish Robinson, Division of Community and Behavioral Health

**Others in Attendance:**

Jane DiFabio, Excel Treatment Center (virtual)  
Annika Franklin, The Milestone House (virtual)  
Timothy Gulick, Excel Treatment Center/The Milestone House (virtual)

## **II. Approval of Minutes**

### **A. Approval of September 12, 2024, Meeting Minutes**

Mr. Chernick, Chair, requested a motion to approve the September 12, 2024, meeting minutes distributed before the meeting. Ms. Csegento motioned to approve the minutes, and Mr. Hill seconded the motion. All were in favor with no opposition and no abstentions.

### **B. Approval of October 10, 2024, Meeting Minutes**

Mr. Chernick, Chair, requested a motion to approve the October 10, 2024, meeting minutes distributed before the meeting. Mr. Hill motioned to approve the minutes, and Ms. Csegento seconded the motion. All were in favor with no opposition and one abstention.

## **III. Presentation: The Milestone House – Ms. Franklin and Mr. Gulick**

- A.** The Milestone House has existed for 22 years and became a nonprofit organization over two years ago. It provides safety and community to those it serves. The organization has a coffee shop called “The Good Bean”, and they are currently having a fall fundraiser where people can choose to donate across several different categories.
- B.** Mr. Gulick began his sobriety 11 years ago at a church called Union Hill. The Union Hill church is popular amongst AA members as they have AA meetings everyday. At the church, he heard regularly about The Milestone House and began to sponsor people who were participating in their program. Over time, Mr. Gulick began to attend events at The Milestone House himself, such as open mics and spiritual speaker events.
- C.** There are now five houses under The Milestone House sober living program, located in Dover at the center of town. Due to location, the program has managed to integrate well with the community. For example, a former client, named Dylan McKinney, walked from Dover to Kensington to raise money to send someone to receive treatment at a facility in Kensington, as there is a significant problem with fentanyl usage in the Kensington area. During the event, Ms. Whiting attended with the Hope One van, members of the Morris County Sheriff’s Department attended, and there were also government officials present. It was a large event that brought many people together.
- D.** Ms. Franklin described The Milestone House as a community where many people get involved and rally around each other. A focus area for the program has been to achieve outreach in Dover. They would like to be a visible resource for people in the area, especially those that may have a language barrier due to the fact that 72 percent of the Dover population is Hispanic, according to the last census.
- E.** The Milestone House has been partnering with several local nonprofit organizations such as Zufall Health, SER – Serving Everyone Regardless, and Healing Hands. Recently, they have started a mural, which is located on one of the walls on the back patio of the Milestone One building. It is visible from the

street from JFK park. Therefore, people who walk down the sidewalk can see it and become interested in learning about The Milestone House.

- F.** Ms. Franklin is an alumni of The Milestone House and she stated that the mural will be right where she had walked in. It is meant to be a visual representation of the warm spirit that they would like to bring people into since early sobriety can be scary and the mural can act as a beacon of what is to come.
- G.** Through working with Morris County over the course of 2024, they have been able to provide programming through the Opioid Settlement Funding, and they will continue to give housing scholarships to people coming to the house with an Opioid Use Disorder.
- H.** Many people who come to the program do not have many resources and are usually coming directly from an inpatient or detox program. Ms. Franklin stated that Milestone is often the last stop on the journey for those in recovery.
- I.** They are looking to institute the Morris Arch Program in 2025 with the funds they have recently been awarded by Morris County.
- J.** Milestone partners with Excel Treatment Center for IOP and traditional outpatient so that people are able to receive clinical treatment while living at the house.
- K.** In September, they hosted a conference after partnering with the Patient Centered Outcomes Research Institute and receiving funding from them. It brought together about 20 researchers as well as other stakeholders in the recovery residents community. They wanted to raise questions that may not have been previously explored or thoroughly examined. Assembly woman Aura Dunn attended and provided information about the 3230 bill.
- L. Questions:**
  - i.** Ms. Csegento asked how long a person is able to stay at The Milestone House. Mr. Gulick replied that there is no limit. Ms. Franklin added that they recently opened a new house titled Milestone Five for long-term residents. It has less structure since it is designed for a longer stay.
  - ii.** Mr. Benson asked when Ms. Franklin and Mr. Gulick became involved with The Milestone House and how this type of program has changed since he was involved with the sober living program at Sunrise House roughly twenty years ago. Mr. Gulick stated that they do not have any affiliation with Sunrise House, but Ms. Franklin stated that she has been with Milestone for more than two years, and, prior to working there, she was a resident. She also added that Milestone is always growing and learning along with its residents.
  - iii.** Mr. Benson asked how much interaction The Milestone House has with Hope House, also located in Dover. Mr. Gulick stated that they have clients who attend meetings at Hope House, but Milestone is not directly involved with their program or Directors.
  - iv.** Ms. DiFabio introduced herself. She works for the Excel Treatment Center and is new to the position, but has worked in the field of behavioral health for almost 20 years. She asked if there was a way to receive a contact list for everyone who participates in the MHASAB meetings. Ms. Borden stated that it might be helpful to connect Ms. DiFabio with the

Professional Advisory Committee (PAC) as there are more providers who attend those meetings.

- v. Mr. Martinak asked how they accommodate co-occurring disorders where clients may need psychiatric medication and if that is a problem for the program. Ms. Franklin replied that it is not a problem and that The Milestone House is one of the earlier residences that would accept clients who were prescribed psychiatric medication. It is fairly common as roughly 85 percent of their residents have co-occurring disorders. They also communicate with the providers who are treating their residents for co-occurring disorders. Some of these providers include Zufall House and the Excel Treatment Center.
- vi. Mr. Martinak asked if clients diagnosed with ADHD would be able to take stimulant medication while in the program. Mr. Gulick stated that they do allow residents to be on stimulant medications, but it is decided on a case-by-case basis. For example, if stimulants were a substance the person misused in the past, then it might be a problem, but if not, then it would likely be okay. Ms. Franklin added that they do provide medication monitoring for patients..
- vii. Ms. Brown asked if the medication monitoring is locked. Ms. Franklin replied that for any medication that is held within the office, residents come on a predetermined schedule and will sign for their medication in a log book. Some residents are permitted to hold onto their own medication, but they are required to keep them in a lock box if they do so.

#### **IV. Open to Public – no comment**

#### **V. Chair Report – Mr. Chernick**

- A. The November 14, 2024 MHASAB meeting is the last meeting of 2024.
- B. Mr. Chernick announced that in 2025 he will be stepping down from his position as chair of the MHASAB and Mr. DeVito's name will be put forth as a recommendaiton for Chair in 2025.
- C. **Questions:**
  - i. Mr. Benson asked if there is a nominating committee for when there is a change in leadership. Ms. Archer replied that there were no volunteers to be apart of the nominating committee when 2024 began, but next year they are opening up the opportunity again for people to sign up.

#### **VI. Closed Session – Hope One Modification**

Mr. Chernick, Chair, asked anyone with a conflict of interest to leave the room for the closed session. Ms. Gatica, Ms. Brown, and Ms. Borden left the meeting room, and Ms. Lichtenberg moved Ms. Villano and Ms. Whiting into a separate online room via Webex.

Mr. Chernick, Chair, requested a motion to start the closed portion of the meeting. Mr. Hill made a motion to start the closed session, and Mr. DeVito seconded the motion. All were in favor with no abstentions and no oppositions. Motion carried.

According to P.L. 1975 Ch. 231 of the Open Public Meetings Act, the board closed the open portion of the meeting at 5:56 PM.

### **Return to Meeting**

Mr. Chernick, Chair, requested a motion to return to open session. Mr. DeVito made a motion to begin the open session, and Mr. Benson seconded. All were in favor with no abstentions and no oppositions. Motion carried.

Ms. Gatica, Ms. Brown, and Ms. Borden reentered the meeting and Ms. Villano and Ms. Whiting reentered the online room via Webex. The session reopened at 6:00 PM.

### **Action Resulting from Closed Session – Hope One Modification**

Mr. Chernick stated that the group discussed a Hope One Modification. Let the record reflect that the Board voted to approve the recommendations in closed session.

As discussed in closed session, Ms. Csegento motioned to approve the recommendations and Mr. DeVito seconded the motion. All were in favor with three abstentions and no opposition. Motion carried.

## **VII. State Liaison Report:**

### **A. Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services – Ms. Gatica**

- i. There are currently two funding opportunities. The first is titled Case Management Services for Adult Individuals With a Substance Use Disorder in Temporary Shelter Bed Housing. DHMAS is looking to make three regional awards of up to \$320,000 each. The second opportunity is titled Temporary Shelter Housing Services for Adults Who Use Substances. It is an annualized funding of \$2,737,500. The proposals for both funding opportunities are due by December 3, 2024 before 4:00PM.
- ii. There are current awards out for Permanent Community-based Housing for Individuals Currently Diagnosed with a Mental Illness, who are in a Nursing Facility, State or County Psychiatric Hospital, or are Homeless. Community Hope received an award for the Northern region. NewBridge Services received awards for Hudson and Passaic County, and Volunteers of America received three awards for Passaic County. There will likely be negotiating meetings soon.
- iii. Calendar Year 2025 Contract Renewals are being prepared for January. DHMAS will be reaching out to providers to set up the meetings to finish the contracts.
- iv. There is a virtual Human Services Budget Listening Session on November 19, 2024. Registration in advance is required for speakers.
- v. There will be a Quarterly Provider meeting soon. The invitations were circulated November 12, 2024.

## **VIII. Staff Reports:**

### **A. Municipal Alliance Coordinator – Ms. Robinson**

- i. The Municipal Alliance Grant System (MAGS) Phase II has opened, but has been paused due to technical problems.
- ii. The reimbursement for the vouchers from fiscal year 2024 will go through at the next commissioner's meeting on November 18, 2024.
- iii. Morris County applied for \$7,500 from the DHMAS Block Grant, and was awarded \$7,500.

**B. Addiction Services Coordinator – Ms. Fosko**

- i. The 2025 CH51 contract was approved by the state.
- ii. Ms. Fosko asked those in attendance if they would like any organizations or topics to be discussed at future MHASAB meetings in 2025. Ms. Brown responded that she did not have any at the moment, but may have an idea at a later date and the other members agreed.

**C. Mental Health Administrator – Ms. Archer**

- i. The Division of Community and Behavioral Health Services is finalizing funding and going through its end of year processes. The timeline will be similar to years prior where there are contracts by end of year 2024, or early January 2025.
- ii. They are looking forward to orientation for 2025 MHASAB members, as well as for other advisory committees. In previous years, every board member would have to attend the same orientation. This upcoming year, they are considering holding a modified orientation for members that were on the committee in 2024, and then providing a more detailed orientation specifically for new members.
- iii. The Planning Subcommittee is holding its first meeting for the forum in early to mid December. In January and February, they will discuss further regarding forum topics, speakers, and presenters.
- iv. Juvenile Justice Commission (JJC) funding is currently out and due by December 5, 2024 at 2:00 PM.

**IX. Subcommittee Reports:**

**A. Funding – moved to closed session**

**B. Planning – Ms. Archer**

- i. The first Planning Meeting will take place in early to mid December.

**C. Legislative/Advocacy – no report**

**D. County Alliance Steering Subcommittee (CASS) – Ms. Robinson**

- i. The next CASS meeting will be held Tuesday, December 3, 2024 at 5:00 PM.

**X. Joint PAC Report – Ms. Borden**

- A. The committee tabled approval of minutes at their last meeting.
- B. Lisa Federico gave a presentation on the Opioid Settlement Agreement that was implemented in Somerset County. Ms. Borden stated that if there is a possibility to share a portion of the presentation from the meeting with the MHASAB members, she would like to do so.
  - i. In Somerset County, they used the Opioid Settlement Funding in several ways that were different from Morris County, but they still had some of

the more traditional case management and peer recovery support programs.

- ii. In 2023, the Department formed an Advisory Council, made up of providers, stakeholders, and members from healthcare industries. The Council held quarterly meetings and continues to have a regular meeting schedule. The Council has conducted surveys with the community, provided networking meetings, and continues to try to spread information across the community as much as possible.
  - iii. The Council receives feedback from individuals who participate in their introductory meetings.
  - iv. Portions of the presentation covered planning for harm reduction, navigation services for mental health and substance use, low-threshold Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT), and access to recovery services. They also have a Behavioral Health System Navigator to act as a professional point of contact.
  - v. Somerset County Opioid Use Treatment Recovery Solutions funded to expand the low-threshold MAT program with trauma mental health experts.
  - vi. The Council holds educational workshops and they have proposed programs that tap into allied and holistic therapies. Currently, they are planning on implementing several different programs. If approved, these include focuses on gardening as a form of therapy, aiding the LGBTQ+ community, Police Community Alliance, and Recovery Friendly Workplaces.
- C. There was no representative from Greystone Psychiatric Hospital at the last meeting.
- D. The Department of Children and Families (DCF) gave a report. They received 200-300 calls in September and 2 of the calls were reports of Child-on-Child Sexual Abuse.
- E. Atlantic Health has established a new eating disorder program.
- F. Prevention is Key reported that they have been dispersing Narcan kits in the jail vending machines, which are available to visiting family members and friends as well.

**i. Questions and Discussion:**

- i. Ms. Gatica asked if Morris County was still in the process of planning or if they have spent all of their Opioid Settlement Funding. Ms. Fosko replied that 2024 is their first year of programming, and she is currently working on a presentation with details about the funding, as all of the counties must submit presentations at the state meeting of the County Alcohol and Drug Directors. Ms. Fosko added that she would be willing to provide the board with the presentation in January 2025.
- ii. Discussion ensued regarding how the presentations are helpful in bringing innovative ideas forward from one county to another. Ms. Archer stated that public meetings may also be helpful to re-implement in the upcoming year.

- iii. Ms. Gatica asked if the Atlantic Health eating disorder program was only for adolescents or if adults could participate as well. Ms. Borden stated that it is only for adolescents.

**XI. HSAC Report – Ms. Hess**

- A. The last HSAC meeting took place September 24, 2024.
- B. United Way of Northern New Jersey gave a presentation on ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed). Their website contains tools to obtain demographic information as well as to see how ALICE households are affected locally in Morris County.
- C. The HSAC Award and Declination letters have been sent out via certified mail and e-mail.
- D. The Morris/Sussex/Warren HIV Chair Kelly Martins has resigned from her position at EDGE to pursue another opportunity addressing healthcare disparities in the LGBTQ+ and HIV+ communities.
- E. Donna Boyce from the Advisory Committee on Women announced that they are seeking nominations for their annual Seeds of Change Award. It is inspired by Leanna Brown and was created to highlight and celebrate women.

**XII. Old Business – no comment**

**XIII. New Business – no comment**

**XIV. Adjourn Meeting**

Mr. Chernick, Chair, adjourned the meeting at 6:23 PM.

Respectfully submitted,  
Louise Lichtenberg, Administrative Professional