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DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

DIVISION OF HEALTH CARE FINANCING AND POLICY

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CHILDREN'S BEHAVIORAL HEALTH TRANSFORMATION WORKING GROUP MEETING MINUTES June 26, 2025

The Nevada Department of Health and Human Services held a public meeting pursuant to NRS 241.020(3)(a) online and by phone on Thursday, June 26, 2025, beginning at 4:30 PM.

1. Introductions and Roll Call

By: Ann Jensen, Innovation Officer

Ann Jensen, Innovation Officer, opened the meeting at 4:30 p.m., welcomed participants, and explained the new chat-based roll-call process. Attendees joining by phone were asked to unmute and confirm their presence. Youth and family representatives and other members entered their names and affiliations into the chat to establish quorum, which was reached at 4:38 p.m.

2. Follow-ups from May Working Group Meeting

By: Ann Jensen, Innovation Officer

Ann Jensen shared key follow-ups from the May 15 Working Group meeting. She provided a summary of the 2025 Legislative Session, highlighting four bills impacting children's behavioral health (AB 514, SB 165, SB 300, and SB 333), as well as Medicaid budget requests establishing new reimbursement rates for crucial behavioral health programs. She informed the group that Nevada Medicaid will officially transition to the Nevada Health Authority on July 1, and assured members that the CBHT work will continue uninterrupted.

Ann Jensen confirmed that the Youth Peer Support Medicaid State Plan Amendment (SPA) was submitted to CMS with input from the May meeting. The SPA for outpatient behavioral health rate increases, she noted, remains under CMS review with approval anticipated soon.

The deadline for Nevada's DOJ Settlement Implementation Plan has been extended by the DOJ to August, given delays with the Independent Review contract, with public release expected in early fall.

Ann also thanked stakeholders for written comments on the proposed Specialty Managed Care Plan (SMCP) and confirmed that more stakeholder engagement opportunities will follow.

3. Presentation & Discussion: Screening and Assessment System

Overview Presentation

Dr. Christine Pebbles, Behavioral Health Clinical Advisor, provided an overview of Nevada's effort to develop a statewide screening and assessment system to meet DOJ Settlement requirements. She explained the key terms (i.e., screening tool, clinical assessment, and comprehensive assessment) and shared a real-world case study to illustrate how earlier screening could better serve children. Dr. Pebbles then presented a draft timeline and invited working group member feedback on current tools, post-screening protocols, and provider support needs.

Discussion and Feedback

Working Group member discussion featured input from clinicians, parents, advocates, and education representatives.

Alana Rogne, Rural Nevada Counseling (CCBHC Provider Representative), shared that her clinic had previously used the ACEs tool but removed it due to duplication with other instruments. She noted the burden of using multiple overlapping screening tools such as the Columbia Suicide Severity Rating Scale, PHQ-9, and DSM-5 cross-cutters. She emphasized that many tools are not age-appropriate and can be invasive or retraumatizing, particularly when used without clinical judgment or flexibility.

Dr. Ashley Greenwald, Director of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) at the Nevada Center for Excellence in Disabilities, emphasized the importance of school-based universal screeners. She explained that MTSS (Multi-Tiered Systems of Support) frameworks already integrate regular behavior screenings in schools, often administered three times a year by teachers. Dr. Greenwald encouraged alignment with these existing tools and structures to avoid duplication and improve early identification in education settings.

Kim Abbott, speaking on behalf of Legal Aid Nevada, underscored that many children in the target population are involved with systems such as juvenile justice and child welfare. She emphasized that assessment tools must incorporate the perspective of multidisciplinary teams, including probation officers, CASA volunteers, and public defenders, who all contribute to a child's support network.

Glenda Cruz Juarez, Veridian Wellness (Social Worker, Behavioral Health Provider Representative), advocated culturally and linguistically appropriate screening tools. She described how a lack of validated Spanish-language instruments creates challenges for equitable care, especially when staff must rely on self-translation that could compromise accuracy.

Leah Skinner, Family Representative and Parent, described her lived experience as a parent navigating fragmented systems. She stressed how difficult it can be to balance caregiving responsibilities with multiple agency requirements, and called for a more streamlined, shared assessment process across systems. She emphasized that the same forms and tools should be used consistently to reduce the burden on families.

Karen Taycher, Executive Director of Nevada PEP (Advocacy Group Representative), asked when and how Serious Emotional Disturbance (SED) determinations would be made within the system. Dr. Pebbles clarified that SED determinations would take place during the comprehensive assessment phase.

Dana Walburn, Nevada Department of Education (School System Representative), recommended that the state adopt Z-codes and other non-stigmatizing classifications in place of “Social Emotional Disturbance” whenever possible. She stated that language influences how families experience the system and emphasized a shift toward whole-child approaches.

Megan Freeman, Boys & Girls Clubs of Southern Nevada (Home and Community Based Services Provider Representative), agreed and highlighted the need to move away from crisis-driven service systems. She said resources should be available earlier and stigma should not prevent families from seeking help.

Brandon Ford, Behavioral Health Provider, flagged that many insurers create barriers to screening by requiring prior authorization or denying reimbursement unless a formal diagnosis is present. He shared his hopes that diagnosis or determination barriers to access care would be addressed in this new model.

Jessica Goicoechea-Parise, Washoe County Human Services Agency (Community Partner Representative, Working Group Co-Chair), raised the need for privacy in protecting screening and assessment data,, explaining that families may not want sensitive assessment results widely shared. She stated that family “voice and choice” must be protected and that consent to share information should be clearly documented and respected by all providers.

4. Wrap-up

By: Ann Jensen, Innovation Officer

Ann Jensen thanked participants and described the discussion as a high-level overview to launch the screening and assessment system design phase. She reminded the group that more targeted sessions will follow.

5. Public Comment Period

James Lutz provided public comment asking whether the Specialty Managed Care Plan would include youth who are adopted or formerly in foster care. He emphasized the importance of ensuring that these populations have continuous behavioral health coverage and access to services.

Ann Jensen responded that youth formerly in foster care up to age 26 are currently included in the plan design, and that the state is reviewing how to support youth with adoption assistance. She invited written feedback and emphasized that the state is committed to maintaining coverage continuity for vulnerable populations.

6. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned by Ann Jensen Innovation Officer, at 5:34 p.m.

Attendance

A complete list of Working Group Representatives and guests who attended the June 26, 2025, meeting is maintained on file and includes:

Youth, Family, and Disability Self-Advocate Representatives:

Matt Lehman, BCBA with Foster parent ABA Group

Leah Skinner, Parent
LaNesha Battle, Foster Parent, Washoe County School District - *Absent*
JayDee Porras-Grant, Foster Parent – *Absent*
Devin Daniels, Black Youth Mental Health Project - *Absent*
Analia Cruz, Black Youth Mental Health Project - *Absent*
Luke Dumaran, Autism Treatment Assistance Program

Behavioral Health Provider Representatives:

Alana Rogne, DNP, PMHNP-BC with Rural Nevada Counseling
Dave Doyle, Eagle Quest & Family Focused Treatment Association Megan McGrew,
PhD, BCBA, LBA with Impact ABA Services - *Absent*
Megan Freeman PhD with Boys & Girls Clubs of Southern Nevada
Takesha Cooper, MD, MS, FAPA with UNR Med and Renown
Glenda Cruz Juarez, LCSW with Veridian Wellness
Natalie Sanchez, LMFT with Health Psychology Associates - *Absent*
Stephanie Brown, Reno Behavioral Health - *Absent*
Janelle Hoover, MSN, RN with Carson Tahoe Health

Community Partner Representatives:

Angie Wilson, Reno Sparks Tribal Health Center - *Absent*
Open Seat, Tribal Health Representative - *Open*
Gwynneth Smith, PhD, JD with Clark County District Attorney Juvenile Division - *Absent*
Jessica Goicoechea-Parise, MFT with Washoe County Human Services Agency, Children's Mobile Crisis Response Team
Meambi Newbern-Johnson, LCSW, PLLC with Clark County Family Services
Shayla Holmes, MA with Lyon County Human Services
Bre Taylor, MSN with Humboldt County School District – *Absent*
Karen Taycher, NV PEP
Robin Reedy, NAMI NV - *Absent*
Jonathan Norman, Esq with NV Coalition of Legal Service Providers
Santosha Veeramachaneni, American Academy of Pediatrics, Nevada Chapter - *Absent*

Guests and Observers:

Alexandria Cannito, Amy Levin, Amy Miller-Bowman, Ana, Angel Beus, Ashley Greenwald, Barbara Scaturro,
Beverly Hart, Brandy Pancoast, Brandon Ford, Britt Young, Brittany Llyod, Brooke Greenlee, Casey, Dana
Walburn, Dawnesha Powell, De Yates, Donna Liendo, Esther Badiata, Eva Velez, James Lutz, Jana Borden,
Jennifer Villanueva, Jon Nortman, Joy Thomas, Julene Zamora, Kathryn Rosachi, Kim Abbott, Kimberly
Purinton, Krystle Gibson, Lauri Curfman, Lea Cartwright, Linda Anderson, Lisa Mariani, Michael Wilden,
Michelle Gonzalez, Monica Romero, Nadine Kienhoefer, Rebecca Stoltz, Sherrita Williams, Valerie Luevano.

Nevada Medicaid:

Amber Cronn, Ann Jensen, Bernadette DeMars, Casey Angres, Cassandra Fox, Christina Cobeo, Christine
Pebbles, Darlene Wolff, Debbie Jordan, Deidre Manly, Erica McAllister, Heather Lazarakis, Lindsey Bondiek,
Marcel Brown, Matthew Burdick, Melorine Mokri, Michael Gorden, Minden Hall, Sandra Villalvazo-Warner,
Sarah Dearborn.
