

OPIOID ABATEMENT ADVISORY COMMISSION

OFFICIAL PUBLIC MEETING

APPROVED MINUTES

MARCH 13, 2024

The Opioid Abatement Advisory Commission was held virtually via WebEx on Wednesday, March 13, 2024.

ATTENDEES

Present

1. Barbara Bazron, Ph.D., Director, Department of Behavioral Health
2. Carl Filler as designee for Ayanna Bennett, Ph.D., Director, DC Health (virtual)
3. Ciana Creighton, Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services
4. Christina Okereke, Representative of the Attorney General of the District of Columbia
5. The Honorable Christina Henderson (then Marcia Huff as the Designee), Chair, DC Council Committee on Health
6. Edwin Chapman, MD, President Designee, Medical Society of the District of Columbia
7. Jacqueline Bowens, Chief Executive Officer, District of Columbia Hospital Association
8. Mark LeVota, Executive Director, District of Columbia Behavioral Health Association
9. Patricia Quinn, Designated Representative, District of Columbia Primary Care Association
10. LaVerne Adams, DMin, Chief Executive Coach, Total Life Consultancy LLC (virtual)
11. Demetrius Jones, Certified Peer Recovery Specialist, Wards 7 & 8 DC Prevention Center/DC Recovery Community Alliance
12. Larry Bing, Certified Peer Recovery Specialist, Leadership Council for Healthy Communities
13. Larry Gourdine, Program Manager, Psychiatric Institute of Washington
14. J. Chad Jackson, MS, CEO, Ardan Community Living, LLC
15. Beverly Settles-Reaves, PhD, Program Manager, Howard University (virtual)
16. Nnemdi Elias, MD, MPH, Addiction/Internal Medicine
17. Juanita Price, M.Ed, Chief Executive Officer, Hillcrest Children and Family Center
18. Senora Simpson, PTMPH, DrPH

Absent

1. Melisa Byrd, Interim Director, DC Department of Health Care Finance
2. Franciso Diaz, MD, FACP, DC Chief Medical Examiner
3. Queen Anunay, MPH MCHES, Designee, Deputy Mayor for Public Safety and Justice

Call to Order

- Chair J. Chad Jackson called the meeting to order at 9:10 AM.

Quorum Declaration

- Chair Jackson conducted a roll call for quorum declaration.

Approval of Minutes

- Chair Jackson presented the minutes for the February 13, 2024, Commission meeting.
- Chad Jackson initiated the approval of minutes from the last meeting.
- Orlando Barker confirmed that the minutes were available via email.
- Motion to approve the minutes was made and seconded.
- Mark LeVota noted an error in the minutes related to the treatment and recovery subcommittee section.
- Chair Jackson acknowledged the error and proposed to remove the erroneous section.
- Motion to approve the minutes with the removal of the erroneous section was carried unanimously.

Welcome and Overview of Agenda

- Chair Jackson presented and discussed the agenda for the meeting.
- Chair Jackson expressed a desire for a more focused approach in future meetings.
- Proposed subcommittee meetings over the next two weeks to review previous discussions on peer support and infrastructure.
- Suggested a discussion on commissioning an independent study to analyze the complexities of the current system.
- Opened the floor for discussion on the proposed study.

Director's Report

- Dr. Orlando Barker of the Office of Opioid Abatement presented the current budget for the Opioid Abatement Fund. The full report is available.
- OAAC Recommended Areas of Focus
 - Contingency Management Pilot Project:
 - Dr. Barker mentioned that the project is slated for April and preliminary discussions have commenced. Commission leadership, particularly Chad Jackson, is involved in the discussions. Orlando expressed optimism about the project's potential.
 - Establishment Enhancement of Drop-in Centers and Peer Support:
 - Dr. Barker discussed the feasibility of this initiative and projected the release of a grant in April. The goal is to understand the feasibility of a harm reduction drop-in center.
 - Engagement and Technical Assistance with Physicians:
 - Dr. Barker stated that this initiative is under development with a tentative timeline towards the end of April. Discussions involve hiring a contractor to facilitate the process.
 - Supplemental Funds for Community-Based Organizations Providing Remediation

Services:

- Dr. Barker mentioned that this initiative is currently under development, focusing on providing financial support.
 - Mobile Medication Units:
 - Dr. Barker indicated that this initiative is under development and likely to be grant-based. A notice of funding vulnerability is projected for June.
 - Temporary Housing and Wrap-Around Services for Unsheltered Individuals with SUD:
 - Dr. Barker highlighted ongoing discussions with DHS regarding the feasibility and potential contract opportunities for this initiative.
 - Housing Services for Post-Equity Treatment and More Absence-Based Housing:
 - Dr. Barker discussed the consideration of funding opportunities for non-absence-based housing, emphasizing the need for further assessment.
 - Expansion of Harm Reduction Vending Machines:
 - Dr. Barker mentioned negotiations with D.C. health for funding, with a focus on harm reduction efforts.
 - Expansion of Harm Reduction Marketing:
 - Dr. Barker discussed the allocation of funds for harm reduction marketing under SOR, with plans for further development.
- Grant-Making Schedule and Budget
 - Dr. Barker provided an overview of projected funding amounts for various initiatives, totaling \$3,338,715.11. He also mentioned ongoing discussions regarding additional funding and grant processes.
- Pre-Application Conference and Community Forums
 - Dr. Barker highlighted the importance of pre-application conferences for technical assistance and proposed community forums for engaging the public on grant opportunities.
- Reporting Schedule
 - Dr. Barker emphasized the need for quarterly reports on fund expenditures and balance, in accordance with D.C. code requirements.
- Commission Feedback
 - Chad Jackson raised concerns about potential overlaps in funding.
 - Dr. Chapman inquired about the Octane partnership and expressed confusion about the overall plan, particularly the focus on prevention.
 - Dr. Chapman raised concerns about the delay in obtaining a list of providers in the community who treat patients with either method. Expressed frustration that despite it being the 7th meeting, the list of providers is not yet available. Highlighted familiarity with clinics and federally qualified health centers, emphasizing the urgency of the matter. Mentioned his 19 years of experience and noted his absence from the treatment list. Emphasized the need for an updated list of providers for patient referrals.
 - Chair Jackson acknowledged the importance of having a comprehensive list of treatment providers and expressed personal commitment to resolving the issue.
 - Dr. Barker noted previous efforts to develop a list but highlighted the need for a more comprehensive approach involving the Department of Healthcare Finance.

- Dr. Chapman stressed the importance of accessibility for homeless individuals and raised concerns about the current outreach methods. Highlighted the need for treatment referrals alongside other services provided.
- Larry Gourdine commented on the delay in obtaining a list of active MAT providers and emphasized the importance of comprehensive treatment options and peer workforce.
- Chair Jackson took personal responsibility for resolving the issue and committed to finding or creating the necessary list of providers.
- Dr. Chapman offered suggestions on where to start in compiling the list.
- Mark LeVota identified Larry Bing and Dr. Simpson as key members involved in the discussion.
- Larry Bing raised concerns about housing options for individuals struggling with homelessness and substance abuse, seeking clarification on available resources.
- Dr. Barker addressed Larry's concerns regarding housing options, highlighting ongoing efforts to determine the best course of action.
- Dr. Simpson raised questions about the decision-making process and voting procedures within the commission, seeking clarification on recent decisions.
- Dr. Barker confirmed that recommendations made by subcommittees were presented and voted on in the previous meeting.
- Dr. Simpson expressed concerns about the lack of clarity regarding voting procedures and decision outcomes.
- Chair Jackson acknowledged the need for clarity regarding funding sources and decision-making processes, committed to seeking further information.
- Dr. Simpson thanked Chad for addressing her concerns and sought clarification on recent funding allocations for warming centers.
- Dr. LaVerne Adams raised concerns regarding record-keeping and the efficacy of previous marketing campaigns. She emphasized the need for thorough research and feedback to assess the effectiveness of campaigns, particularly concerning issues like fentanyl overdosing. Dr. Adams concluded her remarks by highlighting the necessity of improving campaign strategies through enhanced research efforts.
- Mark LeVota noted a disconnect between commission recommendations and the organization of funding information. He proposed organizing the identified funding items into categories based on previous commission-approved recommendations. Additionally, Mr. LeVota expressed concerns about the limitation on spending, suggesting a need for clarity on spending constraints and unit costing information to facilitate informed decision-making.
- Dr. Barker acknowledged discussions within subcommittees regarding initiatives but highlighted the need to disseminate such granular information to the entire commission. He suggested improving communication channels to ensure comprehensive understanding and informed decision-making across all levels of the commission.
- Attorney General Brian Schwalb sought clarification on the commission's authorized spending and expressed the need for transparency regarding allocated funds and recommended areas of expenditure. She emphasized the importance of

ensuring that expenditures align with commission recommendations and expressed a desire for clear communication on financial matters.

- Chair Jackson acknowledged the need for clarity on authorized spending and committed to addressing the issue before the next meeting. He emphasized the importance of effective communication between the commission and the office to ensure alignment with commission recommendations. Chair Jackson proposed further discussions on pertinent topics such as peer programs and infrastructure in subsequent meetings.
- Chair Jackson initiated a discussion on financial approvals, suggesting the need for a motion to report on any movement with allocated funds before they move into spending status.

Motion for Expenditure Limits

- Mark LeVota proposed a motion to cap individual recommendation categories at \$500,000 and aggregate spending at \$3.5 million until further review and approval by the commission.
 - *The motion is that the Commission recommends DBH make expenditures 1) Up to \$500,000 per recommendation from the Prevention Committee, 2) Up to \$500,000 per recommendation from the Harm Reduction Committee, and 3) Up to \$3.5M in aggregate spending, including Prevention, Harm Reduction, and Treatment and Recovery Committee recommendations, as DBH identified during today's slide presentation.*
- Attorney General Brian Schwalb expressed support for the motion, emphasizing the need for clarity and oversight in expenditure approvals.
- Dr. Barbara Bazron raised concerns about potential limitations on funding certain activities due to expenditure caps and sought clarity on the motion's impact on ongoing initiatives.
- Chair Jackson suggested a roll call vote to ensure clarity and agreement on the motion's specifics.
- Jacqueline Bowens expressed concern regarding the wording of the motion, suggesting that it might imply a spending cap that could limit the commission's flexibility in considering larger expenditures.
- Mark LeVota clarified the intent behind the motion, emphasizing that it aimed to replicate previous approvals while allowing for future adjustments based on identified funding needs. He reassured that the motion did not permanently restrict expenditure limits and proposed a mechanism for future budget adjustments based on the commission's recommendations.
- Jacqueline Bowens emphasized the importance of clear and precise motion discussions to avoid misunderstandings and ensure transparency in decision-making processes.
- Dr. Simpson concurred with Jacqueline Bowens' remarks and stressed the need for precise wording in motions to avoid ambiguity.
- Dr. Simpson proposed amendments to the motion to ensure that expenditure limits were subject to commission approval, allowing for future adjustments based on funding needs.
- Dr. Simpson reiterated her concerns and intentions to vote against the motion unless amendments were made to address expenditure approvals and funding recommendations.
- Chair Jackson acknowledged that the motion carried.

- Marcia Huff commented that the Commission does not have the authority to restrict DBH and the Office of Opioid Abatement in deciding on amounts and grant awards.
- Dr. Beverly Settles-Reaves commented that the Commission should have been better at detailing the order from subcommittee, to making recommendations, to implementation of those recommendations.

New Business

- Jacqueline Bowens stated that all communications and commission meetings are solely for education or subject matter expertise. A public forum will be scheduled for individuals to express their perspectives or interests regarding the work at hand.
- Chad Jackson confirmed the scheduling of the public forum and transitioned to the public comment section, allowing a brief period for comments.

Public Comment

- Ambrose Lane, Jr. from the Health Alliance Network expressed concerns about the flawed decision-making process within the commission, emphasizing the need for impact statements before approval, the authority to request additional funds, and proper budget management.
- Chris Thomas acknowledged the valuable information shared in the meeting, highlighting the importance of addressing homelessness, youth involvement in drug use, and the need for diverse approaches to combat the opioid crisis.
- Jacqueline Bowens briefly took over from Chair Jackson to adjourn the meeting and invited additional public comments.
- Anna Jones, a community liaison, stressed the significance of family involvement and mental health support in addressing the opioid crisis, urging the committee to consider these aspects in their future discussions.
- Prince Ham, representing a group assisting citizens, homeless individuals, and the elderly, reiterated the importance of understanding community needs and advocated for increased peer support and community engagement.
- Kent Wilson-El emphasized the essential role of peer support in community development and pledged continued involvement in addressing local issues.

Adjournment:

- Jacqueline Bowens concluded the meeting, expressing gratitude to all participants for their contributions and encouraging continued engagement in future sessions.
- The meeting was adjourned at 11:14 AM.