

NORTHWESTERN COUNSELING & SUPPORT SERVICES
107 FISHER POND ROAD
ST. ALBANS VT 05478

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING MINUTES

FEBRUARY 4, 2026

Present: Angela Poirier, Jason Minor, Dan Thompson, Lisa Whittemore, Rob Hirss, Casey Toof, Elaine Carpenter, Ken Gagne

Excused: Anjanette Watson, Jim McMillian

Staff: Todd Bauman, Ryan Davis, Danielle Roberts, Emily Richards, Belinda Bessette, Matt Habedank, Kim McClellan, Stacey Remillard, April Glover

Public:

Minutes received and meeting called to order by Angela Poirier at 5:31pm.

Motion was made to approve the January minutes as presented by Dan Thompson. Second by Lisa Whittemore. All in Favor

Presentation

- Client and Staff Satisfaction Survey Review

Executive Director Report

- We had our CCBHC and designation exit interview this week. It went well and was quick. There are a few things for us to be working on, which we are like substance use disorder (SUD) treatments and our waiting lists, they did recognize how our access center is helping with this. Nothing they had to say went to an action plan, which means we are in a good place. A few positive things they pointed out were our culture, staff retention, our on boarding structure, data collection and our community partnerships. We should get a written report this week. We are in good position for the go live date of July 1, 2026. We have submitted our costing report and are waiting to hear what the timelines will look like for the state to work on the financial pieces. The question was asked – please explain the need of a strong rate structure? The reports and meetings we will have will help the state determine the rate they will be giving us, we want to make sure that we are accounting for everything. With a good rate we will be able to grow our staff and the programs we offer. The question was asked – what programs are not CCBHC? Currently it is the Parent Child Center (PCC), Developmental Services (DS), Success Beyond Six (SB6), Elder Care, ReachUp Program, Emergency Services and Residential Programs. The question was asked – How is this affecting those programs? We have taken the stance that we want to “lift the whole boat,” we do not want CCBHC programs to be richer than others. As an example, when we did the compensation study, we did the whole agency vs just the required CCBHC positions. The question was asked – On a % base how much of our annual budget will be part of CCBHC? About 35%, we are advocating to put more into that because the funding is predictable, but the state is being cautious about this as it is new

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for them too. We do think that as time goes by they will add more things because the federal match is more, so it makes more sense to have more part of the CCBHC.

- Soar Update – We have received the demo costs and are pleasantly surprised, it is lower than we guessed. We need a few other pieces of information so we can pick a path forward. And we are hoping to have this in the next few weeks. Once we have the information and our path, we will submit it to the state see what they are willing to give us to help with the cost. We will most likely need to get a bond to finish this project much like we did for the Family Center. We have learned that we can build on the same property and that the students can stay in the current building while we build a new one. The consultant did give the numbers of what it would cost to fix it and maintain the structure of monitoring the PCB's and that is more than demo of the building, this is good number to know and use as leverage when we are talking to the state about our options. There is talk that the state doesn't have enough funds for scope of work they are requiring, so may say never mind, don't do anything. However, now that we know we have an issue we can't not do anything about it. We would need to do something about the building anyway there are electrical and plumbing issues just to name a few. The question was asked, did we put this out to bid? The state has a process, and we used a consultant to help us through that process, when it comes to getting the work done he will also help us put it out to bid. We are feeling good about this, as we were kind of blind for a little while with the need to just keep doing more testing, but now are getting numbers and it seems like we can start moving forward.
- Thank you to board for the approval of the purchase of the Elm Street property. There is a little work being done right now so the front apartment is ready for the client in Samantha's division soon. The back apartment needs more work, but we do not need it right at this moment, so we have time to do construction on to make it just right for us.

Financial Report

- We have closed December 2025. We currently have a loss of \$1.54 million but we are on track with our budget. We did have a \$362,000 gain in December. The loss is due to our aggressive moves around wages in preparation for CCBHC and we have 30 more employees than we did this time last year.
- We are showing about 55.5 days in cash. This is a decrease, but an expected one. We have three payrolls and a bonus that was given out. We expect to be back at our normal numbers in January.
- KBS has sent us the 990. It was shared prior to this meeting with all the board members. It was also reviewed in depth during the executive committee meeting. The executive committee recommends that the board approve the 990 as presented. Once it is approved KBS will file it with the state and we will finished with the FY25 audit.

Motion was made to approve the 990 as presented by Ken Gagne. Seconded Rob Hirss. All in favor.

Executive Committee Report

- We reviewed the Executive Director succession plan and there are no changes. The executive committee voted and approved this. Emily will send the plan out this with next month's board packet for you all. Stacey thinks it should be added to the January monthly meeting.
- All other times we talked about have been discussed here.

Nursing Update

- SUD and healthcare screens are things we are working on to improve. We reached out to all the local Primary Care Providers (PCP) with a letter stating that we are starting to work on these things. The letters went out on Friday, and we have already had two folks respond. We are looking forward to working on this with some good partnership.

Community Mental Health Report

- Cost reporting and planning for CCBHC is a ever changing thing, as an example reach out and elder care have not been, but last week Department of Mental Health (DMH) said they are cutting these grants and are telling the legislative folks that it can be covered in the CCBHC so we are talking about that. There have been large changes that are affecting funding for us, so we will be negotiating up when the state tries to negotiate down on the cost reporting. Meaghan Malboeuf will be testing next week on elder care, so we are talking about and the importance of all our programs.
- SUD is starting, we hired a LADD and he has done his first intake. We did receive another application. Belinda also met with Melinda White and wanted to talk about how we can partner together so we are building! With The Howard Center leaving we have 17 people on the wait list who need services. And that doesn't not include the Medications for opioid Use Disorder (MOUD) treatment.
- One of the CCBHC requirements is access and the access center has been doing this to help us meet that requirement. As of last week, there is a 5-day waitlist for adults, the requirement for CCBHC is 10 days. We had a client use the same day access today, and they were referred by UVM so it is working, and we are excited for it.
- Holly Branon and Heather Getty are working with DCF to create a program to help transition youth stay out of the adult system, and the partnership is going really well.
- The question was asked – When the Howard Center left, they just dropped all their clients? Not exactly, they were given two options come to Chittenden County and /or telehealth visits, a lot of these clients have transportation issues and in person is best practice. We are working with the other local programs to work better together and get these folks the help treatment they need.

Early Education & School Based Services Report

- Our Children's Integrated Services (CIS) programs have been inside the Child, Youth and Family (CYF) bundle, until now. This has created a lot more things to report on, we have a semiannual report, and we submitted it for the first time tonight. Margaret Walsh and the PCC staff are working with Amanda Morong to be using the data and our systems to do so. In the past it was mostly hand tracked and we are now at a place where we are pulling it out of the system, and this is great to see.
- Soar high school students went to the Flynn today. It was a great outing, and everyone had a good time.
- Soar is building in some activities and curriculum around the winter Olympics. It will be a good way to spend the last few weeks of school before break. Each class will be a country, to do some education around there, as well as some activities. Keely Loughan the physical education teacher, has been doing this and doing a great job.
- We hired a new DS staff, who is a graduate of Soar. During orientation he said he wanted to have a job that gave back to him like others gave to him. It was so great to see.

Community Relations Report

- We had mental health advocacy day recently. A big portion of the day was talking about the right care, at the time with right people. Dani Roberts felt like it was better than last year's and they are asking for feedback to keep the improvements coming.
- One thing that Dani continues to work on is brochures trying to keep the look, messaging and contact information, consistent.
- Something that will be happening in the next 6 months will be to get in the local papers more. We have been looking for the big story but want to focus on the small things – like the Knights of Columbus donation to camp rainbow every year.
- On April 16th at the Complex will be the Franklin County Volunteer fair, franklin county organizations will have a opportunity to talk about the volunteer needs they have.
- Autism Walk will be Sunday May 17th.
- Community Partners Classic will be June 19th

Human Resources Report

- We have found that our worker's comp numbers have been up over the last few years. We are talking to staff about the cost and different care options, but there are things that we do not have control over, like the local health care providers. Trying to be creative Stacey sent out a memo (it was in the board packet). It was a note to say "hey, this is who we are, and this is philosophy on work, and that we would like people to be at work, and how important it is for folks to be at work and the impact on mental health." We do not know if it will help but we are strategic about how we can help drop the cost. We have been put on support plan with our captive, since we have had 2 bad years, we had to have a meeting about what our plan is and how we are hoping to drop this cost.

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- Feb 1st we needed to do our OSHA report, and we had 14 reportable injuries. There were 259 days out of work, 139 partial days. The question was asked - What is the most common injury we see? It is slips, trips and falls, we had a cost of \$400,000 for those in the 23/24 year. We are going to work with teams and work on how we can help with them.

Quality and Risk Management Report

- Kim wanted to confirm that the days in accounts receivable (AR) for the agency does not include the billing. July through December at the lowest was 28 days and the highest was 36 days. When looking at these numbers you are looking for a lower number and the average in the medial field is 30-40 and mental health field has an average of 50 days. We will start to have a graph going forward in the board report.
- Reviewed the 2025 corporate compliance report

Other Business

Motion made to adjourn by Ken Gagne. Seconded by Elaine Carpenter. All in Favor.

Meeting adjourn at 7:31 pm

Minutes recorded by: Emily Richards