NORTH Dakota | State Hospital
Be Legendary. HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

GOVERNING BODY MINUTES
Monday – December 8th, 2025 – 9:00 a.m.
NDSH LaHaug Archibald Conference Room/Teams

Members Present/Absent:

- ☒ Pam Sagness, Chairperson
- ☒ Aaron Olson, Superintendent
- ☒ Dr. Eduardo Yabut, Medical Director
- ☒ Matthew McCleary, Mental Health America of ND
- ☒ Representative Karen Rohr
- ☐ Vacant Position, Consumer-at-Large
- ☒ Allyson Hicks, Attorney General's Office
- ☒ Courtney Peterson, Assistant CFO, Fiscal Administration
- ☒ Dr. Dan Cramer, BHC Chief Clinical Officer
- ☒ Pat Traynor, Interim Commissioner of ND DHHS

Call to Order: Meeting was called to order at 9:04 a.m. by Pam Sagness, Chairperson.

Approval of Minutes: MOTION by Representative Rohr- *Approve September 8, 2025, minutes.* Second by Dr. Cramer. Unanimous approval.

New Business:

- **New Medical Staff Credentialing – Dr. Yabut**
  Discussion: Dr. Yabut presented Dr. Shannon Alexander and Dr. Tanya Cunic for credentialing.
  Recommendation: Roll call vote taken for approval.

  MOTION by Dr. Cramer– *Approve Dr. Shannon Alexander for credentialing.* Second by Aaron Olson.
  Yes – Peterson, Cramer, Rohr, Yabut, Olson, Sagness, McCleary, Traynor

  MOTION by Mr. McCleary – *Approve Dr. Tanya Cunic for credentialing.* Second by Dr. Cramer.
  Yes – Peterson, Cramer, Rohr, Yabut, Olson, Sagness, McCleary, Traynor

  Follow-up: None noted.

- **Medical Staff Resignations – Dr. Yabut**
  Discussion: Candy Hoggarth-Baldwin, NP, resigned and Dr. Chad Christensen is no longer under contract.
  Recommendations: None noted.
  Follow-up: None noted.

Reports:

- Employee Promotion Committee (EPC) Report – Carie Hanson, EPC Chairperson. Report submitted.
  Discussion:
  - The committee currently has 14 members.
  - Events include chili and soup cook-offs, baked potato and walking taco lunches, picnics, outdoor rock scavenger hunt, turkey bingo, hot chocolate, popcorn, and treat days. A staff movie event also is planned for January.

  Recommendations: Members have received the annual report. No new recommendations made.
  Follow-up: None noted.
- New State Hospital Report – Cody Kinnischtzke, Facility and Admin. Services Director
  - PowerPoint presented to members with information provided pertaining to a review of the construction schedule, site pictures, and guaranteed max price amendment information.
  - Temporary paving, dirt work/excavating, getting utilities on-site, and creating the footings and foundation have begun.
- Superintendent's Report – Aaron Olson, Superintendent. Report submitted.
  - Census has remained stable, with acuity driven by forensic and psych admissions.
  - Recruitment for nursing and direct care associate staff is improving with travel nursing hours decreasing.
  - There also is a continued focus on nursing education and training. Nurse educator and certified nursing assistant training are in place.
  - Medication audit findings from February 2023 were reviewed with members. Updated workflows, strengthened verification processes, targeted coaching, and daily monitoring have contributed to an improved medication safety culture. No errors were noted when auditors revisited.
  - Work is being done with the revenue cycle team related to the admissions process and having correct insurance and billing information as well as an enhanced ability to capture revenue.
  - B.E.R.T. (Behavioral Emergency Response Team) was implemented back in July with staff receiving classroom and hands-on training.
  - Focus continues on the future new State Hospital with policies, procedures, and workflows being reviewed and updated.
  - Growing demand for court ordered forensic evaluations noted.
- Medical Director's Report – Dr. Yabut, Medical Director. Report submitted.
  - Dr. Alexander and Dr. Cunic have started work at NDSH. Recruitment for permanent psychiatrists, clinical forensic psychologists, and family physicians continues.
  - NDSH continues to be a rotation site for UND medical students and psychiatric residents. Rotation schedule was explained to members.
  - All medical staff attended 50% of medical staff meetings this past quarter. Each medical staff member is assigned to a committee.

- Average daily census, waitlist, and length of stay information reviewed with members. Placement in transitional living continues to be a challenge.
- Lack of affordable housing also is an issue for potential NDSH staff/workforce.
- 60% of admissions are emergency admissions. This affects those on the waitlist. Admissions are then balanced between the civil commitment and forensic sides.
- Average forensic length of stay for North Dakota is lower than other states, between 77-88 days at NDSH compared with 90 days for other states.

- Quality Management (QM) Comparative Statistics Report – Deb Eissinger, QM Director. Report submitted.
  - NDSH data is compared against our own records as well as Western Psychiatric State Hospital Association (WPSHA) and NRI (national) data. Six-month data findings reviewed with members.
  - Screening for Social Drivers of Health was reviewed with members. Client food insecurity, housing concerns, and transportation needs upon discharge noted in the report.
  - In January 2026, the patient satisfaction survey is changing to the Psychiatric Inpatient Experience Survey. It will be only for those clients who don't have a guardian and will be given upon discharge only. The Social Determinants of Health screening tool will continue but doesn't need to be reported nationally anymore.
- Financial Report – Courtney Peterson, Assistant CFO. Report submitted.
  - NDSH Fiscal Report through September 30th reviewed with members. Expenditures are trending closely with anticipated expenditures, which is a 13 percent spend; currently there is an 11 percent average between the State Hospital and SOTEP.
  - If one-time spend is taken out from the prior biennium, we are trending almost identically with current spend and revenue collections.
- Human Resources Report – Bobbie Miller, HR Business Partner. Report submitted.
  - Turnover and retirement risk percentages reviewed.
  - 34.5% vacancy noted with organizational restructuring being done including reclassification of positions related to the new State Hospital.
- Safety/Security Report – Larry Culp, Director of Safety/Security. Report submitted.
  - Information regarding drills as well as fire extinguisher, fire panel, and evacuation training explained to members.
  - Fire and smoke door inspections were done. The fire marshal inspection also was completed.
  - B.E.R.T. (Behavioral Emergency Response Team) simulation drills and training are finishing up.
  - Camera additions completed.
  - Annual safety training is out for completion.
- Plant Services Report – Jeff Comer, Plant Services Director. Report submitted.
  - Workload is consistent. An average of 100-150 work orders per week has been noted with approximately 150-175 work orders in progress.

    - The heating system is in service and requires manual adjusting. A few air handler motor failures have occurred, and the motors had to be rebuilt.
    - Winter equipment is ready.
    - JRCC (James River Correctional Center) Maintenance Shop has been demolished.
    - The capital project list is being reorganized, and work is being done getting bids out through procurement to be ready for work to be done in the spring.
    - Three open positions noted; the department is close to being fully staffed.
    - No update regarding the JRCC Grounds Study currently.
- Behavioral Health Clinics Report – Dr. Dan Cramer, Statewide BHC Director. Report submitted.
    - The process of human service centers becoming state-certified behavioral health clinics was explained to members. Currently, four clinics are in the process of becoming certified-- Northwest in Williston, North Central in Minot, Southeast in Fargo, and Badlands in Dickinson.
    - Significant work effort is being done to improve the front door experience at clinics and to make sure people are connected to the right service at the right time for them in a way that they feel supported.
    - Work also is being done growing and expanding services to align with the needs of our state operational enhancements.
    - There has been an effort towards workforce expansion and service growth, which is a community effort. The goal is not to duplicate but to make sure the right services exist for all people locally.
    - Care coordination as a new role explained to members.
    - Peer support role has grown substantially in the past few years.
    - The number of actual people served also has increased.
    - Work is being done on health record modernization to improve the availability of services for all.
- Department of Health and Human Services Report – Pat Traynor, Interim Commissioner of DHHS
    - There was testimony in front of the Senate regarding the Rural Health Transformation Program last week.
        - The program application has been submitted.
        - The amount to be received from this program should be determined by the end of the year. The minimum amount is 100 million dollars per year for five years.
        - Some ideas related to this program could be having a medical detox facility in North Dakota, working with workforce recruitment to help rural healthcare facilities, offering childcare and parent education programs, as well as utilizing new technology and software.
    - Commitment continues to have the healthiest citizens on the planet, to be the model of efficiency and effectiveness, and to have the healthiest, highest-performing workforce by creating an environment of wellness and growing people to their highest potential.

  MOTION by Commissioner Traynor– *Approve Standing Reports.* Second by Aaron Olson.

- NDSH Staff and Public Comment Period
  No comments noted.

Adjourn: Meeting adjourned at 10:42 a.m. MOTION by Dr. Cramer- *Adjourn meeting*. Second by Dr. Yabut. Unanimous approval.

Next Meeting: March 9, 2026, 9:00 a.m., Jamestown Area Chamber of Commerce Conference Room/Teams

Recorded by: Jodi Grugel