

New York State Opioid Settlement Fund Advisory Board

July 10, 2024 – Meeting

Empire State Plaza, Albany, NY – Meeting Room 6
Horizon Health Alliance, 55 Dodge Road, Getzville, NY
OASAS, 501 7th Ave., 8th Floor New York, New York

10:30am – 3:00pm

Welcome/Introductions

Chairwoman Debra Pantin opened the meeting and the Board Members introduced themselves noting their respective locations.

Introduction of New Board Members

Chair Pantin introduced new members Dr. Rebecca Linn-Walter as the New York City Designee and Tracy Gardner as the replacement for former member Avi Israel. Chair Pantin noted additional transitions of membership on the Board as many terms are ending soon.

Chair Pantin advised that Board members Avi Israel and Bill McGoldrick had resigned. Member Ashley Livingston made a motion to accept the resignation of Bill McGoldrick with a second from Member Dr. Tisha Smith and the motion was carried.

Member Dr. Stephen Giordano made a motion to accept the resignation of Avi Israel with a second from Member Livingston and the motion was carried.

May 17, 2024 Meeting Minutes

Members discussed the Meeting Minutes from the May 17, 2024 Meeting. Member Dr. Giordano made a motion to accept the Minutes with a second from Member Dr. Tisha Smith. The motion carried with abstentions from member Lavigne who was absent from the previous meeting and Office of Addiction Services and Supports (OASAS), Office of Mental Health (OMH), the Department of Health (DOH) and the Division of the Budget (DOB).

Presentation Selection

Chair Pantin revisited the presentation selection process and noted the public participation process, which was voted on and approved in September 2022.

Member Dr. Tisha Smith raised the need for the Board to receive and review information from the Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS) regarding data on individuals released from DOCCS. Dr. Smith also inquired about the funds DOCCS received from the Opioid Settlement Fund (OSF). OASAS Commissioner Cunningham clarified that the funds going to DOCCS did not come from the OSF.

Member Marquesano further discussed the presentation selection policy document, distinguishing between three-minute presentations and more extended ones, such as those from various counties.

Members Dr. Tisha Smith and Marquesano addressed concerns about equity, long-term opportunities, and the need for longer presentations on integration and underserved populations.

Member Giordano emphasized the importance of research and the need to hear from the four research institutes in the state about their activities.

Member Constantino requested a comprehensive overview of how other Local Government Units (LGUs) have utilized settlement dollars, to provide the Board with a full accounting of what is being done elsewhere. She further highlighted the issues of sustainability of recommendations and investments in the state, stressing the importance of ongoing funding for the overdose crisis.

Member J. Rivera noted media coverage of the fourth wave of opioid overdoses and requested presentations to better understand what is happening on the ground in real-time. She highlighted the need for research by anthropologists and other rapid research techniques to address the lack of a community, street-based view of the crisis. She specifically requested a presentation from the Drug Policy Alliance and expressed concern about the number of deaths and the inadequate funding from local governments.

Member Dr. Brown discussed measuring impact, noting that while some impacts can be measured immediately, others may take more time. He agreed that removing regulatory boundaries is helpful but not sufficient and concurred with the need for more research. Dr. Brown also highlighted the lack of information from NYC, which is necessary to understand unmet needs.

Member Lavigne expressed the need for a clear understanding of the funding outcomes.

Member J. Rivera highlighted how regulatory changes, such as telehealth, have significantly increased access to Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT). She noted that while some regulatory changes have immediate impacts, a rapid assessment is needed to understand gaps in services and to re-engage necessary stakeholders.

Member Tracy Gardner joined the meeting at the NYC location and introduced herself as a new member.

Vice Chair Justine Waldman discussed changes to regulations requiring prescribers to complete an eight-hour course to prescribe Buprenorphine. She expressed the need for a strategic plan rather than unrealistic requests and suggested focusing on allocating money to specific categories rather than overarching themes.

Dr. Watkins discussed regulatory changes regarding MAT and their impact in Cattaraugus County. He noted a reduction in opioid deaths but an increase in deaths related to methadone. He indicated that while inmates are offered MAT during incarceration and provided with medication upon release, some are not following the prescribed dosages. He suggested that additional regulatory evaluation might be needed.

Commissioner Cunningham explained that statutes guide these services, ensuring medication upon release, and that OASAS is working with county jail administrators and DOCCS on MAT issues. She highlighted that OASAS is collaborating with partner agencies and is the only state providing all forms of FDA-approved MAT. Cunningham advised that a broader discussion on MAT would occur at the next meeting and reminded the Board about the written report and OASAS dashboard for transparency on fund usage.

Member Marquesano expressed concern that the Requests for Applications (RFAs) from the State do not address the Board's overarching theme related to co-occurring disorders.

Chair Pantin acknowledged requests for presentations from DOCCS and LGUs on issues such as integration, research, drug policy, and local government. She stated that she would submit requests to local governments like Nassau County and NYC, noting that NYC was not prepared to present at this meeting but might be able to present in September. She aims to have two presentations per meeting and asked members to provide names of agencies they want to present by next week. She also emphasized the need to focus on strategy, timelines, and detailed recommendations for the annual report.

State Presentation: Review of Dashboard with Status Update

Commissioner Cunningham provided an update on progress since the last OSFAB meeting and reminded everyone of the revised OASAS Mission & Vision Statement. She noted the reduction in funds and advised the Board to consider this when making recommendations. The opioid settlement fund tracker is available online: <https://oasas.ny.gov/fy-2023-opioid-settlement-fund-initiatives>

DOH Designee Joanne Morne and Dr. Chris Smith from OMH presented on their respective agencies' updates.

Member J. Rivera informed members about a concerning increase in AIDS, STD, and STI cases in NYC, particularly in the Bronx, which has the highest rates of injection-related AIDS and overdoses but is not receiving funds. She expressed concern that NYC DOHMH does not report these deaths.

NYC DOHMH Designee Linn-Walter acknowledged that historical responses to the addiction crisis have been insufficient and expressed openness to discussing ways NYC could improve.

Members discussed the Purdue Settlement and whether the Attorney General should negotiate another settlement. They were advised that settlement fund numbers would not be affected by the recent Supreme Court decision allowing the Sackler family to be held personally liable.

Member Marquesano highlighted MATTERS' updates related to co-occurring disorders and suggested inviting MATTERS to present data on co-occurring services. She also recommended broader integration branding for OASAS advertising.

Commissioner Cunningham acknowledged equity concerns in advertising and renewed her request for contact information from the public willing to share their stories, as prior requests had yielded no information. She stated that OASAS would share these stories on various media platforms. Chair Pantin noted that families might be reluctant to share due to fear of additional stigma or harm.

Member Dr. Brown concurred with Member J. Rivera's concerns about the lack of information from NYC and indicated that presentations would be helpful. He was impressed with the information shared by DOH on telemedicine and OMH's initiative.

Commissioner Cunningham and Designee Morne discussed each agency's initiatives and advised that their priorities would determine which programs continue in the future.

DOB Designee O'Shea clarified that the OMH initiatives discussed are not funded by opioid settlement dollars.

Members Gardner and Constantino discussed ways to supplement settlement fund dollars.

Chair Pantin advised members about OASAS's proposed updates to their strategic plan, which is now a new addition to the website. Commissioner Cunningham noted that while the current draft has been updated, the strategic plan is required and updated every five years per Mental Hygiene Law.

Public Comment

The Board heard from members of the public present at the Buffalo, New York City, and Albany locations. The Board then broke for lunch.

State Presentations Questions and Follow-Up

Member Dr. Brown emphasized the need to access mortality data, particularly personnel costs per service, which could be used to save lives and assist others.

Members discussed the sustainability of several initiatives, noting that funds are often allocated to start-up programs. Suggestions included integrating Outpatient and Opioid Treatment Programs (OTPs) with billing to sustain services, with state funding transitioning to billing. Member Constantino noted that sustainability for billable services depends on the rate, and if inadequate, the services are not sustainable. She suggested forming a technical team to develop contracting and data efforts for grassroots organizations and mentioned that federal funding allows for a more streamlined application process for smaller organizations.

Member J. Rivera proposed a motion for the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (NYCDOHMH) to present to the Board on the distribution of funds for FY 22, 23, and 24, including a breakdown of whether the funds were awarded through a competitive process. Chair Pantin offered an amendment to include all NYC and other LGUs across the state. Member J. Rivera accepted the amendment, and the motion was seconded by Member Waldman. Commissioner Cunningham advised that the reporting process differs for LGU funds that flow directly through the LGU. Members further discussed the amended motion, resulting in a second amendment to request presentations specifically from NYC, Nassau, and Suffolk LGUs. Member Linn-Walter highlighted quarterly reports and annual distributions for NYC. The motion carried with abstentions from OASAS, DOH, OMH, and DOB.

Member Dr. Brown proposed a motion for the Board to receive reports at least one to two business days before the next meeting. The motion carried with a second from Member Lavigne and abstentions from OASAS, DOH, OMH, and DOB.

Member Marquesano proposed a motion for a report on the RFA process and commitment to developing co-occurring competency. The motion was seconded by Member Dr. Brown. Members Gardner and Marquesano discussed the motion to clarify it. The motion carried with abstentions from OASAS, DOH, OMH, and DOB, as well as Chair Pantin and Member Waldman.

OSFAB 2026 Recommendations and OSFAB Strategic Plan

Chair Pantin reviewed initiatives funded by the settlement but lacking continuous funding. She advised the Board to prioritize which initiatives will continue and determine the allocation of funds for the next year.

Member Brown suggested that not all initiatives are equal regarding continuity and sustainability. He proposed focusing on overarching themes and reducing the number of categories from ten to five to maximize impact.

Members Giordano and Constantino discussed how the funds should not replace pre-existing funding for services.

Attendees

Board Members:

New York City location: Joyce Rivera, OASAS Commissioner Chinazo Cunningham, and Rebecca Linn Walter (NYC DOHMH Designee).

Buffalo location - Anne Constantino, Ray Ganoe, Cheryll Moore, Dr. Chris Smith (OMH Designee)

Virtual - Kevin Watkins, Stephanie Marquesano, and Carmen Rivera.

Albany Location - Dr. Tisha Smith, Dr. Stephen Giordano, Dr. Lawrence Brown, Joanne Morne (DOH designee), Peggy O'Shea (DOB designee), Debra Pantin, and Justine Waldman.