

Meeting Minutes of the Governor's Council on Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment Courts and Justice-Involved Populations Subcommittee Tuesday, February 10, 2026, Approved

Attendees:

Subcommittee Members Attending: Stephanie Bond, Candace Facemyer, Coty Long, Lori Lynch, Judge Jim Rowe, Stephanie Thornton (Chair)

Subcommittee Members Not Attending: Amber Blankenship, Sam Hess, Cindy Hill, Tom Plymale

Guest Speaker: Kathy Szafran

Other Guests Attending: John Bess

Office of Drug Control Policy (ODCP) Staff Attending: Rick Dempsey, Olivia Fox, Dr. Stephen Loyd

State Opioid Response (SOR) Staff Attending: Gwyn McGee

State Opioid Response (SOR) Regional Coordinators Attending: Barbie Masih, Jill Poe

Marshall University Staff Attending: Bradley McCoy

Opening:

Stephanie Thornton (Chair) provided welcome and opening remarks of this meeting of the Governor's Council on Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment, Courts and Justice-Involved Populations Subcommittee. The meeting was called to order on Tuesday, February 10, 2026, and was conducted by Google Meet conference. Stephanie Thornton approved the January 13, 2026 meeting minutes. There was no further discussion. The purpose of this meeting was to invite guest speaker Kathy Szafran to discuss the ACEs (Adverse Childhood Experiences) Coalition of West Virginia.

Agenda Items:

Guest Speaker – Kathy Szafran (ACEs Coalition of West Virginia)

- Kathy Szafran is President of the board of directors for the ACEs Coalition. Stephanie Bond is a member as well.
- The ACEs Coalition of West Virginia's mission is to improve the health and well-being of all West Virginians by reducing the impact of ACEs and preventing their occurrence. The vision is that all West Virginians can thrive in a compassionate community that supports lifelong healthy development.
- In the first meeting by the Coalition, they realized how young women in West Virginia had abnormally high ACE scores compared to other states. West Virginia's population has had generational trauma.
- The Coalition started 10 years ago and has grown to 4,000 members. They became a 501c3 during the pandemic to formalize their efforts.
- The first initiative of the Coalition was training members on the varying levels of trauma-informed care. They developed Trauma-Informed ACEs courses 101, 102, and 103. These three different curriculums are provided free of charge across the state on the website at

<https://www.acescoalitionofwv.com>. There are 12 Master Trainers who can provide a Train the Trainer course and 146 ACEs Trainers available in the state.

- Their first inaugural conference was last year with 220 attendees.
- The Coalition has 4 main task teams: 1) The Awareness Task Team 2) The Training Task Team 3) The Program and Research Task Team 4) The Legislative Task Team that meet separately and then report back to the group as a whole.
- They have a Faces of ACEs video on their website and another video about ACEs research they made in partnership with Marshall University.
- The Coalition has partnered with Tulane University and the Traumatic Stress Institute to utilize the ARTIC Scale. This scale measures professional and para-professional attitudes towards Trauma-Informed Care (TIC). It has become the go-to measure for TIC program evaluation in such settings as hospitals and Head Start programs as well as the fire departments to justice systems. The justice-involved population and those who work in this space would benefit from research using the ARTIC scale.
- Another partnership is the Tuft Medical Center and the HOPE National Resource Center. This partnership uses Healthy Outcomes from the Positive Experiences (HOPE). You cannot “medicate trauma out of a child”. It is all relational and experience based.
- When delivering the ACEs test, there should be trauma-informed assistance as follow up. The questionnaire is difficult for individuals when administered, and compassion and support should be immediately available.
- Several school districts across the state have participated in the Coalition’s trainings. The HOPE curriculum could be used in school systems. When teaching ACEs, resilience needs to be taught with it. Teachers can be instrumental in helping students with resilience along with excelling and exceeding beyond trauma. There are trauma-informed techniques teachers can adopt into their classroom.
- North Carolina created a trauma-informed bench card that informs court system workers on how to be more insightful to traumatized individuals’ needs. This could be a positive step for West Virginia in creating a trauma-informed setting for the justice population.
 - https://www.nccourts.gov/assets/documents/publications/ACEs-Informed-Courts-bench-card-06102022_0.pdf?VersionId=.tN4ZeT4RU67WB6Zpgc15BoKEWMAUBN5
- The Hear Our Voices campaign is being initiated by the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court and will consist of training for circuit judges on interacting with youth during juvenile abuse/neglect, as well as delinquent court proceedings.
- Stephanie Bond shared links to works by Dr. Nadine Burke Harris who studies and advocates about long-term effects of childhood adversity.
 - <https://www.bing.com/videos/riverview/relatedvideo?q=nadine+burke+harris&mid=2177FFA03E70C91BD66D2177FFA03E70C91BD66D&FORM=VIRE>
 - https://www.amazon.com/s?k=nadine+burke-harris&adgrpid=1335907193658229&hvadid=83494438615920&hvbmmt=be&hvdev=c&hvlocphy=88910&hvnetw=o&hvqmt=e&hvtargid=kwd-83494548162304%3Aloc-190&hydadcr=22538_13494488&mcid=c0203d36a66b3e49987b075148dface&tag=mh0b-20&ref=pd_sl_5kxkv0mylx_e

Additional Discussion

- None.

Adjournment:

Stephanne closed the meeting by thanking all Subcommittee members for their attendance and participation. The Subcommittee will meet on Tuesday, March 10, 2026 at 10:00 AM.