

Meeting Minutes

Treatment, Health Systems, and Research Subcommittee of the Governor's Council on Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment

Wednesday, March 25, 2026, Approved

Attendees:

Subcommittee Members Attending: Dr. Jim Berry, Dr. Jorge Cortina, Candace Facemyer, Ken Fitzwater, Raj Masih, Dr. Garrett Moran, Brienne Taylor, Josh Titlow

Invited Subcommittee Members Not Attending: Rebecca Alley, Dr. Thomas Bailey, Shawna Chapman Jennifer Fields, Constance Harvey, Emalene Heaton, Heather Jarrett, Keith King, Heidi Life, Anita Mallett, Amy Proffitt, Victoria Swain, Timothy Watson, Jessica Whitmore, Danielle Woods-Huffman, Lisa Zappia

Guests Attending: Stephanie Thornton

Office of Drug Control Policy (ODCP) Staff Attending: Jessica Smith

Marshall University Staff Attending: Deb Koester, Bradley McCoy

Opening:

Deb Koester provided welcome and opening remarks of this meeting of the Governor's Council on Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment – Treatment, Health Systems, and Research Subcommittee. The meeting was called to order on Wednesday, March 25, 2026, and was conducted by Google Meet conference. Deb Koester approved the February 17, 2026 meeting minutes. There was no further discussion. The purpose of the meeting was for guest speaker Stephanie Thornton to present on her work on stigma in the court system as Chair of the Courts and Justice-Involved Populations Subcommittee to support KPI implementation and to review progress on other key performance indicators.

Agenda:

Guest Speaker – Stephanie Thornton (Courts & Justice-Involved Populations Subcommittee Chair)

- Stephanie joined the Subcommittee to complete Goal 2, Strategy 5, KPI 1 and 2 with her discussion around stigma in courts and corrections.
- Stephanie shared the work completed by her Subcommittee in 2025 and a summary of their 2026 State Plan.
- Dr. Matt Christiansen and Dr. Stephen Loyd both used their time at ODCP to speak with judges at their judicial conference. They educated courts on the differences between Medications for Opioid Use Disorder (MOUD) and abstinence. There are a lot of new judges who were elected last year, and they present new opportunities for continued education.
- The Courts Subcommittee partnered with the Pregnant and Parenting Women Subcommittee to disseminate a list of recovery-friendly and justice-involved friendly obstetrics providers. This will help to inform pregnant women that substance use during pregnancy is not criminalized so that they do not avoid or stop seeking care.

- This year, the Courts Subcommittee will focus on the following:
 - Documenting reentry services and warm handoffs (an example being Ken Fitzwater’s work with Pretera and their mobile van units at carceral settings to meet individuals following jail/prison release).
 - Informing prison providers about Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), resiliency, and trauma-informed care.
 - Learning why people refuse access to state identification documents when exiting a carceral setting and determining if it is a gap that needs to be closed and how.
- The Subcommittee discussed time, funding, and documentation constraints for getting IDs for those leaving carceral settings. Pretera includes this in grants and have worked with Western and South-Central Regional Jails on this.
- Pretera has successfully gotten their information on prison tablets and disseminated information in the community. They are contacted at every level by inmates directly, providers, jail/prison staff, and families of inmates.
- The Subcommittee discussed next steps for training with providers and other target populations as per the KPI. Pretera has developed a training for providers on working with justice-involved populations. StigmaFreeWV, supported by the Bureau for Behavioral Health, exists to provide general stigma training, and it does touch on the justice-involved population although it is not a main focus. This includes a pre/posttest. Provider relationships with parole and probation officers can close the gap of people missing appointments. Community partners that work with unhoused populations, libraries, food banks, free clinics, recovery housing operators, and health departments were all identified as places resource guides could be distributed. Additionally, the Subcommittee questioned how much these community partners work with the justice-involved and how much training (stigma or otherwise) they have had. It was also noted that the WV Perinatal Partnership also has a training for judges, probation officers, parole officers, etc. on engagement with pregnant and parenting women.
- There was brief discussion on the ongoing sequential intercept mapping that has started. The next 18 months will see regional mapping/planning events occur across the state. Putnam and Cabell counties are completed as of this week. This is another opportunity to understand gaps and stigma.
- The Subcommittee discussed the prevalence of those incarcerated with a traumatic brain injury (TBI), approximately 80%, and the implications that would have on treatment.

2026 State Plan Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

- **Goal 1, Strategy 1, KPI 1:** A draft Quick Response Team (QRT) survey was sent to the Subcommittee on Monday, March 23, 2026. Deb Koester reviewed it again with the Subcommittee.
- Edits suggested by the Subcommittee were the following:
 - Add linkages and referrals to the list of services provided.
 - Ask for the number of encounters and the number of unique individuals served last year.
 - Edit the list of databases used for data collection.
 - Ask for outcome measures – how they measure success.
 - Ask teams where they get their referrals from such as EMS, law enforcement, 911, etc.
 - Ken Fitzwater is sending an additional question pertaining to naloxone and other edits via email following the meeting.
 - Ask about initial team onboarding training as well as other training provided to QRT staff.
- Jessica Smith is working to get the contacts for each QRT by April so this can be finalized by the April meeting.

- **Goal 2, Strategy 4, KPI 1:** Deb Koester will meet with interested Subcommittee members individually outside of the regularly scheduled meetings for their expertise in preparation of the roundtables.

Additional Discussion

- None.

Adjournment:

Deb Koester closed the meeting by thanking all Subcommittee members for their attendance. The Subcommittee will meet again on Tuesday, April 21, 2026 at 1:00 PM.