

Meeting Minutes of the Governor's Council on Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment Courts and Justice-Involved Populations Subcommittee Tuesday, July 14, 2026, Approved

Attendees:

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

Subcommittee Members Not Attending: Amber Blankenship, Sam Hess, Cindy Hill, Lori Lynch

Guests Attending: Anne Thomas

Office of Drug Control Policy (ODCP) Staff Attending: Dr. Stephen Loyd, Justin Smith

State Opioid Response (SOR) Staff Attending: Stephanie Frazer, Renee Harris

State Opioid Response (SOR) Regional Coordinators Attending: 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, July 14, 2026, and was conducted by Google Meet conference. Stephanie Thornton approved the June 9, 2026 meeting minutes. There was no further discussion. The purpose of this meeting was to discuss progress of 2026 State Plan key performance indicators (KPIs) related to comparisons of police programs utilizing Peer Recovery Support Specialists (PRSSs).

Agenda Items:

Comparing 3 Models of Police Embedded Peers

- The three models are the following:
 - The Wheeling Police Department's Crisis Response Unit (CRU)
 - West Virginia Sober Living's (WVSL) Police and Peers Program
 - Buckhannon Police Department's Embedded Peer
- First Choice funds the two Police Departments while WVSL's program is funded by SOR.
- Data Collection
 - Buckhannon's police department has a focus on qualitative data such as community impact, quality of life, and changes in officers' attitudes towards working with those in the community with substance use disorder.
 - The Wheeling Police Department has quantitative data with a focus on the law enforcement side of the continuum of care such as crime and arrest rates.
 - WVSL also has quantitative data with a focus on referrals and connections to treatment since they focus on the case management side of the continuum of care.
- Model and Function
 - The Buckhannon model relies on the Police Chief and their one peer. The Chief submits reports regularly to the Buckhannon City Council. Twice annually the peer reports to the

City Council about her work. Reports include the number of people contacted entering treatment, number of service calls, and other data but Chief says the true effect of the program is seen in the qualitative outcomes. The project receives accolades from Council members.

- The Wheeling model is a multidisciplinary crisis response unit within the police department. It includes CIT officers, a mental health specialist, a social worker, a victim advocate, and peer recovery support specialists. The PRSSs here work within the police department and are legitimized by wearing Police Department logos and branded uniforms.
- The WVSL program is a multi-county peer engagement program. Peers collaborate with police and sheriffs but are not embedded in the department. There is a focus on harm reduction, outreach, and treatment referrals.
- The Wheeling Police Department has an infographic with a summary of last year's data, crime rates, and explanation of their continuum of care that is available upon request.
 - Dr. Stephen Loyd emphasized their contact rate. They arrest at a very low rate and often deflect them to other programs.
- Outcomes:
 - Wheeling provides the number of officers trained in CIT, diversions, mental health referrals, number of arrests at crisis events, connections to treatment, peer engagement/follow-up, and the general public safety impact via a breakdown of crime arrests.
 - WVSL provides peer data but does not provide law enforcement data such as arrest metrics. Their data is driven by case management such as referral and connection to treatment
- The Subcommittee discussed differences in their numbers for connections to treatment since Wheeling is only one city and the Police and Peers program serves a six-county region.
- The Subcommittee discussed the differences between a warm handoff, a confirmed connection to treatment, an active case load, and how much follow-up occurs. It is likely different in every county based on local culture between police, peers, and their local treatment facilities.
- The Subcommittee also discussed what happens when a police officer decides to deflect to services. In the event that an officer still decides to make the arrest, they will have access to post-booking/pre-trial services that exist or later possibly treatment court.
- Lewis County also has a peer that works with the Police Department, Sheriff's Department, and State Police. Stephanie Thornton has tried to establish contact with them.
- Harm Reduction
 - The Wheeling program is focused on crisis response and therefore does little in harm reduction.
 - The Police and Peers program distributes Narcan and test strips with a large focus on harm reduction.
- A key takeaway is how important champion personnel are to the success of the programs.
- The Subcommittee discussed how to do long-term follow-up to measure employment post-treatment because funders and legislators want to know this variable.
- Monetization of the programs is possible by calculating the return on investment for money that would be spent on arrests, incarceration, probation, parole, recidivism, and other publicly funded programs.

Town Hall Meetings

- Four virtual Town Hall Meetings are scheduled for the following times. Bradley McCoy still needs a facilitator to volunteer for September 3, 2026.
 - Wednesday, August 12, 2026, 10:00-12:00
 - Wednesday, August 19, 2026, 1:00-3:00
 - Wednesday, August 26, 2026, 10:00-12:00
 - Thursday, September 3, 2026, 1:00-3:00

Additional Discussion

- The McDowell County Sheriff's Department is having another outreach day on Friday, July 17, 2026.
- Family treatment court is expanding to Berkeley County.

Adjournment:

Stephanne closed the meeting by thanking all Subcommittee members for their attendance and participation. The Subcommittee will meet on Tuesday, August 11, 2026 at 10:00 AM.