

Meeting Minutes of the Full Governor's Council on Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment Wednesday, May 20, 2026, Approved

Attendees:

Council and Ex-Officio Members In Attendance: Dr. Michael Kilkenny, Elizabeth Hardy, Dr. Stefan Maxwell, Dr. Lauren Miller Dr. Amy Saunders

Council and Ex-Officio Members Not in Attendance: Michael Baylous, Dr. James Berry, Justin Davis, David Goazal, Stephanie Hayes, The Honorable Lisa Johnston, Senator Brian Helton, Dr. Clay Marsh, Dr. Allen Mock, Dr. Garrett Moran, Dr. Lyn O'Connell, Chief Shawn Schwertfeger, Stephanie Thornton, Delegate Evan Worrell

Other Attendees: John Anderson, Amber Blankenship, Janine Breyel, Shawna Chapman, Leah Cook, Rebecca Crowder, Elizabeth Hardy, William King, Simone Marsalis, Dan McCawley, Lt. Kenneth Murray, Amy Tolliver, Elizabeth Shahan

West Virginia Department of Human Services: Acting Secretary Christina Mullins, Alex Alston

West Virginia Office of Drug Control Policy: Olivia Fox, Jessica Smith

Marshall University: Bradley McCoy

Opening:

Christina Mullins provided welcome and opening remarks of this meeting of the Governor's Council on Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment. The meeting was called to order on Wednesday, May 20, 2026 at 3:02 PM and was conducted by Google Meet conference.

Agenda Items:

Approval of March 18, 2026 Meeting Minutes

- Meeting minutes for March 18, 2026 were sent out via email to the Council prior to this meeting. Dr. Amy Saunders made a motion to approve the minutes, and Dr. Stefan Maxwell seconded. There was no further discussion, and the meeting minutes were approved with all in favor and none opposed.

Approval of the 2026 State Plan Quarter 1 Progress Report

- The 2026 State Plan Quarter 1 Progress Report was sent via email to the Council prior to this meeting. Dr. Stefan Maxwell made a motion to approve the report, and Dr. Amy Saunders seconded. There was no further discussion, and the quarterly report was approved with all in favor and none opposed.

Pregnant and Parenting Women (PPW) Subcommittee Spotlight – Dr. Stefan Maxwell (Chair), Janine Breyel, Amy Tolliver

- Dr. Stefan Maxwell provided a brief overview of the PPW section of the 2026 State Plan's one Goal and three Strategies. The Subcommittee has worked on utilization of the Prenatal Risk Screening Instrument (PRSI) and the education of providers; however, today's presentation focused on Strategy 3 - creating a cannabis education campaign.

- Cannabis has become more concentrated in products post-legalization and post-hybridization of plants. It is now more dangerous than it was while being studied in previously published research.
- The purpose of the education campaign is to inform and educate pregnant women, women of childbearing age, and family members about the risks associated with marijuana use during pregnancy. It is funded by the West Virginia Department of Human Services' Bureau for Behavioral Health and is being implemented by the West Virginia Perinatal Partnership.
- Dr. Maxwell provided a brief overview of marijuana use during pregnancy and the potential risks to a developing fetus, including:
 - Fetal growth restriction
 - Long-term brain development issues
 - Low birth weight
 - Preterm birth
 - Risk of stillbirth
- The Subcommittee has partnered with NTI Upstream, an award-winning, full-service creative and digital marketing agency specializing in crafting impactful outreach and awareness campaigns that resonate with audiences and inspire action. Dr. Maxwell provided an overview of his past work with Dr. Chasnoff, NTI Upstream.
- Dr. Maxwell provided an overview of the campaign's approach:
 - Share information via:
 - Animated videos
 - Blog entries
 - Digital assets
 - Flyers/brochures
 - Social media
 - Web-based content
 - Strategies:
 - Connect audiences with fact and science-based information, as well as prevention, treatment, and support services.
 - Drive social media engagement through likes, follows, shares, video views, and more.
 - Drive traffic to website
- Campaign deliverables will include the following over 12 months:
 - 10 Facts about Marijuana Use During Pregnancy
 - Animated Videos
 - Brochure
 - Digital Booklet
 - Digital Content (blog posts, online training, educational flyers)
 - FAQ Video Series
 - Social Media Content
 - Video Production (on location)
 - Personal stories
 - Professional opinions
- The Subcommittee highlighted that it has been a collaborative effort between the Subcommittee and NTI Upstream to develop content ideas and make edits back and forth with an open dialogue.

- The Subcommittee requested that when the campaign is available, all Council members and partners attending this meeting share it where they feel appropriate.

Guest Speaker – Angel Initiative – Lit. Ken Murray (West Virginia State Police)

- Lt. Ken Murray provided an overview of the Angel Initiative as a non-punitive self-referral program to treatment. People can refer themselves to any West Virginia State Police Post and, with no disqualifying charges/warrants, be referred to treatment.
- Lt. Murray began leading the program in February, 2026 and developed a streamlined digital intake form. After completing the form, an individual is connected with First Choice Services to be referred to treatment.
- Since February, Lt. Murray has developed a QR code for the program, updated program policy and reporting documents, applied for a West Virginia First Foundation grant for another staff person and additional educational materials, trained agency supervisors on program requirements, educated agency personnel on the intake process, and added a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) section to WVSP.gov website.
- By June, all West Virginia State Police will be trained on the program via their in-service training.
- Lt. Murray has also presented at the Court Appointed Specialist Advocates (CASA) training in Harrison County and will also present at the West Virginia 988 and CIT Summit in July.
- The number of individuals trained on the Angel program (by month) include:
 - February: 167
 - March: 240
 - April: 73
 - May: 70
 - Tomorrow: 35-40
 - **TOTAL TRAINED in 2026 to date is 590.**

Additional Discussion:

- Bradley McCoy provided an update that planning is underway for virtual Town Hall Meetings to develop the 2027 State Plan. Tentative dates are as follows:
 - Wednesday, August 12, 2026 from 10:00-12:00
 - Wednesday August 19, 2026 from 1:00-3:00
 - Wednesday August 26, 2026 from 10:00-12:00
 - Thursday, September 3, 2026 from 1:00-3:00

Adjournment:

Acting Secretary Christina Mullins closed the meeting at 3:40 PM by thanking all attendees for their attendance and participation. The Governor's Council will meet again on Wednesday, July 15, 2026 at 3:00 PM.