Meeting Minutes of the Governor's Council on Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment Courts and Justice-Involved Populations Subcommittee Tuesday, October 20, 2026, Approved

Attendees:

Subcommittee Members Attending: Amber Blankenship, Stephanie Bond, Candace Facemyer, Lesley Hill, Coty Long, Judge Jim Rowe, Stephanne Thornton (Chair)
Guests Attending: Erica Hermon, Gina Savinell
Subcommittee Members Not Attending: Sam Hess, Cindy Hill, Lori Lynch
Office of Drug Control Policy (ODCP) Staff Attending: Olivia Fox, Justin Smith
State Opioid Response (SOR) Staff Attending: Renee Harris, Stephanie Frazer
State Opioid Response (SOR) Regional Coordinators Attending: Jill Poe
Marshall University Staff Attending: Bradley McCoy

Opening:

Stephanne 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, October 20, 2026, and was conducted by Microsoft Teams conference. Stephanne Thornton approved the September 8, 2026 meeting minutes. There was no further discussion. The purpose of this meeting was to discuss priorities for the 2027 State Plan.

Agenda Items:

General KPI Updates

- Lesley Hill provided an update on the Groups Inc. program. The St. Mary's pilot has not started. Currently, 4 members of the Goals program have been referred to the Groups program.
- On the November 2026 meeting, Lesley will provide an update on reasons for refusal of IDs upon release because the Division of Corrections and Rehabilitation has been tracking that data now.
- In relation to Goal 1, Strategy 2 of the 2026 State Plan, Recovery Point has provided Stephanne Thornton with aggregate Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) data for 158 individuals across their programs. It is notable that the women had a higher average score than men. Additionally, the Subcommittee discussed how the average score seemed low for what they expected. Key performance indicators (KPIs) regarding recommendations for this will be carried over into the 2027 State Plan.

2027 State Plan

- The Town Hall Meeting Summary Report is currently under review. Bradley McCoy shared overarching themes such as peer involvement across programs, exploring funding to keep peers and treatment courts, child welfare, and diminishing stigma as priorities in the future.
- 2027 State Plan Goals and Strategies are due Monday, November 2, 2026.

- Chairs will present their Goals and Strategies on the November 18, 2026 virtual Governor's Council meeting.
- The final draft of 2027 State Plan with key performance indicators (KPIs) is due Friday, November 20, 2026.
- Stephanne Thornton will work outside of scheduled Subcommittee meetings to create a 2027 State Plan draft and will be emailing Subcommittee members for suggestions and edits.
- The Subcommittee discussed the inclusion of a trauma-informed bench card across multiple levels of the judiciary. As discussed by this Subcommittee previously, North Carolina has a version of this to use as an example. The Subcommittee can also engage North Carolina's Judge Beth Heath as a champion of this. They will also have to decide which committees to engage about participation before creating it.
- Amber Blankenship has a grant funding proposal with the West Virginia First Foundation for reentry expansion.
- Amber is working with Lesley for peer navigators to do contact visits in carceral settings.
- The Subcommittee discussed housing post-release as a priority.
- Another priority is supporting bills related to expungement and their interpretation.
- There are currently 4 peers on the state budget and 3 peers on the SOR budget for treatment courts in the state. The Subcommittee would like to support the continuation of this.
- The Subcommittee discussed lack of pre-arrest options such as sobering centers or mental health urgent cares and how they could partner with deflection programs.
- The Subcommittee discussed day report centers and how they operate individually. They would like to explore day report centers best practices and fidelity of their models and would like to engage the existing Community Corrections Subcommittee who oversees day report centers about this.

Additional Discussion

- Arkansas has a program that waives reinstatement fees for the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) upon release of prison. The Subcommittee is unsure if it applies to fine as well, but it shows as a banner on their DMV profile.
- Lauren's Ladder is a recovery residence opening in January 2027 that will house women and they also have a goal of allowing their children 12 and under live with them as well.

Adjournment:

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