



Whatcom County Behavioral Health Advisory Committee (BHAC) Meeting Minutes

Meeting Date/Time/Location: January 12th, 2026, 3:00pm-4:30pm, Hybrid – Zoom & In-Person at 322 N. Commercial St, Garden Level

BHAC Committee Members Present: Caleb Erickson, Champ Thomaskutty (health rep stand-in), Donnell Tanksley (arrived after roll call and left early), Shannon Boustead, Stephanie Kraft, Stephen Gockley, Summer Starr, Susan Johnson (arrived after roll call) & Tannis Peura

BHAC Committee Members Absent: Barry Buchanan & Meg Lelonek

Whatcom County Staff/Guests: Ann Beck, Charlene Ramont, Joe Fuller, Kari Holley, Mallory Hamilton, Malora Christensen, Riley Myers & Tom Wynne

Agenda Item	Discussion
<p>1. Welcome & Roll Call</p> <p>Land Acknowledgement</p> <p>Review & Approval of 11/3/25 BHAC Meeting Minutes</p>	<p>Stephen Gockley – Welcome</p> <p>Riley Myers – Roll call. Seven committee members present, so there is a quorum. Two additional members joined the meeting after roll call, one member left before the end of the meeting.</p> <p>Malora Christensen – Land Acknowledgement.</p> <p>Caleb Erickson – Move to approve the previous meeting minutes.</p> <p>Sue Johnson – Seconded.</p> <p><i>Motion Approved – Ayes: 8, Nays: 0, Abstain: 0</i></p>
<p>2. Public Comment</p>	<p>Public Comment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amelia Vader – Bellingham Public Schools Mental Health • Laura Cardinal – Bellingham Public Schools Mental Health



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lindsay Anderson – Nooksack Public Schools Mental Health
<p>3. Finish the Behavioral Health Prioritization Exercise</p>	<p>Charlene Ramont – As a reminder, the goal of this activity is for the committee to determine priorities and then let Health and Community Services know what those priorities are, so they can use them during the next few years to make decisions.</p> <p>During the last meeting, we grouped all of the different areas of focus into five different categories. Those categories included, Removing Barriers to Care, Generations, Resource Assessment & Coordination, Workforce Development, & Behavioral Health Facilities. The committee then used a dot voting method to select which category is the top priority to provide a (pre-official vote) recommendation to County Council.</p> <p>Today the committee will go back and do what is called, “naming.” After that, we will finalize by taking all of the priorities identified and putting them into two “buckets.” Priorities #1 and priorities #2.</p> <p>Let’s start by going around the room and having everyone share a sentence or two about what they remember from the last couple of meetings?</p> <p>Now we’re going to clarify what we mean by these different categories. We’re going to take the title “naming) cards and answer the prompt, an area we should focus on that will make a significant impact on behavioral health in our community is...</p> <p>After much discussion between the committee, they came up with the following priorities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aligning data, assessment and coordination of system resources Optimizing Workforce Development Closing gaps to care Strengthening services for youth, family and elders Enhancing the continuum of behavioral health facilities



	<p>After the priorities were finalized, the committee placed them into the following tiers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Priorities that need to be kept top of mind through the entire process <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Aligning data, assessment and coordination of system resources ○ Optimizing Workforce Development • Tier 1 Priorities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Closing gaps to care ○ Strengthening services for youth, family and elders • Tier 2 Priorities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Enhancing the continuum of behavioral health facilities <p>Charlene Ramont – Will compile all of the work and data from the entire prioritization process and bring it back to the committee for them to keep.</p> <p>Sue Johnson – Motion to approve the priorities as presented in their tier format.</p> <p>Caleb Erickson – Seconded.</p> <p><i>Motion Approved – Ayes: 8, Nays: 0, Abstain: 0</i></p>
<p>4. Next Steps</p>	<p>Malora Christensen – These recommendations are helpful. You’ve built a framework that can continue to be built on. We’ll work on a future feedback process to the committee to share how we’ve used the recommendations. Hope to discuss what else the committee would like to see the Behavioral Health Sales Tax dollars used on in the future. We’ll be in a tough decision-making space for a while, so it’ll be great to think creatively and think about how other communities have used revenue like this. It’s likely this priorities and recommendations could change, because things are always changing, so maybe we update them every year or two years.</p> <p>Recommend that part of the next meeting we review the new (draft) charter, which still hasn’t been officially voted on, and think about adding in something for providing recommendations and making sure the work is aligned with them.</p>



5. Closing & Adjournment	Stephen Gockley – Meeting adjourned.
Next Meeting:	<p style="text-align: center;">March 9th, 2026 3:00pm-4:30pm Hybrid – In Person @ 322 N Commercial St, Garden Level / Virtual via Zoom</p>