

MENTAL HEALTH AND RECOVERY BOARD OF ASHLAND COUNTY
Board Meeting Minutes
March 24, 2026

PRESENT: Andrew Kinney David Ross, Executive Director
Katie Wright Patty Pawlikowski, Associate Director
Mary Deeter Sandy Hoffman, Community Relations Coordinator
Tom Gaus Alyse Schroeder, Director of Programs, Training, and Education
Connie Butler
Cindy Kyser
Sara Battison
Chad Brown

ABSENT:
Ed Kieper*
Nancy Udolph*
Ben Key*
*Provided notice

GUESTS: Jerry Strausbaugh, Appleseed
Sheryl Villegas, CCS
Rick Ford, ACCADA
April Schwendeman, Leadership Ashland

I. CHAIRPERSON'S COMMENTS

Andrew Kinney, Chair, called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m. in the Martha Jordan Room, 1605 Co. Rd. 1095, Ashland.

Roll Call -Secretary Katie Wright took the roll call and noted that a quorum was present.

Pass Warrants- There was a quorum to pass the warrants.

II. APPROVAL OF THE FEBRUARY MINUTES

RESOLUTION: A motion was made by Mary Deeter to recommend approval of February 24, 2026
26-03-01 Board meeting minutes. Tom Gaus seconded the motion. The motion carried.

III. NEW BUSINESS

- **Finance**, Mary Deeter provided the Finance report in the absence of Ben Key, Chair
 - i. March Warrants

RESOLUTION: A motion was made by Tom Gaus to approve the Warrants. Cindy Kyser seconded the
26-03-02 motion. The motion carried.

- ii. January Financials

RESOLUTION: A motion was made by Connie Butler to approve the February financials.
26-03-03 Tom Gaus seconded the motion. The motion passed.

Patty reviewed the February financials, indicating the target is 67 percent, and revenues are 67 percent. She reported that all three agencies are trending below target; however, they are at or above where they were at this time last year. Overall expenses are at 53 percent. She noted that some building reserves were used for necessary repairs at the Church Street and Columbus Circle buildings.

- iii. Agency Audit (ACCADA)

Patty indicated the ACCADA Audit has been completed and has no findings

RESOLUTION: A motion was made by Sara Battison to accept the ACCADA Audit.
26-03-04 Connie Butler seconded the motion. The motion passed.

iv. Use of Credit Card

David Ross, Executive Director, pointed out that there was an article in the Ashland Source titled "Ashland County Board of Health mismanaged credit card". David explained that he included this in the Board packet to keep the Board informed about existing challenges that could become problematic if we are not proactive in ensuring payments are made in a timely manner. Patty commented that we have been diligent in ensuring payments are not received late. She further explained that the Board is not legally permitted to pay late fees, and we must be vigilant to ensure this doesn't happen. It takes time to make extra trips to the Courthouse to ensure bills are paid on time, or even to get assistance in removing fees, but we do whatever is necessary.

• **Planning, Sara Battison, Chair**

i. **March 2026 Suicide Fatality & Review Meeting**

David and Alyse participated in the Overdose/Suicide Fatality Review Committee meetings. David explained that changes in Ohio law put the Committees into place to see what could be done differently to save lives. The Committees consist of a comprehensive group of mental health, law enforcement, and health professionals. He reported that the data shows multiple shared risk factors of overdose and suicide risk in the areas of social isolation, aging, and life transitions such as loss of jobs or family, conflicts in relationships, chronic illness, substance use, and access to lethal means.

David reviewed the analysis (2021-2025) handout, with other key data that is reviewed by the committees:

- **What changed in 2025**
- **Suicide Deaths Increased and Expanded Across Age Groups**
- **Multi-Year Trends (2021-2025)**
- **Key Population Shifts**
 - Overdoses: shifting toward older adults
 - Suicides: expanding across both young adults and older adults
 - Men remain the highest risk group across both categories
- **System Implications**
- **Strategic Direction**
 - Increase focus on social connection and isolation reduction
 - Target older adults and caregivers
 - Expand support during life transitions
 - Strengthen continuity of care and follow-up
 - Promote lethal means safety (firearms and medications)

*****Widows are another key group that David and Alyse will check into.

ii. **Recent Census Data (2019 vs. 2024)**

David briefly reviewed the handout "Ashland County Snapshot: Census Indicators (2019 vs 2024)". There are ten key indicators derived from the American Community Survey five-year estimates referenced in the Community Solutions Analysis of Ohio Census Trends. There was a significant change to eight of the 10 indicators. The changes reflect: Income growth appears strong- but it may be inflation-driven, housing affordability worsened, and the most structurally important change is the aging trend with implications affecting the workforce, healthcare, housing, and public services.

The Bottom Line: Ashland County's data shows moderate economic improvement (high incomes, lower poverty) but also structural demographics shifts- especially aging and housing cost growth-that will shape policy, healthcare, and workforce planning over the next decade.

David noted that nothing stood out to him, suggesting the Board needed to make significant changes to its priorities or funded programs/services. We are looking to meet the older population through other partners and the Golden Centers. We don't need to change direction, but the information will inform us as we prepare the FY27 budget and decide how to invest the increased revenue from the levy in January 2027.

iii. **Training & Event Updates**

- March 16 & 18 - QPR AU Dr Kruger's Class
- March 17- Nominating Committee Meeting
- March 25 RSVP Conference
- April 11- Ashland Symphony 5K
- May 21- Senior Health Fair

- **Nominating, Connie Butler, Chair**

- i. **Update on Members for SFY 27**

Connie Butler reported that the Committee met on March 17. She indicated that Cindy Kyser and Chad Brown have both agreed to second-term county appointments, and Ben Key has agreed to a second-term state appointment.

Connie indicated that she and Nancy Udolph will be ending their second terms on June 30. Connie explained that Nancy will not continue her service because she plans to travel. Connie expressed appreciation to Nancy for her service. Connie will be recommended to start a new term with the Department of Behavioral Health on July 1.

Several potential candidates and recruits were discussed. Committee members identified two people who were interested in becoming Board members. One has decided they cannot commit due to their career and hours, and the other has not returned the Board Interest form. Dwight McElfresh is open to returning.

David indicated that we would bring recommendations to the Board in May.

Andy also thanked Connie for her hard work and years of service.

- o **DIRECTOR'S REPORT, David Ross, Executive Director**

Key Items of Focus

1. **Ensure Responsible & Effective Stewardship of Levy Revenue in Service of the Board's Mission**
 - a. Begin working on projects/services/activities that will achieve the Board's mission.
2. **Contract for Services for SFY 2027**
 - a. Final funding from DBH is pending, but we anticipate some reduction in the Crisis Block Grant line.
 - b. Agency Applications were distributed. They are due back to the Board by April 15th. The Board will hear directly from the agencies about their proposals at the Board meeting on May 19th.
3. **Promote and Provide High-Quality Training and Events in SFY 2026/27 (Annual Luncheon, Awareness Walk, Fairs, RSVP).**
 - a. The next major event is the RSVP Conference on **March 25, 2026**
 - i. Thank you to all who are attending and/or volunteering!
4. **Continue to ensure effective Board Operations (Board Members & Staff)**
 - a. Connie will update the Board on our efforts/plan to fill the two open County Appointment slots as of July 1, 2026.

Highlights

- ✓ Informative meeting with gubernatorial candidate Dr. Amy Acton.
- ✓ Trade association receiving many quality applicants for the new Executive Director position.

Lowlights

- ✓ Property Tax Ballot Initiative will require sustained attention through at least July and possibly to November's vote and beyond, depending on the outcome.
- ✓ Persistent staffing/workforce issues at DBH.

What's Keeping Me Up at Night

- ✓ Governor Transition
- ✓ Ballot initiative to eliminate property taxes
- ✓ Economic challenges (affordability, housing, stress on our farmers, etc.)

Knowledge of Note

- Governor DeWine Delivers [Final State of the State Address](#). Highlights:
 - DeWine's speech was much more about **children and families** than about the adult behavioral-health system.
 - His clearest direct behavioral-health claim was that **every Ohio child now has access to mobile mental-health crisis response within an hour**. MRSS Reference.
 - He said **unintentional drug overdoses fell for the third straight year, by 34%**, but he did not outline a major new addiction-policy package in the speech.
 - He framed child mental health in upstream terms: **sleep, exercise, recess, reading, in-person interaction, and less screen time**.
 - He pushed three tech-related legislative ideas: **ban AI child sexual abuse material, hold AI platforms accountable for self-harm encouragement, and require parental controls**.
 - There was **little direct discussion of ADAMH boards, 988, adult access, workforce, or local financing**,
 - **Quotes of Note:**
 - "A child's mental health is equally important to their physical health."
 - "Our kids are getting their lives back!"
 - "Excessive screen time is really a thief. Social media is a thief."
 - "Every Ohio child -- no matter where they live -- now has access to mobile mental health services..."
 - "For the third year in a row, unintentional drug overdoses have decreased -- this time by an astounding 34%!"
- New Book: [Fentanyl: Fighting the Mass Poisoning of America and the Cartel Behind it \(Convo with Sam Quinones\)](#)
 - **New strategy against fentanyl networks:** Beginning in **mid-2023**, federal agencies applied **counter-terrorism style "counter-network" tactics**, targeting the entire fentanyl supply chain—chemicals, money, transportation routes, and brokers—not just cartel leaders.
 - **Evidence of supply disruption:** Officials reported changes in cartel behavior, reduced fentanyl availability in some markets, and shifting smuggling tactics. National data later showed a **sharp drop in overdose deaths**, with some analysts linking part of the decline to supply disruption.
 - **International cooperation is critical:** U.S. and Mexican law enforcement worked together to target trafficking networks and precursor chemicals coming largely from China. The strategy treats fentanyl as a **national security threat due to the scale of deaths in the U.S.**
- [OACBHA One-Pager](#): Board Levies

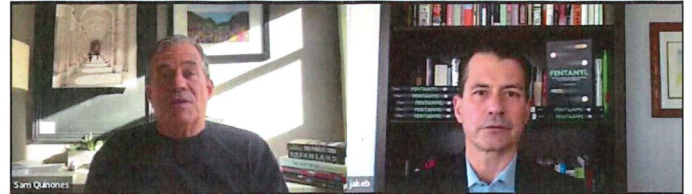
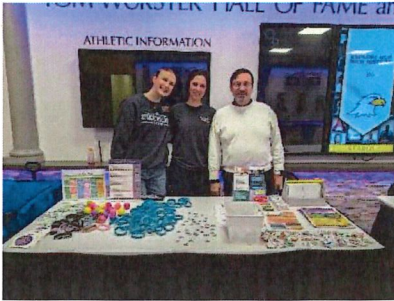
The Board Making News

- Andy and David represented the Board in Columbus at the Dr. Amy Acton meet and greet.
- David & Alyse represented the Board at the recent overdose and suicide fatality review meetings. David also attended the child fatality Review.

- Sandy represented the Board at AU's Mental Health Week

SFY 2026 Board Schedule & Important Dates

- April 28th – **Board Meeting**



o **RECOGNITION OF GUESTS**

- Jerry Strausbaugh, Appleseed -Appleseed is busy with MRSS. He reported that there is a huge demand for services for children and families in Ashland County.
- Sheryl Villegas, CCS – Preparing for CARF Certification.
- Rick Ford, ACCADA- Thank you for what the Board does. ACCADA is working on its application.
- April Schwendeman- Akron Children's Hospital, with Leadership Ashland.
- Regarding Suicide and Farmers, Connie talked about the prices of diesel and fertilizer, and that we need to check in on our farmer friends because this is going to be a hard year for them.

o **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 4.55 p.m. The Board moved into required annual Board training.

Respectfully Submitted,
Sandy Hoffman, Community Relations Coordinator


David Ross, Executive Director


Andrew Kinney, Board Chair



Mental Health & Recovery Board
OF ASHLAND COUNTY