



Tompkins County
COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES BOARD

Tompkins County Whole Health
201 East Green Street
Ithaca, New York 14850-5421

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Substance Use Subcommittee

Substance Use Subcommittee Meeting
Wednesday, January 14, 2026 – 12 to 1 p.m. Via Zoom
Meeting Minutes

Minutes Approved
March 11, 2026

Present: Stu Bergman, Ron Schoneman, and Julie Carmalt

Excused: Jacob Parker Carver, Robert Grolling, Jessica Massaro, and Howard Reid

Guests: Amanda Howlett, Brad Wadworth, CARS.

TCWH Staff Present: Harmony Ayers-Friedlander, Rich Shaw, Shannon Alvord, and Karan Palazzo, LGU AA

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The meeting was called to order at 12:00 p.m. by Jake. Introductions were made. A quorum was not met, and the December 2025 meeting minutes could not be approved.
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Privilege of the Floor:

Announcements/Correspondence:

Disparities in Social Health Needs & Healthcare in Tompkins County - Harmony Ayers-Friedlander, Tompkins County Director of Community Services

Harmony presented a report on health disparities in Tompkins County, focusing on premature death rates, suicide and self-harm, and substance misuse. She highlighted racial disparities in these areas, with Black and Hispanic individuals experiencing higher rates of premature death and suicide compared to whites. The report also examined medication adherence and mental health follow-up rates after emergency department visits and hospitalizations, noting disparities across racial groups. Harmony announced the addition of a planner position to further analyze this data and work towards reducing health disparities in the community.

Improving Suicide Data Collection Methods - Data Collection Methods for Suicide and Self-harm Statistics - Harmony and Shannon explain that data comes from comprehensive, complex Community Health Assessments (CHA) involving the medical examiner, reports, and emergency department records, initiated from the death certificates. Harmony mentioned that Jennie plans to establish a fatality review committee to improve data collection and community interventions. The 2025 CHA report is undergoing state review and will be released soon.

Medetomidine's Growing Presence: New Opioid Adulterant - Harmony shared information about a new drug adulterant, medetomidine, which has been detected in illicit opioid samples across multiple cities, including Philadelphia and New York. She explained that medetomidine is a synthetic sedative used in veterinary medicine, similar to xylazine but more potent, and difficult to detect in standard drug tests, and has been linked to severe health complications, including severe withdrawal symptoms and ICU admissions. While naloxone may not be effective against medetomidine, it should still be used as it may help with the opioid component, and the Department of Health is working to obtain test strips for community drug checking programs. They plan to obtain more information from Kusuma Anad, the specialist drug analyst at STAP.

Suggestions for Community Events and Activities to Raise Awareness in the Community about Substance Use Issues and Concerns

Julie shared details about an upcoming recovery film series at Cornell Cinema, [Thursdays at 6 pm. Film Calendar | Cornell Cinema](#). She noted a talk by journalist Carrie Blackinger on April 22nd. The Phoenix Sober Fitness is fueling a movement that builds on the power of community and belonging to change how society approaches addiction and recovery (<https://thephoenix.org>) and requires 48 hours of sobriety before attending, which will be held on Thursday, February 12th at 6 pm at Phoenix CrossFit.

Harmony raised concerns about the lack of local resources for people who have lost loved ones to overdose.

Amanda shared that Hospice offers free therapy sessions for such losses.

Brad suggests collaborating with Truth Farm, which takes an artistic approach to raise awareness, reduce stigma, educate the public, and advocate for policy change to reduce the harms of substance use. <https://truthpharm.org> and <https://trailoftruth.org>.

On the Right Path: CASA-Trinity's Adventures in Recovery Office of Addiction Services and Supports. [Children's Character Books & Basketball Life Skills | OTRP](#) <https://onterightpath.org>

Ron raised concerns about the detox services in the area. Harmony shared that there have been challenges with legal and financial red tape and acknowledged the importance of having the service locally. She is monitoring the progress on the local detox/stabilization program and will provide updates as new information becomes available.

The group will continue to compile and share a list of local sober/fitness/recovery activities and events for broader community awareness

The meeting was adjourned at 12:50 p.m.

**The next Substance Use Subcommittee Meeting
will be held on Wednesday, February 11, 2026, from 12 – 1 pm**