

Substance Use Recovery Services Advisory Committee Meeting Notes

July 7, 2025, 9:00AM-11:00AM PST

Meeting Recording: [Substance Abuse Recovery Services Advisory Committee - YouTube](#)

HCA Executive & Administrative Support

<input type="checkbox"/>	Jason McGill, Executive Co-Sponsor	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Tony Walton, SURSAC Chair	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Rachel Downs, Admin Assistant
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Michelle Martinez, SURSAC Administrator	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sarah Melfi-Klein, Unit Supervisor	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Alex Sheehan, BH Program Manager
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Tim Candela, Health Services Consultant	<input type="checkbox"/>	Brianna Peterson, Plan Writer	<input type="checkbox"/>	Hailee Fuller, Admin Assistant
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Blake Ellison, Meeting Facilitator				

Committee Members (28)

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Tony Walton, SURSAC Chair	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Amber Cope	<input type="checkbox"/>	Donnell Tanksley
<input type="checkbox"/>	Governor's Office - TBD	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Brandie Flood	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Malika Lamont
<input type="checkbox"/>	Sen. Manka Dhingra	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Stormy Howell	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Addy Adwell
<input type="checkbox"/>	Sen. John Braun	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Chad Enright	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Kevin Ballard
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Rep. Lauren Davis	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	John Hayden	<input type="checkbox"/>	Hunter McKim
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Rep. Brian Burnett	<input type="checkbox"/>	Niki Lewis		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Caleb Banta-Green	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sherri Candelario		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Don Julian Saucier	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	James Tillett		Alternates / Optional Attendees:
<input type="checkbox"/>	Shawn Mire	<input type="checkbox"/>	Christine Lynch	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Rep. Mari Leavitt
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Alexie Orr	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Sarah Gillard	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Rep. Deb Manjarrez

Meeting Attachments

- Meeting Agenda

Substance Use Recovery Services Advisory Committee (SURSAC) Updates

Tony Walton, Chair of the SURSAC Committee and Section Manager, Adult Substance Use Disorder, shared updates on:

- SURSAC Committee welcomes three new members, Rep. Brian Burnett replacing Rep. Dan Griffey, and Rep. Mari Leavitt and Rep. Deb Manjarrez serving as alternate members
- Governor Bob Ferguson has announced the appointments of two new Secretaries for the Washington State Health Care Authority (HCA), Dr. Ryan Moran and Washington State Department of Health (DOH), Dennis Worsham
 - DOH Secretary Appointment Announcement - <https://doh.wa.gov/newsroom/washington-state-department-health-welcomes-dennis-worsham-new-secretary-health>
 - HCA Secretary Appointment Announcement - <https://governor.wa.gov/news/2025/governor-ferguson-appoints-ryan-moran-health-care-authority-director>
- The Washington State Institute for Public Policy (WSIPP) published its report on effectiveness of Recovery Navigator Program, entitled [Washington's Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion \(LEAD\) & Recovery Navigator Program \(RNP\): Opportunities to Improve Pre-Booking Diversion Fidelity](#) as required in [2E2SSB 5536](#)
 - Tony indicated that HCA can reach out to WSIPP to come speak on key findings at a future meeting if there is interest
- There have been a number of articles covering the Safe Supply Work Group and their recommendations. The work group developed its own recommendations and legislative report, and there has been incorrect media coverage of the relationship between SURSAC and Safe Supply workgroup. The HCA Media Liaison reached out to the media organizations to correct and clarify the misinformation to no avail. For transparency, articles are shared below:

Questions and Comments from SURSAC Members RE: Announcements

Q: Regarding the media announcements of the Safe Supply Work Group, can HCA clarify what is true and what is incorrect? Additionally, is the Work Group a part of the SURSAC? Who has jurisdiction over the work group?

A: The media coverage is indicating that the recommendations and legislative report derived directly from the SURSAC committee. However, SURSAC only recommended, as part of the Substance Use Recovery Services Plan, that Washington State convene a separate safe supply work group. Funding authorizing and supporting the Safe Supply Work Group was then provided in the biennial operating budget (Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill 5187) in 2023. This work group was facilitated by Health Management Associates. The news articles are conflating recommendations for a safe supply model as SURSAC recommendations, when in fact, they are the recommendations derived from the Safe Supply Work Group. The proviso language directed the Governor's Office to appoint the work group. The funding was one time, the work group completed its task, and the set of recommendations was submitted. *Note: more information can be found [here](#).*

Public Comment

- A SURSAC meeting attendee noted the importance of long-term case management teams like those within the RNP, LEAD, and AJA programs throughout the state. As the state faces ramifications of Medicaid changes that are coming, most of the projected losses in terms of people being removed from Medicaid is due to project churn, where individuals who are eligible because of a disability or otherwise fail to certify. This is where long-term case management comes in and is of incredible value to the state.

Walk-on Item Requests

- No Walk-On Item Requests.

New Report: Use of Harm Reduction & Drug Treatment Among Participants of Syringe Service Programs

Teresa Winstead, Ph.D., Alison Newman, MPH, and Leif Layman, MPH, from the Addictions, Drug, and Alcohol Institute (ADAI) of University of Washington shared a presentation entitled *I think One Enhances the Other: Use of Harm Reduction & Drug Treatment Among Participants of Syringe Services Programs*

- ANNOUNCEMENT: There is an opportunity to attend a webinar where they will share the longer form report and have more opportunity for discussion. Individuals can register here: https://washington.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_reXeK67fSy-M6dtVtwnwlg#/registration
- The presentation included a look at:
 - Research Questions
 - Methods
 - Demographics
 - Drug Use
 - Timeline
 - Harm Reduction
 - Treatment Experiences
 - Treatment
 - Quotes about Treatment
 - Treatment: Recommendations
 - Harm Reduction + Treatment
 - Limitations
 - Summary
 - Contact Information regarding the report: alison26@uw.edu
 - Read the report: <https://adai.uw.edu/hr-tx-ssp-report-and-webinar>

Questions and Comments from SURSAC Members RE: Use of Harm Reduction & Drug Treatment Among Participants of Syringe Service Programs

Q: Tony asked a question about how “motivation” is defined in reference to the study

A: For purposes of the study, by “motivation”, they actually mean the external reason why an individual went to treatment and not necessarily personal motivation.

Q: As a majority of the participants were unhoused, that is why the study talked about hygiene centers and showers, is that correct? Additionally, was there any follow-up into nature of the treatment options that individuals had previously participated in? Whether they were short or long-term stays and public vs. private?

A: We did ask people what types of treatment and I can just tell you that it was incredibly varied that every type of treatment that you've described someone had tried. We do have a little bit more information about that in this report and because of the number of qualitative interviews, only being 27, it's likely not representative of the general trajectory.

COMMENTS:

- A SURSAC Committee member noted that the 2023 survey indicated 8% of individuals had inpatient treatment within the prior year and roughly 35% had been in some form of treatment within the prior year - <https://adai.uw.edu/syringe-survey-2023/>

Rural Behavioral Health Access Study

Dan Wendt, Mercer, shared that in 2023, HCA collaborated with Merce and performed a rural behavioral health access study, and the presentation would cover key findings and recommendations related to that study. Of note, Mercer only helped develop the recommendations and can't speak towards steps taken to implement the recommendations. The presentation included:

- Rural Behavioral Health Access Study – Overview
- Background
- Methodology
- Focus Area #1: DCR Response Times
- Focus Area #2: Access to Inpatient and Outpatient BH Services
- Focus Area #3: Hospital Bed Wait Times
- Focus Area #4: Timely Access to Mobile Crisis Teams
- Tribal Listening Session Findings
- Focus Area Specific Recommendations
- Tribal Delivery System Recommendations

Questions and Comments from Meeting Attendees RE: Rural Behavioral Health Access Study

Q: Is there a report associated with this study?

A: Yes. That can be accessed in full, here: <https://www.hca.wa.gov/assets/program/rural-access-study-legislative-report-2023.pdf>

Questions and Comments from SURSAC Members RE: Research and Data Analysis Presentation on Current State Assessment

Q: Did you speak with individuals that actually utilized the services?

A: We did not speak specifically to members or family members that had experience within the health care delivery system outside of the tribal listening sessions that were facilitated with HCA. Those insights were not a part of this particular study. There have been similar studies conducted with other states and we know firsthand that the experiences of individuals experiencing care systems is very powerful and insightful.

HCA will check with internal teams at HCA to see if there have been other efforts to get treatment participant voice and they can circle back on this.

2025 HCA Client Survey Results – SUD Services

Teresa Ciabattari, Ph.D., Survey Research Manager with the Washington State Department of Social and Human Services, shared a presentation that included:

- Goal of 2025 Client Survey – Elevate the voices of our clients
- About the Respondents
- Respondent Characteristics: SUD
- SUD Client Satisfaction Rates
- SUD Program Questions
- Survey Results by Region
- Historical Comparison of Client Survey Satisfaction Rates
- Comparison to All Respondents
- 2025 Client Survey: Comments
- What SUD Clients Liked Best
- What SUD Clients Would Like Improved
- Contact information: Teresa.ciabattari@dshs.wa.gov and John.rogers@dshs.wa.gov

COMMENTS:

- The slide deck will be sent to Michelle Martinez for dissemination to meeting attendees and SURSAC members can follow up with individual questions.

Final Comments

- There will be time set aside at the next SURSAC meeting to discuss the term “addiction” and its use within the context of this meeting and committee conversation
- Tony followed up on the previous meeting recommendation from Rep. Davis about how to utilize SURSAC meeting time to help leverage the vast amount of expertise on the committee. Tony noted that there is internal discussion within HCA on how best to operate committee meetings moving forward. This will include using meeting time to elicit more feedback, thoughts, opinions, and experiences of committee members as it relates to what is within the SURS Plan

Next Steps

1. Michelle will send out the August 2025 SURSAC agenda prior to the next scheduled meeting.