Substance Misuse Prevention Oversight and Advisory Council (SMPC)
October 2026 Meeting Minutes

Date: October 26, 2026 Time: 1-2:50 PM	Mtg. Facilitator: Amy Brewer Mtg. Recorder: Heather Michaud Where: Microsoft Teams

	Name	Organization and Role
X	Rick Hildebrant	Department of Health, Chair
X	Amy Brewer	Northwestern Medical Center, Vice Chair
	Mourning Fox	Department of Public Safety, Executive Committee Member
X	Monica Hutt	Agency of Administration, Executive Committee Member
X	Courtney O'Brien	Representing Courtney O'Brien, Agency of Education, Executive Committee Member
X	Kimberley Diemond	Big Brother Big Sister, Member
X	Kheya Ganguly	Department of Mental Health, Member
X	Maryann Morris	The Collaborative, Member
X	Janet Potter	Hartford Middle and High School, Member
X	John Searles, Ph.D.	Department of Health (Retired), Member
X	Olivia Terranova	Vermont Judiciary, Member
X	Jessica Farnsworth	UP for Learning, Member
X	Michelle Shepard	Pediatrician, University of Vermont Health, Member

Others Present: Beth Keister, Kathrin Lawlor, Galaxia Pistole, Traci Sawyers, Beth Shrader, Ian Spencer, Katie Stetler

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Agenda Item	Lead	Minutes
Welcome and Introductions (welcome new members if in attendance)	Amy Brewer	• Vice Chair Amy Brewer opened the meeting; quorum requirements were raised before beginning formal business. • Amy Brewer facilitated introductions, including welcoming new members Jess Farnsworth and Dr. Michelle Shepard.
Review and Approve September 2026 Minutes	Amy Brewer	• John Searles moved, seconded by Courtney O'Brien, to approve the September 2026 Minutes as presented. With no opposition or abstentions recorded, the Minutes were approved.
Update on New Member Outreach	Katie Stetler/ Courtney O'Brien	• Katie Stetler and Courtney O'Brien provided an update on ongoing efforts to fill vacant positions. • Eight positions remain open, with recruitment focused on ensuring membership includes the roles and perspectives identified in the Council's enabling legislation. • Courtney O'Brien will consult with the Office of Racial Equity for recommendations to ensure diversity in Council membership. • Targeted outreach will continue before the next Council meeting. • Amy Brewer encouraged Council members to continue recommending individuals who may be qualified to fill current vacancies. • Courtney O'Brien offered to share a standardized introductory email to assist Council members with recruitment efforts.
Feedback on Annual Report	Katie Stetler	• Katie Stetler presented the draft annual report, explaining its revised organization and purpose. The report includes statewide substance misuse trends, Council strategies and performance measures, state-funded prevention programs and evaluations, and programmatic and policy recommendations. • With regard to programmatic recommendations, members questioned if the report should explicitly reference community prevention "coalitions" or broaden the language to include a wider array of community-level prevention structures and organizations. Members expressed concerns that "coalition" is both too narrow and inconsistently applied across regions. There was general support for revising the recommendation to reflect the broader prevention system while maintaining an emphasis on sustainable funding and community needs. • Members discussed elevating recommendations in regard to ensuring stable, sustainable funding for prevention programs. The discussion highlighted the role of VPLOs in connecting

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		funding with community-based organizations and ensuring prevention expertise remains accessible locally. Members discussed whether the stable funding recommendation should remain a separate recommendation or be incorporated into the broader recommendation addressing regional prevention structures. • Katie Stetler agreed to draft revised language based on member feedback and follow up with members with relevant subject-matter expertise to ensure accuracy. • With regard to policy recommendations, there was consensus to recommend removing the statutory requirement for the Council to develop a statewide media campaign, as members feel this responsibility falls outside the Council's appropriate scope. • There was discussion of ensuring parity across alcohol, tobacco and cannabis regarding taxation, licensing fees, marketing restrictions and youth access. Amy Brewer recommended making parity a standalone policy recommendation rather than addressing it only within the alcohol section. • Janet Potter expressed concerns about the need for stronger alcohol prevention policies, particularly regarding retail placement and accessibility of alcoholic products that may appeal to young people. She suggested stronger retail controls comparable to those applied to tobacco and cannabis. • John Searles recommended describing alcohol as one of Vermont's most widely used and abused substances. • Discussion of youth alcohol use trends and the importance of distinguishing actual increases from statistically insignificant changes occurred. Members agreed that the report should accurately reflect statewide trends while acknowledging that individual communities may experience different patterns. • Kheya Ganguly raised concerns about problem gambling, particularly among young people. There was also discussion about gaming, screen use, and other behaviors that may share risk factors with substance misuse. Council members acknowledged connections between these behaviors and broader risk factors but questioned whether they fall within the Council's statutory authority and available funding. There was consensus that these issues warrant future discussion but should not be included in this year's report. • Kheya Ganguly cautioned that statewide improvements in substance misuse indicators can conceal disparities among specific youth populations including BIPOC, disabled, and other marginalized youth. Although the report includes disaggregated data, it does not contain targeted recommendations addressing these disparities and she encouraged the Council to

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		consider specific recommendations rather than just presenting the findings. Katie Stetler asked for someone to draft a recommendation for potential inclusion in the report and Kheya agreed to develop proposed language or key points for consideration. • Amy Brewer suggested creating a policy "cheat sheet" summarizing recommendations upfront near the beginning of the report so legislators can quickly grasp key messages and retaining detailed explanations later in the report. This suggestion received support from other Council members.
Confirm Strategies and Performance Measures	Katie Stetler	• Katie Stetler presented a near-final list of strategies and performance measures. She explained that the strategies are intended to remain consistent from year to year, but the specific activities and implementation plans may change annually. • Maryann Morris questioned whether the Council has the authority and organizational structure to formally advise state agencies or whether its role should be described more as collaboration. She also emphasized the need for standardized procedures to distinguish activities conducted on behalf of the Council versus those undertaken by members in their individual professional capacities. • Monica Hutt emphasized ensuring that guidance addresses emerging substances, behavioral addictions, prevention gaps, etc., rather than funding alone. Amy Brewer agreed, indicating the Council's role should encompass statewide prevention efforts including identifying gaps, addressing equity concerns, improving coordination, and making recommendations based on available data. • Dr. Hildebrant believes the Council's strength lies in connecting policymakers with prevention experts and organizations that can provide relevant information and testimony. • Katie Stetler cautioned against expanding the third strategy so much that it overlaps the first. • Amy Brewer suggested revising the third strategy to reference advice and guidance related to substance misuse interventions, programming, and funding, allowing for a somewhat broader scope. • Council members expressed general support for the proposed strategies and performance measures but identified areas requiring further clarification.
Discuss 2027 Workplan	Katie Stetler	• Katie Stetler presented a draft annual workplan outlining proposed activities, responsibilities, and timelines linked to the Council's strategies. The goal of the workplan is to create clearer structure, consistency, and forward momentum for the Council's annual work. • Maryann Morris expressed concern that the proposed activities under the first strategy appear broad enough to be a full-time job and could require substantially more time than Council

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		members have available. Members agreed on the importance of prioritizing achievable activities and avoiding an overly ambitious workplan. • Amy questioned the distinction between strategy 1 and strategy 3. She views strategy three – providing advice and guidance to funders – as the core purpose of the Council but said the Council has struggled to define an effective process for assessing statewide prevention work and translating it into meaningful recommendations. • Katie Stetler clarified that strategy three is intentionally focused on funding guidance and strategy one centers on general information sharing and landscape level understanding. There were suggestions to refine the language to better distinguish the strategies while recognizing their interconnected activities. • Maryann Morris recommended that the Council establish a shared vision and values for prevention funding before developing specific recommendations. She said the Council currently has eight open seats and emphasized the importance of establishing principles that would provide consistency as membership changes. • Kimberley Diemond proposed combining overlapping activities from strategy one and strategy three without merging the actual strategies. This would reduce duplication while allowing the Council to use the same information and activities for different purposes. • Katie Stetler acknowledged the heaviness of the workload but noted some of the items are one-time setup tasks (e.g., clarifying who is authorized to testify on behalf of the Council, establishing a process for monitoring and responding to legislation, clarifying the roles of subcommittees and how their work is communicated to the full Council, etc.) • Amy Brewer acknowledged that the Council's previous subcommittee structure had dissolved over time. She said the Executive Committee has been discussing how to reestablish subcommittees to support more detailed work on policy and other priorities. • Katie Stetler asked members to review the draft workplan independently and send written feedback. The Executive Committee will continue reviewing and refining the workplan during its meetings, with the goal of having a practical and actionable 2027 workplan substantially finalized by the Council's January meeting.
Public Comment	Amy Brewer	• None. • Amy Brewer invited council members to share any items of information or concern. • Janet Potter reported participating in a community cleanup that collected approximately j1,400 discarded needles in three hours, many near waterways. She expressed concern about environmental contamination and public safety.

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		• John Searles emphasized the effectiveness of the Council's subcommittee structure and urged reestablishment. • Amy Brewer shared information regarding disposal of vaping devices as hazardous waste. Currently, vaping devices can be brought to household hazardous waste facilities and disposed of for a fee. As of January 1, 2027, there will be no cost to users for vaping device disposal through household hazardous waste collection programs and product manufacturers will assume a portion of the disposal costs. Janet Potter asked if that change will apply to schools managing confiscated vaping devices and Amy Brewer confirmed that it will.
Adjourn	Amy Brewer	• The meeting adjourned at 2:25 p.m.

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