

CONNECTICUT VALLEY HOSPITAL
ACHIEVING EXCELLENCE TOGETHER

Mental Health and Addiction Services



CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION SERVICES

Connecticut Valley Hospital
Advisory Board Meeting Minutes

Date: March 13, 2026

Time: 8:00–9:00 am

Location: Page Hall, AV Room, 365

Attendees

- **Larry McHugh**, Chairperson
- **Harry Burr**, Community Member
- **Erika Costa**, Chief of Police, City of Middletown, CT
- **Cynthia Clegg**, Community Member
- **Richard Davis**, Deputy Chief of Police, City of Middletown, CT
- **Kevin Elak**, Director of Health, City of Middletown, Health Department
- **Sarah Gadsby**, Chief Executive Officer, River Valley Services
- **Lakisha Hyatt**, Chief Executive Officer, Connecticut Valley Hospital
- **Maria Laporto**, Division Director, Addiction Services Division – CVH
- **Nancy Navarretta**, Commissioner, DMHAS
- **Dr. Kichul Pak**, Chief Medical Officer, Connecticut Valley Hospital
- **Dr. Edwin Renaud**, General Psychiatric Division Director – CVH
- **Phillip Pessina**, Community Member (virtual attendee)
- **Justin Sleeper**, Chief Quality Officer, Connecticut Valley Hospital
- **James Trzaski**, Community Member, Middletown South District Fire Chief

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at **8:00 a.m.** by **Chair Larry McHugh**. The Chair welcomed members and guests in attendance.

2. Commissioner's Report

Nancy Navarretta, Commissioner, provided an update including the following highlights over the last quarter:

Page Hall
1000 Silver Street
Middletown, CT 06457

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- Since the last meeting, the state of Connecticut has been awarded \$100 million in rural health grants focused on rural hospitals and the work of the medical community
- Teams will be hiring an FTA to launch one or more stable information centers as well as the pediatric phones at consultation services
- Local budget did well in the proposed budget with the inclusion of an additional \$1.9 million for outpatient competency restoration. The focus is on the continuation of the growth and New Haven Forensic respite beds at the February 4, (State of the State) session.
- \$1.3 million has been allocated to aid allegation investigation and lower-level charges and covering the cost of \$690,000 for low weight work
- \$100,000 reduction was targeted for the legislative year under review.
- On 23rd of February, the Commissioner got testimony to test follow up questions that have been provided via remote hearing. Communication provided on legislative enhancing access for life saving options in SUD Treatment.

3. Chief Executive Officer Report

Lakisha Hyatt, Chief Executive Officer, provided the following updates:

- Acknowledged International Women's Day and Women's History Month and local event collaboration with the Chamber of Commerce.
- Overall, the hospital remains in healthy standing with updates on recent OSHA visits and recommendations. Environmental reports continue to ensure care quality and safety.

4. Vocational Services Presentation

Ryan: During COVID, these initiatives didn't take place, however, after COVID, patients were reintegrated back off the unit.

- The CVH Greenhouse is one of the largest vocational sites on campus for patient engagement with income that supports patient activities.
- At the site, patients are privy of activities such as shipment timetables, calendars of events for the planting of approximately 9000 seedlings, aiding with appropriate watering and pest control processes and the provision of general educational overview. Once plants are ready for purchase, patients are encouraged to conduct sales creating an enriching opportunity for community engagement.
- The second site is Valley View where patients get involved with food processes such as:
 - Serving food to the community at large and CVH staff outside of their units, handling cash registers and operating dishwashing machines. These skills are preparatory for ease of workforce integration once discharged. Critical skills such as customer service, community relations and citizenship have been utilized by former patients as employees of Goodwill, Electric Boat, ShopRite, Stop and Shop and some federal jobs.
 - Patients are encouraged to reach out to the hospital for updates on progress and to not limit themselves by their diagnosis and to utilize the opportunity for personal and vocational development.
 - Currently, vocational services are seeking to expand and explore small jobs vocation in and around campus. Future expansion might include Warehouse inventory.

- Patients may begin with minimal duties on the unit to make them feel part of the unit such as wiping tables after dinner and snack, wiping doorknobs, railings on the unit, etc.
- The pre-vocational education program assesses independent learning style, identifying hobbies and interests. Career assessment through discussion and role play aids success in the long term. There is an in-house boutique, coffee cart, and auto detailing.
- The vocational program includes community reintegration supports such as job coaching in collaboration with recovery services. Patients are also guided through the transitions through SSI, SSDI and the Labor Department for benefit management and license renewal waivers.
- **Patients recognize the benefits of the program gaining self-confidence, working on communication and social skills.**

5. Update from Sarah Gadsby, CEO River Valley Services

- Updates regarding collaboration at Middletown Police.
- Program started 3 years ago to support people with mental illness
- Social workers are working with police, including case workers, to help the homeless community.
- Police and their response in the City of Middletown is more advanced than others by at least 3 to 4 years
- 2nd Annual Mental Health Fair is under way

6. Update from Mayor Nocera

- Exploration into collaboration with the Community Health Center Greenhouse.

7. Update Phillip Pessina

- Highlighted the dignity of our clients, the great work of CVH and vocational programs at CVH. Ms. Pessina supported collaboration at CVH.

6. Lakisha extended community partnerships

Thanks to all as we continue to do great work with community reintegration. Thank you to the CVH Champions.

Chair McHugh thanked all members for their participation and service.

The meeting was adjourned at **8:50 a.m.**

Minutes Prepared By: Amy Howard

Date Prepared: Mar 18, 2026

Next Scheduled Meeting: June 12, 2026