

Vermont Agency of Human Services
Department of Mental Health

**STATE PROGRAM STANDING
COMMITTEE
OPERATING GUIDELINES**

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**Department of Mental Health
State Program Standing Committee Operating Guidelines**

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1. Department of Mental Health Vision, Mission, Values, and Outcomes

Mental health will be a cornerstone of health in Vermont. People will live in caring communities with compassion for and a determination to respond effectively and respectfully to the mental-health needs of all citizens. Vermonters will have access to effective prevention, early intervention, and mental-health treatment and supports as needed to live, work, learn, and participate fully in their communities.

1.2 Mission

It is the mission of the Vermont Department of Mental Health to promote and improve the mental health of Vermonters.

1.3 Values

We support and believe in the Agency of Human Services' values of respect, integrity, and commitment to excellence and express these as:

Excellence in Customer Service

- People receiving mental-health services and their families should be informed and involved in planning at the individual and the system levels.
- Services must be accessible, of high quality, and reflect state-of-the-art practices.
- A continuum of community-based services is the foundation of our system.

Holistic Approach to Our Clients

- We can promote resilience and recovery through effective prevention, treatment, and support services.
- Integration of mental health care with physical and behavioral health care providers across public and private systems is essential for optimal outcomes.

Strengths-Based Relationships

- It is important to foster the strengths of individuals, families, and communities.

Results Orientation

- Strong leadership, active partnerships, and innovation are vital strategies to achieve our mission.
- We are accountable for results.

1.4 DMH Desired Outcomes in Four Quality Domains

Access

Core services are available to individuals and families in need.

Practice Patterns

Services provided are appropriate, of high quality, and reflect current best practices.

Outcomes/Results of Treatment

The quality of life for consumers will improve.

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Structure/Administration

Designated Agencies will be fully functional and have strong working relationships with the Department, families, and other stakeholders. The Department will forge new working relationships with public and private health care providers and insurers to build an integrated health care system for all Vermonters.

2. Purposes of the State Program Standing Committee

The *Administrative Rules on Agency Designation*, effective June 1, 2003, describe the role and function of the Department of Mental Health's Standing Committees.

From *Administrative Rules on Agency Designation*:

Section 3.3. The State Committee shall advise the department on the performance of the system with respect to the points below, based on a uniform evaluative format developed by DDMHS.

Responsibilities of the State Committee shall include:

3.3.1. **Hiring of Key Management:** The Commissioner shall seek advice from the Committee in the appointment of a new Division and/or Unit director. The Division Director shall no less than annually seek feedback from the committee regarding program management.

3.3.2. **Evaluation of Quality:** The Committee shall review information and advise the Department on the quality and responsiveness of services offered statewide.

3.3.3. **State System of Care Plan:** The Committee shall participate in the development of the State System of Care Plan and its updates. In doing so, it will advise the Department in regard to establishing general priorities for resource allocation consistent with the State System of Care Plan. Committee members will have a working knowledge of:

3.3.3.1. Regulatory requirements or mandates that significantly influence resource allocation decisions

3.3.3.2. Other community and departmental pressures on the resources

3.3.3.3. Outcomes related to system of care plan priorities and general resource allocations

3.3.3.4. Any new initiatives, demonstration projects.

3.3.4. **Department Policy:** The Committee shall review and recommend policy that pertains to or significantly influences services for the population they represent.

3.3.5. **Grievances & Appeals:** The Committee shall review aggregate information on the frequency, nature and resolution of grievances and appeals about services in order to make recommendations on how the statewide network of services or Departmental operations could be improved.

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Section 3.4. The State Program Standing Committee shall be involved in the agency designation and redesignation process, as defined in section 6 of these rules.

3. Membership

From *Administrative Rules on Agency Designation*:

Section 3. State Program Standing Committees: There shall be a State Program Standing Committee (State Committee) for each DMH population served.

3.1. Each State Committee shall be comprised of between 9 and 15 members, a majority of whom will be disclosed consumers and family members of the disability group that they represent.

3.1.1. All members of the State Program Standing Committees shall be appointed by the Governor for staggered terms of three years and shall serve until a successor is appointed.

Other notes:

- Appointees may seek reappointment to additional terms.
- If a person is appointed in the middle of a term, they shall fulfill the remaining amount of time for that term.
- Persons who have potential interest in applying for appointment should contact DMH.
- Reimbursement for meeting, travel time, and mileage is available for consumer/family appointees and prospective members awaiting appointment according to guidelines formulated by the Agency of Human Services and DMH. Reimbursement requests may be entered on the *State of Vermont website under Expense Claim* form.
- The application form for membership can be acquired by contacting the DMH support to the committees, listed on the first page of this document.

3.2 Filling Vacancies

Responsibilities for filling vacancies on the Standing Committees:

- Identifying, contacting, and interviewing prospective members
- Inviting prospective members to attend meetings
- Reviewing résumés and other application materials (currently, an application for membership to the committee and the form for gubernatorial appointments)
- Contacting references for prospective members
- Presenting new members for nomination to the Standing Committee

For the State Program Standing Committee for Child, Adolescent, and Family Mental Health, the all members are involved in the process of filling vacancies.

For the State Program Standing Committee for Adult Mental Health, there is a membership subcommittee that consists of up to three members that are involved in the process of filling vacancies. The full Standing

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Committee votes on forwarding a nomination to the Department of Mental Health for recommendation to the Governor¹.

3.3 Maximum Members from One Organization

Not more than two members with an affiliation or conflict of interest related to an organization or Designated or Specialized Service Agency will be accepted onto the committee, for the purpose of keeping the committee diverse and number of members eligible to form a quorum (see standard 5.5).

4. Responsibilities of Members

Participate in each meeting.

It is the expectation that the members will attend each of the regularly scheduled monthly meetings and contribute to accomplishing the work of the Standing Committee. Although it is preferable to attend in person, it is possible to participate by telephone or video conference call. Conference lines are included in the meeting agenda and open throughout the duration of the meeting.

Promote mental health for all Vermonters.

It is important for the committee not only to advise the Department of Mental Health on the system of care's accomplishments and challenges in providing high-quality treatment for those in need, but also to look for ways to promote mental health for all.

Represent Vermonters, as best we can, with or at risk of experiencing mental health issues.

Members are selected to serve on the committee in part because of their individual experiences, knowledge, and skills. Equally important is their ability to see beyond the personal level to acknowledge the experiences of all Vermonters and to explore system-level issues, resources, performance, and new approaches to significant problems.

Respect diversity of committee members and the public.

As Vermonters, we have a long history of respecting individual differences in philosophical, political, religious, and cultural beliefs and practices. This respect is expected of all members of this Governor-appointed public committee.

Be familiar with the Administrative Rules on Agency Designation

Standing Committee members are expected to familiarize themselves with the *Administrative Rules (found on the DMH website)* and to help new members to master their provisions. Please reach out to DMH if you have further questions about the Administrative Rules.

5. Meetings

5.1 Day, Time, and Location

It is the intent of DMH to hold these meetings at times that accommodate as many members as possible. The committee will review the day, time, and location as needed to meet these needs.

¹ See Addendum 1 for a graphic representation of the SPSC for Adult Mental Health application process

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State Program Standing Committee for Child, Adolescent, and Family Mental Health currently meets on the fourth Friday of the month, 10:00 – 2:30, at the Waterbury State Office Complex, 280 State Drive, NOB-2 North, in the DMH’s Cherry C Conference Room.

The State Program Standing Committee for Adult Mental Health meets on the second Monday of the month, 12:00 – 3:00, at the Waterbury State Office Complex, 280 State Drive, NOB-2 North, in the DMH’s Beech Conference Room.

Because these meetings are all public meetings, the Committees follow Vermont laws about public meetings. Public meeting law can be found here: <https://www.sec.state.vt.us/media/915217/a-guide-to-open-meetings-january-2019.pdf> Among these requirements is that meetings are held in accessible places and that notice is posted through the Vermont Department of Libraries. Additionally, the day, time, and location of all meetings are posted on the DMH website under “Upcoming Events” at <http://mentalhealth.vermont.gov/>

5.2 Attendance

Attendance at all meetings is important and expected. It is possible, however, that one’s personal and professional life as well as Vermont weather can present unavoidable challenges from time to time.

- It is the responsibility of all Standing Committee members to let DMH know when they will not be able to attend a meeting.
- If a member is unable to travel to the meeting, conference call participation is always an option.
- If only limited travel is possible, video conferencing may also be arranged.
- If the timing is not possible on a given day, please notify DMH.
- Three absences without prior notification may constitute resignation from the committee.

5.3 Roles

To assure optimal meetings, the Standing Committee asks members to volunteer to fill the following roles for each meeting.

- **Rotating Facilitator/Committee Chair**
Each standing committee can elect to select a committee chair or a facilitator. If the Committee chooses not to select a chair, members will be asked to rotate turns as facilitators for periods of three or four months at a time, as may best be determined in practice. Facilitators/Chair should:
 - Be guided by *Robert’s Rules of Order* in conducting the meeting²
 - Familiarize themselves before the day of the meeting with each of the items on the agenda and the person or persons who will present or discuss each item
 - Convene and adjourn the meeting on time
 - Determine that a quorum (a majority of the membership) is present
 - Review the agenda at the beginning of the meeting
 - Preside over introductions and approval of minutes of the previous meeting
 - Ask for desired adjustments to the agenda

² See Addendum 2 for *Robert’s Rules of Order*

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- Be aware of process and especially communication trends in the group. For example, do all members have the time and comfort level they need to participate in discussion? Is there sufficient time for members to ask questions?
- Assign a timekeeper.
- Assign time for public comment on each agenda allowing members of the public/other interested parties to make their thoughts and concerns known
- Negotiate with the group if an item needs additional time or should be tabled
- **Agenda Preparation**
 - The Standing Committee members contribute ideas for future agenda topics apart from required business (e.g., recommendations for agency designation to the Commissioner)
 - The departmental liaison to the Standing Committee has responsibility for assisting the facilitators/chairs with tasks that may be associated with the agenda, such as arranging times for presenters from outside the Committee.

5.4 Agenda

Each meeting has an agenda. Items are suggested by the work of the committee at its meetings and by the committee's responsibilities under *Administrative Rules on Agency Designation*. The agenda is sent by e-mail to members before the scheduled meeting along with related handouts as they are available; a limited number of hard copies will be available at the meeting. The agenda is also posted on the DMH website at <http://mentalhealth.vermont.gov> Time is scheduled for members of the public to express their opinion on matters considered by the committee during the meeting if order is maintained.

5.5 Decisions

Generally, the Committee makes decisions by consensus. On matters with significant potential impact (e.g., recommendations to the Commissioner on the redesignation of an agency), a vote by a quorum of members (a majority) is taken. Quorum is here defined as a majority of the number of members who are eligible to vote for that topic. Eligibility is impacted by conflicts of interest, defined as:

- The member has a direct (affecting that individual) or indirect (affecting a family member, employer, or employee of that individual) significant personal or financial interest in the outcome of that decision, more so than other individuals affected by the decision. It is up to individual members to determine whether they have a significant personal or financial conflict of interest, and to notify the committee before the day of the meeting if they plan to recuse themselves from voting on the upcoming decision so that a quorum may be established by the committee chair.
- A "conflict of interest" does not arise in the case of an official act or action in which the member has a personal or financial interest in the outcome that is no greater than that of other persons generally affected by the decision.

5.6 Minutes

A DMH liaison from the central office staff takes minutes of committee meetings, and a draft is then distributed to the committee for review. If necessary, the minutes are edited before they are accepted and approved. Draft and approved minutes are posted on the DMH website at <http://mentalhealth.vermont.gov>

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5.7 Ground Rules

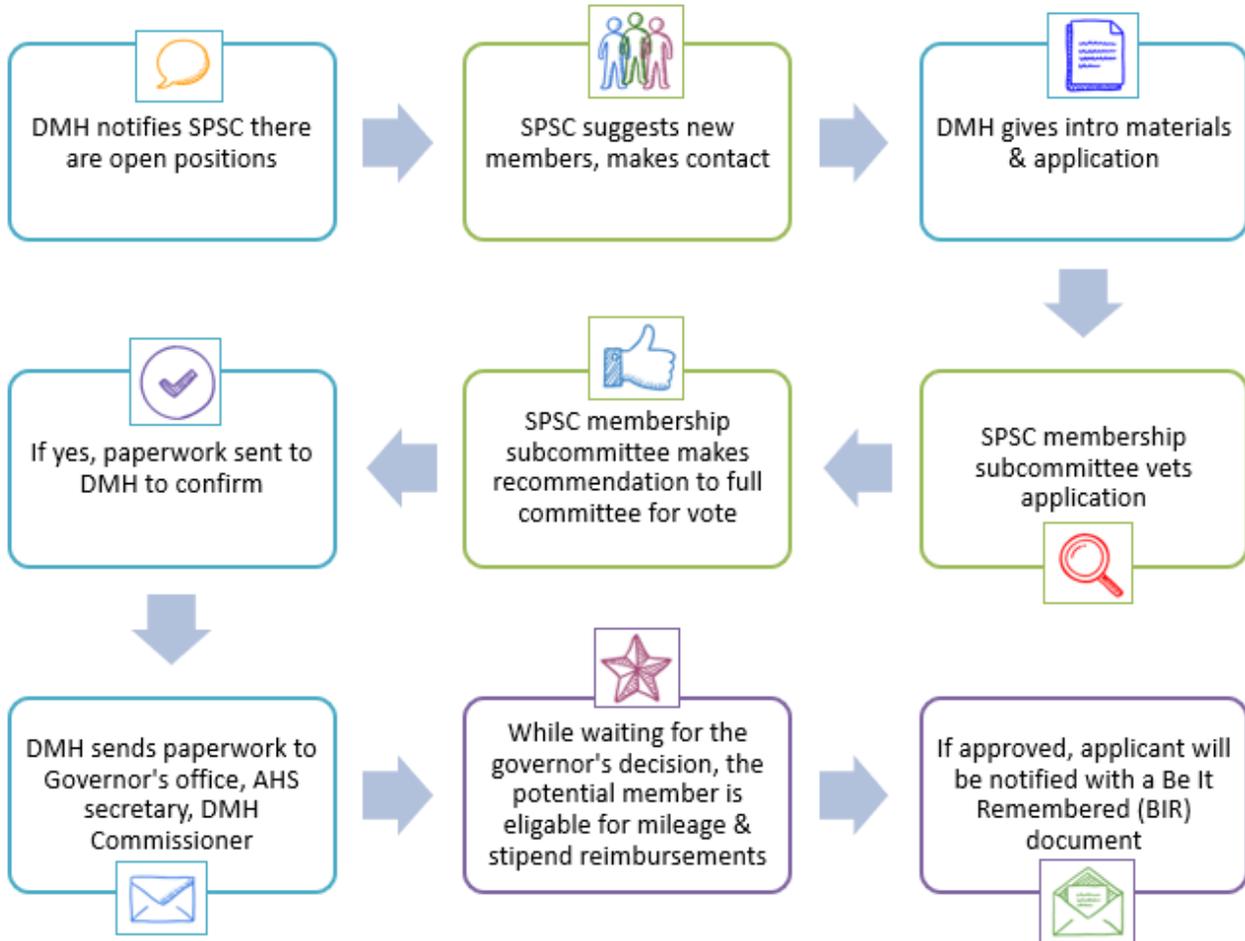
The following ground rules are developed and adopted by the State Program Standing Committee Members.

- Respect everyone
- Listen
- Be honest
- Take action steps
- Ask questions and get clarification
- Offer constructive criticism
- Express your opinion
- Limit acronyms and jargon
- Compromise
- Put principles before personalities
- Share ourselves as people, beyond our roles

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Addendum 1: SPSC for Adult Mental Health Application Process

New Appointment Process



Intro Materials

From DMH:

- One page intro to SPSC
- Minutes from previous meetings
- Operating guidelines
- Conduct of meetings
- Appointment process

Paperwork for Full Submission

From Applicant/SPSC:

- Application for Gubernatorial Appointment
- SPSC Supplemental Questions
- Resume

From DMH:

- Memo from DMH Quality to DMH Commissioner
- Memo from DMH Commissioner to AHS Secretary

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Addendum 2: *Robert's Rules of Order*

CONDUCT OF MEETINGS

1. Most meetings, from board meetings to town meetings, are conducted using what are known as "Robert's Rules of Order."
2. The point of Robert's Rules of Order is:
 - a) to allow all members of a group to have the opportunity to express an opinion; and
 - b) to ensure that when a decision is made (usually in the form of a motion), all of the members understand exactly what they are voting for (or against).
3. A member of the group makes a motion to the chair/group facilitator about some action: to approve minutes, to accept the nomination of a new member, etc. Another member of the group must "second" the motion in order for it to be open for discussion.
4. Once a motion has been made and seconded, the chair/facilitator must ask if there is any discussion about the motion. Any member of the group who wishes to comment should indicate that to the chair/facilitator, and once called on to speak, may present his or her opinion or comments on the motion.
5. When every member of the group who wishes to speak about the motion has had an opportunity to do so, the chair/facilitator can take a vote on the motion. It is customary for the chair/facilitator to then announce what the decision on the motion was: e.g., the minutes have been approved.
6. Only members of the group may speak about an agenda item or a motion during the discussion period. Only members of the group may vote on a motion.
7. A member may ask that a topic or motion be put off for discussion at another time. The other members of the group need to agree to put off the discussion, usually for a set amount of time (later in the meeting when an absent member is present, during a subsequent meeting, etc.).
8. Members of the public who wish to speak may do so during the public comment period. The comment period is an opportunity for members of the public to comment on the topics discussed by the group. It is not an opportunity for members of the public to question group members or their decisions or any guest speakers at the meeting.