HEALTH PLANNING COUNCIL OF SOUTHWEST FL
HEALTH FOCUSED COMMUNITY DRIVEN

THE HEALTH PLANNING COUNCIL OF SOUTHWEST FLORIDA, INC.

Minutes from 1/14/2026
Board of Directors Meeting

Time: 10:00 a.m.
Location: The Health Planning Council of Southwest Florida Offices, 12220 Towne Lake Dr. Suite 01 Fort Myers, FL 33913

Members Present Marked with a Check (✓) Members Absent marked with an X Vacant positions left blank

Board Members	Georgeann Burns – Secretary Charlotte County Consumer Representative	✓	Joe Meek- Treasurer Collier County Consumer Representative	✓	Michele Wardeberg Collier County Consumer Representative	✓
	Tim Stanley Glades County Consumer Representative	X	Vacant Hendry County Representative		Dr. Jorge Quinonez Lee County Provider Representative	✓
	Sharon Murphy – Vice Chair Lee County Provider Representative	✓	Bob Johns - Chair Lee County Provider Representative	✓	Dr. Achal Bhatt Sarasota County Representative	**X**
	Patrick Dewechter Sarasota County Provider Representative	✓	Sarah Hipp DeSoto County Provider Representative	✓	Lindsay McDonnell Sarasota County Representative	✓
Staff	Mike Waite Finance Director	✓	Trina Puddefoot, Program Director Early Steps Program	✓	Warren Wright Navigator Program Manager	✓
	Brian Hemmert CEO	✓	Carmen Garay Admin. Assistant	✓	Robin Listello Human Resources	✓
	Jennifer Soler Human Resources Specialist	✓	Julia Cooper Manager of Community Initiatives	✓	Jessica Stone Infant Mental Health Coordinator	✓
	Katie Ritz Early Steps	✓	Karol Verdone Gulf Central Program Director			

Agenda Item	Discussion	Action
Meeting Minutes and Consent Agenda	Bob Johns (Chair) welcomes everyone to the board meeting. Attendance was taken, as documented above, and it was announced that there was a quorum present. The Chair calls the meeting to order at 10:00 am. A motion was presented for the approval of the previous board meeting minutes, the consent agenda, and the meeting materials. Meeting minutes from previous board meetings and consent agenda items were approved.	Motion Georgeann Burns Second Joe Meek
Financial Reports	Mike Waite provided the financial report to the board. The Navigator program is running slightly underbudget, but that is due to the change in funding. HOPWA is running on budget. Early Steps is running over budget but the gap is closing and getting closer to getting on budget. Health Planning has a surplus due to the completed paid projects. The board accepted the report as presented. Brian Hemmert made the board aware that the Sunshine issues discussed in previous meetings continue to be a concern. We have successfully been in contact with supervisors and directors within sunshine health who appear to better understand our questions and concerns. There remains a little over 20K in part c funding utilized to pay providers who were wrongfully denied payment. Board offered assistance and requested updates as needed between Board meetings.	Motion Jose Quinonez Second Sharon Murphy
Program Orientation *Planning*	Julia Cooper provided an overview of the three programs under the Health Planning Department: HOPWA, Healthcare Coalition, and Health Planning. The HOPWA program is a housing resource program for people living with HIV/AIDS. HOPWA has four main programs to help assist with housing resources. HPC is the project sponsor for this program. This means that HPC oversees all program aspects, subcontracts with local agencies to provide the direct client interactions, and is the primary fiscal agent. Next, Julia Cooper provided an overview of the Southwest Florida Healthcare Coalition on behalf of the program manager. The Coalition works to develop healthcare emergency preparedness, response, and recovery capabilities through collaboration, training, and planning. The Coalition is made up of different healthcare, emergency management, and public health entities. The Coalition works on various projects, activities, and plans, including tabletop/full-scale exercises. One of the big projects that was highlighted in the presentation was PEPI (Pediatric Emergency Preparedness Initiative). In this, the Coalition created and distributed 317 pediatric sensory kits, and counting, to all ambulances, emergency shelters, and emergency departments throughout the region. Also, the Coalition will be hosting the very first SWFL Pediatric Emergency Preparedness Summit at FGCU on February 25th. Julia Cooper provided the overview of the Health Planning Department as	

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	well. Julia Cooper went over the contracts the department has from the state, which include the planning contract and DSMES contract. Julia Cooper talked about the various community education activities the health planning department does, which include the annual County Health Profiles, fact sheets, documentary screenings, and educational webinars. To highlight one of the tools that is used during many health planning projects, Mentimeter, the board members were asked to score 10 health priorities on a scale from 1 to 10. This information will help to the health planning department to prioritize where they should focus their community education activities for the year. Julia Cooper discussed the completed project over the past year, highlighting the completion of the Collier County and Lee County Community Health Assessment. The presentation concluded with a look ahead to all the potential projects the health planning team is planning for the upcoming year.	
Early Intervention Services	Katie Ritz and Karol Verdone provided the program overview for the Early Intervention Services program. These services are for children ages 0-3. They provided an overview of the various programs that make up Early Intervention Services, like the Early Steps program and the AAC program. Early Steps goes into the natural environment and works by coaching/guiding the family to help the child. Katie provided information on the new data collection tool which is the Child Outcome Data. This looks at a child when they enter the program and how they have grown throughout their time in the program when they exit. Karol Verdone provided a look at upcoming events. They are preparing to use a new data system from the state. They are anticipating this to launch in April. Some staff from each location will be attending a PreK Conference in February to learn more about the new expansion to four-year-olds. The first Early Steps Conference is taking place in May; this is the first conference in 10 years. Three staff members will be presenting on the Zone teams. Karol provided an overview of the ongoing Sunshine Medicaid issues that Brian Hemmert and Trina Puddefoot discussed earlier.	
Infant Mental Health	Jessica Stone provided the overview of the Infant Mental Health program. This program provides consultation to childcare centers to help prepare providers. The program is secured funding from the Early Learning Coalition of Southwest Florida to increase this consultation program to all their contracted centers. They are waiting to hear more about an extended contract. Jessica Stone provided a year-end review of all the outcomes from the program. Jessica Stone continues to receive a 100% satisfaction rate, this survey is completed by the providers. The program is looking to partner with the David Lawrence Center.	
Navigator	Warren Wright provided the overview of the Navigator program. What will happen next is up in the air due to what is happening at the federal level. The program overachieved all of its goals. The funding for the program	

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Human Resources	ends January 15th. There was a reduction in the workforce due to a change in funding. HPC is awaiting USF's response on a new grant. This would allow us to move the program forward. Jennifer Soler presented on behalf of Human Resources. Jennifer Soler provided an overview of how HPC moved IHCRA provider to ensure a better experience for employees. There was a discussion about the increase in healthcare costs to employees. HPC has a higher number of employees who have worked at the organization for 5+ years. In 2025, HPC had its highest turnover rate, but this was due to the reduction of the workforce for the Navigator program.	
Audit	Brian Hemmert provided an update on the audit. The audit has been submitted	
Adjournment	**With no other business, meeting was adjourned at 11:51 am. The next board meeting will take place on April 8, 2026 at 10 am.**	