



DRAFT

**Virginia Board of Counseling
Quarterly Board Meeting Minutes
Friday, January 16, 2026, at 10:00 a.m.
9960 Mayland Drive, Henrico, VA 23233
Board Room 2**

PRESIDING OFFICER:	Terry R. Tinsley, PhD, LPC, LMFT, CSOTP, Board Chair
BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:	Marlo Burdge, Citizen Member Nakeisha Gordon, LPC Luanne Griffin, LPC Gerard Lawson, PhD, LPC, LSATP, NCC, Vice-Chair, Regulatory Committee Chair Charlotte Markva, LPC, LMFT, CSAC Matthew Scott, LMFT Cyrus Williams, PhD, LPC, LSATP
BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:	Benjamin Allison, Citizen Member Maria Anastasiou, LMFT Lester Paul Bernard, PhD, LPC Shannon Kuschel, PhD, LPC
BOARD STAFF PRESENT:	Latasha Austin, Licensing & Operations Manager Alesia Baskin, Senior Licensing Specialist Jennifer Lang, Acting Executive Director Christy Palmore, Senior Discipline & Compliance Case Specialist
DHP STAFF PRESENT:	Erin Barrett, Director of Legislative & Regulatory Affairs, DHP Arnie Owens, Agency Director, Department of Health Professions
BOARD COUNSEL PRESENT:	James Rutkowski, Assistant Attorney General
PUBLIC ATTENDEES:	Henry Bruns, Premier Supervision and Consultation Cinda Caiella, LMFT Liz Konikoff, Institute for Public Health Innovation Andrew Rousseau, Founding Freedoms Law Center
CALL TO ORDER:	Dr. Tinsley called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.
MOMENT OF SILENCE:	Moment of silence was observed.
ROLL CALL/ESTABLISHMENT OF A QUORUM:	A formal introduction of all Board members and staff was conducted. At the time of roll call, eight Board members were present, establishing a quorum.
MISSION STATEMENT:	Dr. Tinsley read the mission statement of the Department of Health Professions, which was also the mission statement of the Board. Dr. Tinsley also read the emergency egress instructions.
ADOPTION OF AGENDA:	The meeting agenda was adopted as presented.
PUBLIC COMMENT:	Mr. Rousseau from the Founding Freedom Law Center provided comments regarding a recent Consent Order regarding Conversion Therapy. Requested that the Board inform counselors about the board's position to ensure awareness.

Mr. Burns addressed concerns about supervision for Qualified Mental Health Professionals (QMHP). Requested the Board to review and improve supervision standards in Virginia to enhance quality and oversight.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

The Board reviewed the minutes from the last quarterly board meeting held on October 17, 2025.

Motion: Dr. Lawson made a motion, which Ms. Griffin properly seconded, to approve the minutes from the October 17, 2025 meeting as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

AGENCY DIRECTOR REPORT:

Mr. Owens expressed appreciation for the Board members and acknowledged their contributions. He extended thanks to both the Board and staff for their continued dedication and excellent work.

- **Efficiency Measures**
 - Focus remains on implementing efficiency measures.
 - Fee increases from other boards are pending; these changes do not affect this Board.
- **Legislative Updates**
 - The General Assembly has convened.
 - Agency bills will be addressed by Ms. Barrett during the meeting
- **Leadership Updates**
 - A new Governor has taken office; today marks Mr. Owens' last day in his current role.
 - The search for a new Director for BSU is underway.
 - Ms. Lang is currently serving as Acting Executive Director.

BOARD CHAIR REPORT:

Dr. Tinsley thanked Mr. Owens for his leadership and service to the agency.

LEGISLATION & REGULATORY REPORT:

- **General Assembly**

Ms. Barret provided the Board with a brief recap of the Virginia General Assembly session. Analysis of all bills is still pending. No committee meetings have been held yet. Notable legislation mentioned:

 - AI-related bill (details forthcoming).
 - Proposed bill to revise the Callahan Act and allow all boards to amend licensure fees through an exempt regulatory action and recover costs for disciplinary actions.
- **Current Regulatory Actions**

Ms. Barrett reviewed and discussed with the Board the current regulatory actions pertaining to the Board of Counseling, as outlined in the agenda packet beginning on page 12, dated January 5, 2026.
- **Closure of Periodic Reviews for 18VAC115-20, 30, 40, 50, 60 and 70**

Ms. Barrett informed the Board that every four years, each regulatory Board is required to go through a periodic review process, a formal review of regulations to determine if the regulations continue to meet the needs of the profession or if changes should be made. The Board of Counseling opened periodic reviews on nearly all chapters in mid-2024 and has not yet taken any further action on them. She informed the Board that these reviews should be closed. It was recommended that the periodic reviews be closed and the regulations be amended. Exact changes would be determined at a later date and time.

Motion: Dr. Lawson made a motion, which Ms. Gordon properly seconded, to close the periodic reviews for 18VAC115-20, 30, 40, 50, 60 and 70 with the intent to amend. The motion passed unanimously.

- **Revision of Guidance Document 115-2**

Ms. Barrett reviewed and discussed with the Board the suggested changes to Guidance Document 115-2, the Impact of Criminal Convictions, Impairment, and the Past History on Licensure, Certification or Registration by the Virginia Board of Counseling, as provided in the agenda packet beginning on page 17. The suggested changes are being requested to include BHTs and BHTAs.

Motion: Mr. Scott made a motion, which Ms. Markva properly seconded, to amend Guidance document 115-2 as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

- **Repeal of Guidance Document 115-4.3**

Ms. Barrett reviewed and discussed with the Board Guidance Document 115-4.3, Direct Client Contact Hours in an Internship that can be applied toward the residency. It is recommended that it be repealed due to the reduction of residency requirements which became effective as of December 18, 2025.

Motion: Ms. Gordon made a motion, which Mr. Scott properly seconded, to repeal Guidance Document 115-4.3. The motion passed unanimously.

ACTING EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

Ms. Lang is currently serving in the Acting Executive Director role. The agency is currently recruiting for a new Executive Director and Ms. Lang will keep board members updated when a decision is made.

- Recent meetings attended:
 - Evidence-based Practice Coordinating Committee
 - Reentry to Recovery Workgroup from EO26
 - Meeting with Maryland counseling association members to discuss teletherapy and continuity of care.
 - Meeting with the Executive Director of the Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) program regarding QMHP training. This training is only available to first responders.
- Board appointments expiring on June 30, 2026
 - Benjamin Allison's 1st term
 - Matthew Scott's 1st term
 - Terry Tinsley's 2nd term

Ms. Lang advised members that, if they want to apply for a 2nd term, to wait until after January 17th. The new administration will have a different system for accepting applications.

- Ms. Lang reminded board members that the deadline to complete the Conflict-of-Interest filing is February 2nd.

DISCIPLINE REPORT:

Ms. Lang referenced the discipline report, beginning on page 27 of the meeting agenda, and noted the following:

- There was a slight decrease in discipline cases received from 2024-2025.
- The Board of Counseling cases decreased by 1% and the total cases from the three boards (Counseling, Psychology, and Social Work) decreased by 4%.

LICENSING REPORT:

Ms. Austin referenced the licensing report, beginning on page 53 of the meeting agenda and notes the following key updates:

- **Survey Results**
The 1st Quarter survey results were 93.6%.
- **Licensing Statistics**
Total licenses for all license types: 39,734 (as of January 5, 2026).
- **Application Processing**
Due to limited staffing and increased application volume, Board staff are currently reviewing complete applications within 45 to 60 days. Extended processing times are attributed to application complexity, ongoing audit review, limited staff resources, new residency requirements, incomplete application submissions
- **Continuing Education Audit**
Ms. Austin provided an overview of the 2025 Continuing Education Audit.
- **Residency Requirements**
Updates were shared regarding changes implemented by staff following the new residency requirements effective December 18, 2025.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

- **Updates to Training and Policy Documents**
Ms. Lang discussed a program approval request that was submitted to the Board for consideration:
 - **Institute for Public Health Innovation** – Submitted curriculum to meet didactic education requirements for BHTAs, BHTs, QMHP-Trainees, and QMHPs.

Motion: Dr. Lawson made a motion, which Dr. Williams properly seconded, to approve the IPHI for both the BHT and QMHP training. The motion passed unanimously

NEW BUSINESS:

- **Counseling Compact**
Ms. Lang informed the Board about the status of the Counseling Compact. Due to Ms. Hoyle's resignation as Executive Director, she can no longer serve as the Virginia Delegate for the Counseling Compact Commission. A volunteer is needed to serve as Virginia Delegate until a new Executive Director is appointed. Ms. Lenart will continue serving as the alternate delegate.

Ms. Lang notes that the Virginia Board of Counseling is still unable to participate in the Compact due to background checks.

Motion: Ms. Griffin made a motion, which Ms. Gordon properly seconded, to approve Dr. Lawson to serve as the Virginia Delegate on the Counseling Compact Commission until the new executive director is able to serve. The motion passed unanimously.

**CONSIDERATION OF
RECOMMENDED DECISION:**

Closed Meeting: Mr. Scott moved that the Board of Counseling convene in a closed meeting pursuant to § 2.2-3711(A)(27) of the Code of Virginia to consider an agency subordinate recommendation. He further moved that James Rutkowski, Jennifer Lang, and Latasha Austin attend the closed meeting because their presence was deemed necessary and would aid the board in its deliberations. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

Recommendations Considered:**Mitchel Lamont Thomas, QMHP****Registration No. 0732-004713****Case No. 235491**

Mr. Thomas did not appear before the board and did not submit a written response. The board considered the agency subordinate's recommendation to place certain terms and conditions on Mr. Thomas' registration to practice as a qualified mental health professional.

Reconvene: Mr. Scott made a motion to certify that, pursuant to § 2.2-3712 of the Code of Virginia, the Board of Counseling heard, discussed, or considered only those public business matters lawfully exempted from open meeting requirements under the Virginia Freedom of Information Act and only such public business matters as identified in the original motion. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

Decision: Upon a motion by Ms. Gordon, and duly seconded by Ms. Burdge, the board unanimously voted to accept the agency subordinate's recommendation, as presented, in the matter of Mitchel Thomas, QMHP.

NEXT MEETING DATES:

The next quarterly full board meeting is scheduled for Friday, April 3, 2026.

ADJOURNMENT:

Dr. Tinsley adjourned the January 16, 2026, meeting at 10:56 a.m.

Terry R. Tinsley, PhD, LPC, LMFT, CSOTP, Board Chair

Jennifer Lang, Acting Executive Director