Community Townhall Summary: Psychedelic-Assisted Therapy

September 22, 2026 | Co-hosted by Camden Coalition and PMHA Alliance

Overview

The townhall began with an overview of what psychedelic-assisted therapy (PAT) is, what the research shows, the safety guardrails used in this type of care, and why this work is coming to New Jersey. Staff emphasized that no clinical trials are yet underway in New Jersey.

Feedback from the townhall will inform the design of future research trials, including access, safety standards, the importance of trusted partnerships, clear preparation, and follow-up, and the inclusion of culturally and spiritually responsive care. There will be additional opportunities for community members to provide feedback as the work moves forward.

Key Themes

Spirituality, culture, and lived experience

Community members want care that respects language, culture, spiritual beliefs, personal goals, and trauma history. Because of the importance of psychedelics in Indigenous culture, they called for meaningful engagement with the local Lenni-Lenape tribal community and, when desired by participants, involvement of local spiritual leaders and peers in treatment planning and execution.

Fair access and practical support

Cost, insurance, transportation, childcare, housing needs, language access, and late outreach can keep community members from existing care. Future PAT trials should address these barriers from the start through practical supports, peer navigation, and inclusion of community members without insurance. Community members also want a clear rationale for selecting Camden and assurance that research will directly benefit and protect the community.

Safety, evidence, and ongoing support

Community members asked for plain-language evidence about effectiveness, duration of benefit, dosing, dependence risk, and possible worsening of symptoms. They supported careful screening, well-trained facilitators (including peers and spiritual guides), clear

strategies for managing poor outcomes, continued therapy after treatment, and transparent eligibility criteria with alternatives for those who cannot participate.

Trust, community voice, and accountability

Past institutional and systemic harms shaped questions about why Camden was selected and who will make decisions. Community members want transparent roles, meaningful participation in study planning and oversight, and sustained input rather than consultation after plans are set.

A supportive setting and potential benefits

Community members described a safe setting as peaceful, private, comfortable, and free of judgment, with choices that reflect individual culture, beliefs, and comfort. They saw possible value for depression, post-traumatic stress, trauma, opioid use, and other substance use concerns—especially when existing treatments have not helped—while emphasizing that any benefit must be weighed against individual and community risks.

Conclusion

Some community members see promise in psychedelic-assisted therapy, but they want future research to be safe, fair, and respectful of local cultures and spiritual beliefs. Others expressed skepticism and concern, citing historic institutional harm and fear about poor outcomes harming individuals and their community. Ongoing community input will help ensure that the New Jersey clinical trials address local needs and benefit the Camden community.