



Howard County Local Health Improvement Coalition
Healthy Minds and Suicide Prevention Coalition (HMSPC)

January 8, 2026

2:00 – 3:00 PM

Howard County Health Department

Virtual via Zoom

Minutes

Co-Chair Present:

Jessica Fisher, Howard County Health Department

Members Present:

Erin Anderson, Bureau of Family Health Services, Assistant Director of Nursing

Trudy Conley, MD Dept of Health Maryland's Commitment to Veterans

Ashley Deare, MDH BHA Office of Integrated Wellness and Prevention Suicide Prevention Office

Enjolie Gomez, MDH BHA Office of Integrated Wellness and Prevention Suicide Prevention Office

Natalie Hall, Bureau of Assessment, Planning, and Community Engagement

Karen Hull, Howard County Office of Aging and Independence

Stacey Ibekah, Loving Support Center Incorporated

Genny LaPorte, Howard County Police Department

Sonya Lloyd, BBH Grassroots Grant Monitor

Sarah McCoy, Grassroots Crisis Intervention

Chimezie Ndukuba, Bureau of Assessment, Planning, and Community Engagement

Marlene Orantes, Horowitz Center for Health Literacy, University of Maryland, School of Public Health

Donna Phillips, Everstand Behavioral Health

Reena Rambharat, Bureau of Assessment, Planning, and Community Engagement

Lauren Soummers, BBH Family Support Services Unit

Laura Willemin, Grassroots Crisis Intervention

Eileen Zeller, Moms Demand Action Howard County

Staff Present:

Stephanie Foster, Howard County Local Health Improvement Coalition

Maribet Rivera-Brute, Howard County Local Health Improvement Coalition

Topic/Agenda	Discussion	Action/Follow-up
<p>Welcome, Ice Breaker, and September 8th Meeting Re-Cap</p>	<p>Welcome</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jessica Fisher, Co-Chair and Bureau of Behavioral Health (BBH) Suicide Prevention Coordinator, called the meeting to order at 2:01 PM. • Attendees were invited to introduce themselves. <p>Icebreaker:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jessica Fisher, Co-Chair and Bureau of Behavioral Health Suicide Prevention Coordinator, led the group in an icebreaker activity titled “Moose Bunny.” Participants were asked to imitate either a moose or a bunny based on Jessica’s actions demonstrated on camera. <p>November 13, 2025, HMSPC Meeting Re-cap:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stepping Towards A New Destiny (S.T.A.N.D.) Presentation – Cortez Dillahunt <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Mr. Cortez Dillahunt, Administrative Assistant with Stepping Towards A New Destiny (S.T.A.N.D.), provided an overview of the organization and its ongoing efforts to empower youth through mentorship, academic support, and life-skills development. • Continued Discussion and Brainstorming on Community Engagement – Barbara Allen <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Coalition members expressed appreciation for the current process of submitting events and 	<p>LHIC’s website: https://www.hclhic.org/</p> <p>Email LHIC with any other announcements or questions: lhic@howardcountymd.gov</p> <p>Click here to access previous meeting minutes:</p>



	<p>program information to the Howard County Local Health Improvement Coalition (HCLHIC). Members also noted the value of including the HCLHIC Calendar QR code on HMSPC agendas and meeting minutes, as it offers an easy and efficient way to stay informed about upcoming events and initiatives.</p>	
<p>Announcements</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • January Full LHIC Meeting: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Click here to register for the January 15, 2026 Full LHIC Meeting. 9:00 – 11:00 AM. • Community Survey on Firearms <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Howard County Health Department Bureau of Behavioral Health wants to hear your thoughts about guns, safety concerns, and possible solutions in this short, four-minute survey. 	
<p>Behavioral Health Data Highlights: Suicide, Mental Health & Service Utilization Presentation –</p>	<p>Ms. Chimezie Ndukuba, Epidemiologist for the Bureau of Assessment, Planning, and Community Engagement at the Howard County Health Department, presented data on suicide deaths in Howard County</p>	<p>For more information about S.T.A.N.D., visit https://www.standmentorship.org/</p>

**Chimezie
Ndukuba, MPH**

from 2019–2023. The data revealed a total of 131 suicide deaths, with a notable portion involving adolescents. The leading methods of suicide during this period were suffocation and firearms, raising concerns about trends in both youth and adult populations. Coalition members emphasized the importance of comprehensive and detailed data to inform effective prevention strategies and expressed interest in receiving additional breakdowns to better understand trends over time.

Key highlights from the presentation included:

- The majority of suicide deaths were among males, with firearms and suffocation being the most common methods.
- Mental health concerns among adults have increased, with 45% of adults reporting poor mental health days in 2023.
- High school students showed a recent decrease in suicidal ideation.
- Substance use among middle and high school students has decreased for most substances.

Ms. Ndukuba noted that updated information and detailed data will be included in the presentation slides, which will be shared with coalition members along with the meeting minutes.



Firearm Safe Storage Workshop Discussion – Jessica Fisher

Ms. Fisher discussed plans to host a Firearms Safe Storage Workshop in late winter or early spring. The proposed community workshop aims to promote awareness and dialogue around suicide prevention, with a specific focus on the safe storage of firearms. Ms. Fisher emphasized the importance of community involvement and shared potential dates and venues for the event. Tactical 52, a partner organization, will assist with the workshop and provide education on safe firearm storage practices.

Ms. Karen Hull, Mental Health Coordinator with the Howard County Office on Aging and Independence, inquired about the possibility of collaborating with a Korean-speaking educator from the Howard County Health Department to address suicide prevention among older Korean community members. Coalition members acknowledged the need for culturally and linguistically appropriate resources and suggested partnering with community health workers to explore available options. The discussion highlighted a significant gap in mental health support for the Korean community.

Ms. Fisher reminded attendees that the Safeguard Your Home brochure is currently available in Korean and Chinese and invited suggestions for additional language translations.

Ms. Fisher also emphasized the importance of community participation in the upcoming workshop to foster meaningful discussion and awareness. She noted a scheduling conflict with the proposed venue and invited coalition members to suggest alternative locations. The goal is to maximize attendance by offering engaging content and refreshments.

Ms. Hull shared that several 50+ Centers could potentially host the event, noting that at least three centers have the capacity. However, she explained that programming is already scheduled from January through March, limiting available dates to April or later. Coalition members discussed timing considerations to ensure the event effectively reaches the target audience.

Ms. Hull further noted that May is a particularly busy month for mental health and older adult programming and recommended avoiding scheduling events during that time. Ms. Eileen Zeller (Moms Demand Action, Howard County) suggested hosting activities at 50+ Centers to reach a broader audience. Enjolie Gomez (MDH BHA Office of Integrated Wellness and Prevention – Suicide Prevention Office) expressed willingness to assist with planning and promotion related to safe firearm storage initiatives. Natalie Hall, Program Manager for Nicotine and Cannabis Education, raised questions about geographic areas with higher firearm suicide rates and suggested potential outreach at firearm sales events.



	<p>Ms. Fisher thanked all participants for their contributions and encouraged those interested in further involvement to contact Stephanie Foster. Coalition members also shared personal reflections on finding glimmers of joy and connection in daily life. Lastly, updates were provided regarding venue options for an upcoming event, with a focus on securing the historic Oakland Manor for March 14, as the originally proposed March 21 date was unavailable.</p>	
<p>Next Steps & Wrap-up</p>	<p>Ms. Foster announced that the next HMSPC Workgroup meeting will be held on March 12, 2026, from 2:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m., via Zoom. She thanked all attendees for their continued dedication and participation.</p> <p>The meeting was adjourned at 3:00 p.m.</p>	<p>Please visit the HCLHIC Healthy Minds and Suicide Prevention webpage and send any updates needed to kfoster@howardcountymd.gov</p> <p>Email lhic@howardcountymd.gov with any questions.</p>

Respectfully submitted by
Ms. Stephanie Foster
Community Engagement Coordinator
Howard County Local Health Improvement Coalition



To access a list of community events posted on the LHIC Calendar, scan the QR Code above!

Website: www.hclhic.org Facebook: www.facebook.com/hclhic X: [@hclhic](https://twitter.com/hclhic)

