

Meeting Minutes: Healthy Minds and Suicide Prevention (HMSPC) Workgroup Meeting

Date: May 14, 2026

Time: 2:00 – 3:00 PM

Location: Virtual via Zoom

Coalition Co-Chair Present: Jessica Fisher, Barbara Allen

LHIC Staff Present: Stephanie Foster, Maribet Rivera-Brute

1. Attendees

Members Present: Erin Anderson, Ellen Blackwell, Ashley Deare, Enjoli Gómez, Karen Hull, Stacey Ibekweh, Rosemarie Jiménez-Rosales, Sherri Koller, Sonya Lloyd, Chris Miller, Laura Willemin, Eileen Zeller

2. Agenda Items

2.1 Welcome and Introductions

Ms. Stephanie Foster called the meeting to order at 2:02 PM and welcomed attendees. Attendees introduced themselves by name, organization, and roles across county health, nonprofit, crisis, and behavioral health organizations to the Healthy Minds and Suicide Prevention Coalition (HMSPC) Workgroup.

Ms. Foster identified her role as Community Engagement Coordinator for the Howard County LHIC and confirmed that the meeting would be recorded for internal note-taking purposes.



2.2 Mental Health Awareness Month Icebreaker

Jessica Fisher, Co-chair, facilitated a Mental Health Awareness Month icebreaker activity centered around the question: “What does a good day look like for you personally and for your community?”

Participants responded verbally and through the Zoom chat, sharing themes related to:

- Sunshine and pleasant weather
- Family and social connection
- Community safety and neighborliness
- Gratitude
- Peaceful and pain-free days
- Positive community engagement

2.3 2026 Announcements and March Meeting Recap

Ms. Stephanie Foster shared upcoming community events, trainings, and coalition announcements.

- **Safe Love: LGBTQIA+ Domestic Violence Awareness and Prevention Workshop**
 - Join HopeWorks in honoring LGBTQIA+ Domestic Violence Awareness Day through a free interactive workshop focused on education, awareness, and support.
 - 📅 Thursday, May 28
 - 🕒 7:00 – 8:00 PM
 - 📍 HopeWorks of Howard County,
9770 Patuxent Woods Dr., Suite 100
Columbia, MD 21046
 - 🔗 Click [here](#) to register
- **Good Vibes & Voices 2026**
 - Join Howard County Recreation and Parks for a free evening of music, entertainment, and family fun at Rockburn Branch Park (West). This event brings the community together while connecting service members, veterans, and their families with local resources and support.



-  June 4, 2026 (Rain Date: June 5)
 6:30 – 8:30 PM
 Rockburn Branch Park (West),
6105 Rockburn Branch Park Road,
Elkridge, MD 21075
-  Click [here](#) to learn more and register.
-  Feel free to bring lawn chairs and blankets to relax and enjoy the evening.
- **Spring Classes Now Open with NAMI Howard County**
 - Join one of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Howard County's FREE educational programs this spring.
 - Family-to-Family
 Wednesdays, April 8 – June 3, 2026
 7:00 – 9:30 PM
 - Peer-to-Peer
 Thursdays, April 23 – June 11, 2026
 6:30 – 8:30 PM
 - NAMI Basics
 Tuesdays, May 19 – June 23, 2026
 6:30 – 9:00 PM
 -  All in-person classes are held at:
NAMI Howard County Office
9650 Santiago Rd, Suite 1
Columbia, MD 21045
 - These programs provide education, support, and hope for individuals and families navigating mental health challenges.
 -  Register [here](#) or email Kristen at kmoore@namihowardcountymd.org for more information.

March Meeting Recap

Ms. Foster also provided a recap of the March HMSC meeting, which included:

- A presentation from Ms. Tiffany Erbelding from the The Horizon Foundation regarding behavioral health legislative priorities, budget concerns, and coordinated advocacy strategies in Maryland. Ms. Erbelding emphasized the importance of advocacy in influencing local and state policy and shared examples of successful community-driven advocacy efforts.
- A presentation from Ms. Sue Maskaleris and Mr. Bill White from the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP) regarding advocacy priorities related to mental health parity, coverage, and access. The presentation highlighted behavioral health coverage gaps, key legislation, the 2024 federal rule on non-quantitative treatment limits (NQTLs), and the need for stronger state-level protections.

2.4 2026 MDH Behavioral Health Administration Office (BHA) of Integrated Wellness and Prevention Presentation

Enjoli Gómez, Administrator Officer III from the Maryland Department of Health Behavioral Health Administration (BHA) Office of Integrated Wellness and Prevention, provided a presentation regarding the office's role and statewide prevention initiatives.

The Office of Integrated Wellness and Prevention formerly operated as the Office of Suicide Prevention and later expanded to include Substance Use and Problem Gambling prevention efforts. The office was subsequently renamed to better reflect its broader wellness and prevention focus.

Ms. Gómez emphasized that the office prioritizes:

- Upstream prevention strategies
- Early identification and intervention
- Systems-based prevention approaches
- Whole-person wellness promotion across all stages of life

Ms. Gómez clarified that the Office of Integrated Wellness and Prevention does not provide direct crisis counseling services and directed individuals to contact 988 for immediate crisis support.

In addition, Ms. Gómez emphasized the importance of:

- Peer-led and peer-informed approaches
- Lived experience representation
- Community engagement and trust-building
- Recovery-oriented prevention models

Operational Framework

The Office of Integrated Wellness and Prevention organize its work around five operational pillars:

- Inform
- Train
- Educate
- Connect
- Sustain

And also provides:

- Technical assistance
- Statewide trainings
- Resource dissemination
- Community implementation support
- Data-informed prevention planning

Data and Prevention Findings

Ms. Gómez reviewed statewide suicide prevention data and demographic trends, including:

- Maryland's suicide rate remains below the national average overall.
- Northwest Maryland and the Eastern Shore continue to experience higher suicide rates compared to other regions.
- Suicide rates remain historically higher among males.
- Demographic trends indicate increasing rates among additional racial and ethnic groups, highlighting the need for culturally responsive interventions.

Website: www.hclhic.org **Facebook:** www.facebook.com/hclhic **Instagram:** @hclhic



- Risk generally increases with age while also showing concern increases among younger adults.

Ms. Gómez also discussed data limitations, including:

- Delays in finalized cause-of-death determinations
- Small-number reporting limitations
- The importance of pairing quantitative data with lived experience and community insight

Communication and Prevention Best Practices

The Office of Integrated Wellness and Prevention emphasized:

- Person-centered and recovery-focused language
- Avoiding stigmatizing terminology
- Creating emotionally safe spaces during discussions of suicide prevention
- Using trauma-informed and culturally responsive approaches

The office continues supporting prevention, intervention, and postvention efforts through:

- Policy alignment
- Local implementation support
- Technical assistance
- Community partnerships

Statewide Prevention Campaigns and Resources

Ms. Gómez also reviewed statewide prevention campaigns, grants, and community engagement efforts, including:

- Together We Care
- Caring Out Loud
- Caring for Champions
- Caring for Communities
- Caring for the Village
- Taking Care of Us

These campaigns focus on supporting:

- LGBTQ+ youth



- Athletes
- Native and Indigenous communities
- Older adults
- Black and Brown communities

Ms. Gómez additionally shared that:

- The Connecting to Hope toolkit is currently being updated.
- A comprehensive adult suicide prevention toolkit exceeding 500 pages is under development and expected to be released within the year.
- One veteran/service-member resource link is currently unavailable while an IT ticket is being addressed.

2.5 2026 Good Vibes and Voices Community Event Discussion

Ms. Jessica Fisher, Co-chair, discussed the upcoming Good Vibes and Voices Community Event organized by the Howard County Crisis Intercept Mapping (CIM) Team.

The event will:

- Be held on June 4th in Elkridge
- Serve veterans, service members, and families
- Include community resource tables, food trucks, activities, and entertainment
- Focus on reducing stigma and improving access to mental health, workforce, housing, and community resources.

2.6 2026 Next Steps and Action Items

Next Meeting Date/Time:

-  July 16, 2026
 2:00 – 3:00 PM
 Via Zoom

Action Items/Resource Shared:

- **Safe Routes to School Community Forum**
 - Join the Howard County Local Health Improvement Coalition (HCLHIC) and Safe Routes to School (SRTS) partners for a community forum focused on improving safe walking, biking, and overall wellness around Mayfield Woods Middle School.



-  June 3, 2026
 -  5:30 PM – 6:30 PM
 -  Mayfield Woods Middle School
7950 Red Barn Way, Elkridge, MD 21075
 -  Click [here](#) to register
- **Information Regarding Suicide and Suicide Prevention Among Older Americans**
 - <https://aspe.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2deada6e1221e6a58bdae93f308a6fb3/napa-january-2023-mckeeon.pdf>
 - **KFF Health News - Low Wages, Empty Plates, Heavy Toll: Rethinking Suicide Prevention**
 - <https://kffhealthnews.org/mental-health/suicide-prevention-economic-assistance-mental-health-eleven-minutes/>