

Howard County Local Health Improvement Coalition

Healthy Minds and Suicide Prevention Coalition (HMSPC)

March 12, 2026

2:00 – 3:00 PM

Howard County Health Department

Virtual via Zoom

Minutes

Co-Chair Present:

Barbara Allen, Executive Director, James' Place Inc.

Members Present:

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

Ellen Blackwell, Howard County Local Health Improvement Coalition (HCLHIC) Community Member

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

Tiffany Elderling, Horizon Foundation

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

Karen Hull, Howard County Office of Aging and Independence

Stacey Ibekah, Loving Support Center Incorporated

Sheri Koller, Brave Journeys LLC

Sonya Lloyd, BBH Grassroots Grant Monitor

Chris Miller, John Hopkins Howard County Medical Center (JHHCMC)

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

Sue Maskaleris, American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP)

Rev. Hyiwot Teshome, Pastor, Saint John United Church

Bill White, American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP)








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
Welcome	<p>Stephanie Foster, Community Engagement Coordinator for the Howard County Local Health Improvement Coalition (HCLHIC), called the meeting to order at 2:01 PM.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attendees were invited to introduce themselves. Due to time constraints and the two presentations scheduled on the agenda, there was no icebreaker or recap from the January 8, 2026, HMSC meeting. 	<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>
Announcements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FREE Mental Health First Aid Training (Virtual) <ul style="list-style-type: none">  March 21 8:30 AM – 1:30 PM Hosted by The Healthy Church & sponsored by HCHD. Register here! Voices of Faith, Journeys of Healing <ul style="list-style-type: none">  March 25 6:30 – 8:30 PM  Owen Brown Interfaith Center Hosted by Horizon Foundation & NAMI Howard County.  Click here to register. For questions, email: dgiuliano@namihowardcountymd.org 5th Annual Light the Night 5K <ul style="list-style-type: none">  March 27 6:00 – 8:15 PM  Oakland Mills High School Hosted by Howard County Health Department.  Register here 	



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • April Full LHIC Meeting: Click here to register for the April 16, 2026 Full LHIC Meeting. 9:00 – 11:00 AM • You're Invited: An Evening on Adolescent Mental Health <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 📅 Monday, April 20, 2026 • 🕒 6:00 – 8:00 PM • 📍 Long Reach High School, 6101 Old Dobbin Ln, Columbia, MD 21045 • 🔗 Register here • Spring Classes Now Open with NAMI Howard County! <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 🧠 NAMI Basics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 📅 Tuesdays May 19 – June 23 • 🕒 6:30 – 9:00 PM • ❤️ Family-to-Family <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 📅 Wednesdays April 8 – June 3 • 🕒 7:00 – 9:30 PM • 🤝 Peer-to-Peer <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 📅 Thursdays April 23 – June 11 • 🕒 6:30 – 8:30 PM • 📍 Held at the NAMI Howard County Office • (9650 Santiago Rd, Suite 1, Columbia, MD) • 🖥️ Also available via Zoom • 🔗 Register here 	
<p>Mental Health Legislation Presentation -</p>	<p>Ms. Tiffany Erbelding (Horizon Foundation) provided a presentation on legislative priorities, budget concerns, and</p>	<p>For more information about The Horizon Foundation, visit https://www.thehorizonfoundation.org/</p>

<p>Tiffany Erbelding, The Horizon Foundation</p>	<p>coordinated advocacy strategies for behavioral health in Maryland. Ms. Erbelding shared her background with the Horizon Foundation and Ignited Strategies and highlighted the Foundation’s focus on advancing sustainable, system-level policy impact. She emphasized advocacy as the process of raising collective voices to influence local and state policy and provided concrete examples of successful community-driven advocacy efforts.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ms. Erbelding cited a recent fatal crash and a coordinated community WhatsApp response as an example of how advocacy can lead to rapid local change. • She also highlighted the successful protection of school-based mental health positions through action alerts and petitions during the 2025 budget process. <p>The group reviewed Maryland’s behavioral health landscape, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workforce shortages • Youth suicidal ideation trends • Increased 9-8-8 call volume • Rising overdose rates <p>Ms. Erbelding presented the Mental Health Association’s Behavioral Health Coalition priorities, which include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A 3% behavioral health funding increase • Protection of consortium funding • Advancement of Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics (CCBHCs) • Attendees were encouraged to join the statewide Behavioral Health Coalition and monitor upcoming Senate Budget & Taxation hearings. 	
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- Horizon Foundation and partners emphasized the importance of preserving funding and securing a 3% increase to prevent service disruptions and workforce challenges.

Ms. Erbeling also discussed proposed budget concerns:

- A near 4% reduction to the Behavioral Health Administration (BHA) budget
- Potential \$20 million reduction in consortium funding through BRFA language
- Coalition members are actively opposing these proposed reductions due to their potential impact on services and workforce capacity.

Additional legislative priorities discussed included:

- The importance of Maryland participating in the federal CCBHC program and avoiding language that would make participation discretionary
- A collaborative care bill aimed at eliminating out-of-pocket costs for follow-up behavioral health visits to improve patient engagement

Ms. Erbeling concluded by outlining opportunities for stakeholder engagement in advocacy efforts:

- Submitting written testimony
- Attending rallies and advocacy events
- Participating in action alerts and coalition activities

	<p>She highlighted the Keep the Door Open Rally as a key annual advocacy event with strong participation and impact.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The rally brought together several hundred participants to elevate behavioral health funding priorities. • Attendees were directed to Horizon Foundation action alerts and resources, including links to register as advocacy contacts for the General Assembly. • Contact information for Marcus Alston and Dan Martin was shared for additional support. • Ms. Erbelding also offered to share presentation slides following the meeting. 	
<p>American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP) Presentation – Sue Maskaleris and Bill White</p>	<p>Ms. Sue Maskaleris (American Foundation for Suicide Prevention - AFSP) provided an overview of AFSP’s advocacy priorities, focusing on mental health parity, coverage, and access. She shared data on unmet behavioral health needs and insurance coverage gaps and outlined key legislation currently under consideration.</p> <p>Bills discussed included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parity Codification (HB280/SB205) • Transparency Reporting (HB1156/SB774) • Medicaid/Insurer Coverage for Mobile Crisis and Stabilization Services (SB738) • Collaborative Care Bill (focused on improving access to follow-up behavioral health services) <p>AFSP is advocating for four priority bills centered on parity, crisis service coverage, and collaborative care.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Parity Codification Bill (HB280/SB205) has passed both 	<p>For more information about the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP) Maryland Chapter https://afsp.org/chapter/maryland</p> <p>Click here for information about The Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act (MHPAEA)</p> <p>Click here to sign up to be a volunteer for the American Foundation of Suicide Prevention (AFSP)</p> <p>Legal Resource Center Public Health Tracker (2026 Legislative Session) - https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1a8GEqUtCMdXkwqRMZAdH-xeMIA0SW9MedLkWWFN8vOs/edit?gid=362217528#gid=362217528</p>



chambers and is likely to become law.

- The Transparency/Parity Bill (HB1156/SB774) was withdrawn by the House sponsor, and its status remains uncertain.
- Medicaid/Insurer Coverage for Mobile Crisis and Stabilization Services Senate Bill 738 (SB738) would require Medicaid and certain insurers to cover mobile crisis and stabilization services and is currently awaiting committee action following a March 4 hearing.
- The Collaborative Care Bill passed the Senate; however, amendments in the House removed the prohibition on patient cost-sharing, making the outcome uncertain.

Mr. Bill White (AFSP) provided additional context by discussing the federal landscape, including a 2024 federal rule requiring insurers to report on non-quantitative treatment limits (NQTLs). He noted that this rule may be challenged or modified, underscoring the importance of strengthening state-level protections.

- Both Ms. Maskaleris and Mr. White emphasized the need for incremental progress and continued advocacy.
- They also addressed questions regarding legislative hearings, BRFA implications, and bill outcomes.

Coalition members expressed appreciation to Ms. Tiffany Erbeling, Ms. Sue Maskaleris, and Mr. Bill White for their leadership and for providing valuable advocacy updates during the meeting.

	<p>Ms. Natalie Hall, Program Manager, Nicotine and Cannabis Education, provided a legislative update regarding a bill that would prohibit denying firearm rights solely based on an individual’s status as a registered medical cannabis patient. She clarified that the bill does not apply to recreational cannabis use and encouraged participants to review the Legal Resource Center tracker for additional details.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A bill is currently under consideration to prevent denial of firearm rights solely for registered medical cannabis patients. <p>Ms. Ellen Blackwell, LHIC Community Member, raised concerns regarding the increased risk of suicide following a dementia diagnosis and asked whether this issue is being addressed in the county’s dementia plan.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stephanie will follow up with co-chairs to explore incorporating this issue into future planning efforts. 	
<p>Next Steps & Wrap-up</p>	<p>Ms. Foster thanked the presenters for their time and sharing of valuable information.</p> <p>In addition, she announced that the next HMSPC Workgroup meeting will be held on May 14, 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 3:02 pm.</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

Howard County LHIC

Local Health Improvement Coalition



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