

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

Date: July 16, 2026

Time: 2:00 – 3:00 PM

Location: Virtual via Zoom

Coalition Co-Chair Present: Jessica Fisher

LHIC Staff Present: Christine Ballou, Stephanie Foster, Maribet Rivera-Brute

1. Attendees

Members Present: Kaitlyn Miranda Carrera, Trudy Conley, Enjoli Gómez, Pastor Teshome Hyiwot, Natalie Hall, Karen Hull, Stacey Ibekweh, Sonya Lloyd, Caroline Metersky, Christina Miller, Marlene Orantes, Reena Rambharat, Buthaina Shukri, Laura Sommers, Kirsten Wheeler, Laura Willemin, Eileen Zeller

2. Agenda Items

2.1 Welcome and Icebreaker

Ms. Stephanie Foster called the meeting to order at 2:01 p.m. and welcomed attendees. Participants introduced themselves by sharing their names, organizations, and roles across county health, nonprofit, crisis response, and behavioral health organizations represented in 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.



Jessica Fisher, Co-chair, facilitated a Mental Health Awareness Month icebreaker activity centered around a virtual charades icebreaker focused on favorite summer activities, provided instructions for participation and safety, and invited volunteers to act while others guessed. Participants were asked: “What does a good day look like for you personally and for your community during the summer season?”

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

- Spending time at the beach
- Swimming
- Driving with the hair blowing in the wind
- Walking outside and being around nature

2.2 Announcements

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

2.3 Turnaround, Inc. Presentation

Caroline Metersky, Human Trafficking Community Educator for Howard County with TurnAround, Inc., introduced the organization and its mission to support survivors of intimate partner violence, sexual violence, and human trafficking. She began by providing a trigger warning for the sensitive topics discussed during the presentation.

Ms. Metersky reviewed TurnAround's survivor services and engaged participants in an interactive true-or-false activity addressing common misconceptions about sexual assault and children's exposure to violence. She also shared shelter data comparing Fiscal Year 2020 with the most recent fiscal year, including the number of shelter nights provided, average length of stay, and the number of children served.

The presentation highlighted human trafficking in Maryland, including regional risk factors such as major interstate highways and airports, while emphasizing that trafficking also occurs locally without transportation. Ms. Metersky explained the Regional Navigator Program established through 2019 legislation and described TurnAround's role as the Regional Navigator for Baltimore and Howard Counties.



She discussed how navigators support survivors throughout law enforcement investigations and court proceedings.

Ms. Metersky outlined referral options to the Regional Navigator Program, including email, phone, the agency's main office line, and the 24/7 helpline. She recommended that referral partners identify themselves and explain the purpose of their call when contacting the helpline.

She also introduced the Community Advocacy and Protection Services (CAPS) program, which provides community-based case management, crisis intervention, culturally responsive resource coordination, prevention services, and collaboration with multidisciplinary community partners.

Ms. Metersky presented Luna, a hybrid, survivor-led peer support group launched last year. She explained that the private group requires an application, intake process, and agreement to community standards. Unlike clinician-led therapy groups, Luna focuses on peer support and helping survivors move forward. Referrals should contact Liz Himmel to begin the intake process and receive an invitation to the group's Slack platform.

The presentation also highlighted TurnAround's Community Engagement and Training (CET) program, which offers free educational presentations and outreach to schools, businesses, healthcare providers, faith communities, libraries, and other organizations. Training topics include consent, intimate partner violence, sexual harassment, bystander intervention, healthy relationships, and age-appropriate prevention programming for elementary, middle, and high school students. Ms. Metersky also discussed multi-session workshops and extended healthy relationship education programs.

Lastly, Ms. Metersky shared information about TurnAround's office locations, the annual survivor Purple Poetry Book (with a July 31 submission deadline), and the agency's anonymous presentation evaluation form. She noted that proceeds from the poetry book support survivor services. She concluded by emphasizing that the 24/7 helpline serves as the primary point of contact for shelter referrals and resource connections, while office locations also accept walk-ins during designated hours. She confirmed that services are accessible to both Spanish-speaking and Deaf community members through bilingual and American Sign Language (ASL)-proficient staff.

2.4 2026 HMSPC Workgroup Future Discussions Topics Questionnaire

Due to time constraints, Ms. Jessica Fisher, Co-chair, asked members to complete a circulated questionnaire to guide future presentations and coalition work, offered to email the form to those needing it, and solicited topic suggestions including immigrant resources and caregiving mental-health impacts. Members were reminded to contribute additional ideas via chat or by voice.

Ms. Fisher also announced plans for the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP) Howard County Out of the Darkness Walk, an annual community event that brings together individuals, families, businesses, and organizations to raise awareness about mental health, support those affected by suicide, and promote hope through connection, education, and compassion.

The event will take place on Saturday, September 26, 2026, at 9:00 a.m. in Columbia, Maryland. Ms. Fisher also shared information for organizations interested in participating as community vendors and encouraged members to register to walk in the event.

2.5 Next Steps & Wrap-Up

Next HMSPC Meeting Date/Time:

-  September 10, 2026
-  2:00 – 3:00 PM
-  Via Zoom

Action Items/Resource Shared:

- **HMSPC Workgroup - Future Discussion Topics Questionnaire**
 - <https://forms.gle/XumbuMjmUyeRRte79>
- **Free Virtual Forum: Adult ADHD Across the Lifespan**
 - Join the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Howard County for a virtual education forum featuring Dr. Rick Silver, who will



discuss Adult Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)
Across the Lifespan.

-  **Date and Time:** Tuesday, July 21, 2026, 7:00 PM
-  **Virtual via Zoom**
-  Click [here](#) to register

- **FREE Adult Mental Health First Aid Training (AFMH)**

- Africans for Mental Health, in partnership with Sheppard Pratt, is offering Adult Mental Health First Aid training for family caregivers and community members.

-  **Dates and Times:**
 - **Cohort #5:** Tuesday, July 28 and Wednesday, July 29, 2026 from 12:00 PM– 3:00 PM
 - **Cohort #6:** Tuesday, August 25 and Wednesday, August 26, 2026 from 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM
 - **Cohort #7:** Wednesday, September 23 and Thursday, September 24, 2026 from 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM
 -  Click [here](#) to learn more and register.

- **FREE QPR Gatekeeper Suicide Prevention Training (AFMH)**

- Learn how to recognize the warning signs of suicide and help save a life by participating in this FREE virtual QPR (Question, Persuade, Refer) Gatekeeper Suicide Prevention Training, presented by Africans for Mental Health (AFMH) in partnership with Sheppard Pratt.

-  **Dates and Times:**
 - **Cohort #5:** Tuesday, July 21, 2026 | 10:00–11:30 a.m. EST
 - **Cohort #6:** Thursday, August 13, 2026 | 1:00–2:30 p.m. EST
 - **Cohort #7:** Tuesday, September 15, 2026 | 10:00–11:30 a.m. EST
 -  Register [here](#)

- **L.E.T.S. Save Lives: An Introduction to Suicide Prevention for Black and African American Communities**



- The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP) is hosting L.E.T.S. (Listening, Empathy, Trust, Support) Save Lives, a presentation designed to reduce stigma, encourage conversations about mental health, and raise awareness of suicide prevention in Black and African American communities.
 -  **Date and Time:**
 - Thursday, July 23, 2026 | 4:00 – 5:30pm EST
 -  Register [here](#)
- **How does community shape our health, well-being, and sense of belonging?**
 - Join Pastor Hyiwot Teshome of St. John United Church, located at the Wilde Lake Interfaith Center, for a special screening of the documentary Join or Die, an inspiring film that explores why joining communities matters and how meaningful connections can strengthen our lives.
 - Participants were encouraged to attend the documentary screening to learn how meaningful community connections can strengthen health, well-being, and social connectedness.
 -  **Dates and Time:**
 - Thursday, July 23, 2026, 6:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.
 - Wilde Lake Interfaith Center, 10431 Twin Rivers Road, Columbia, MD
- **Talk Saves Lives: An Introduction to Suicide Prevention for Latinx and Hispanic Communities (ASFP)**
 - Join the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP) for Talk Saves Lives, a presentation that raises awareness about suicide prevention, shares the latest research, and provides practical strategies to help save lives in Latinx and Hispanic communities.
 -  **Date and Time:**
 - **English Presentation:** Thursday, July 30, 2026 | 2:00 – 3:30 p.m. EST
 -  Register [here](#)



- **Join the 2026 Howard County Out of the Darkness Walk!**
 - The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP) is hosting its annual Howard County Out of the Darkness Walk—a community event that brings together individuals, families, businesses, and organizations to raise awareness about mental health, support those affected by suicide, and promote hope through connection, education, and compassion.
 - **Date and Time:**
 - Saturday, September 26, 2026 at 9am
 - Azlon Plaza, Merriweather District in Columbia, MD
 - **Become a Community Vendor!**
 - If you would like to showcase your business or organization while connecting with families, advocates, and community members, vendor applications are now being accepted.
 - **Vendor applications are currently being accepted:**
 - Register here:
<https://afsp.wufoo.com/forms/q1so9yov1ba9tow/>
 - **Participants were encouraged to register for the walk:**
 - Whether you're walking in memory of a loved one, supporting someone affected by suicide, or helping raise awareness for mental health, your participation makes a difference.
 - **Register to walk here:**
<https://afspwalks.donordrive.com/HoCo>

The meeting adjourned at approximately 3:01 p.m.