Howard County LHIC
Local Health Improvement Coalition
HOWARD COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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

Date: September 10, 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: Erin Anderson, Ellen Blackwell, Kaitlyn Miranda Carrera, Trudy Conley, Sapna David, Pastor Teshome Hyiwot, Natalie Hall, Stacey Ibekweh, Sonya Lloyd, Laura Sommers, Lisa Terry, Laura Willemin.

2. Agenda Items

2.1 Welcome and Icebreaker

Jessica Fisher welcomed attendees and invited participants to introduce themselves and their organizations. Members represented the Howard County Health Department, Howard County Local Health Improvement Coalition, Grassroots Crisis Intervention Center, Howard County Police Department Crisis Intervention Team, faith community, veteran services, developmental disability services, and other community partners.

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.

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2.2 Suicide Prevention and National Recovery Month Announcements, Observances and Reflections

The workgroup observed a moment of reflection in recognition of the 25th anniversary of September 11 and a moment of silence in remembrance of individuals lost to suicide and in support of those who may currently be struggling.

September is recognized as Suicide Prevention Awareness Month and National Recovery Month. Members also showed support for 988 awareness by wearing yellow and/or using 988-themed virtual backgrounds. A group photo was taken for potential use on HCLHIC and Health Department communications.

Jessica encouraged members to participate in Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA) 988 awareness campaign by displaying 988 window clings and sharing photographs of their participation with HCLHIC. Members discussed suicide prevention activities occurring throughout the community, including awareness efforts at Grassroots, local faith communities, and the upcoming Howard County Out of the Darkness Walk.

2.3 HMSPC Workgroup Future Discussion Topics Questionnaire

Jessica reviewed preliminary results from the HMSPC member survey. Five members had completed the survey at the time of the meeting.

Workplace Mental Health and Wellness emerged as the strongest priority, selected by all respondents. Areas of concern included workplace stress, burnout, anxiety, caregiver and healthcare worker fatigue, and stress affecting federal employees. **Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Among Older Adults** was the second-highest priority, selected by 80% of respondents.

Additional topics receiving interest included immigrant mental health and resources; perinatal and postpartum mental health; burnout and compassion fatigue among providers and caregivers; building resilience in children and families; and parenting and child emotional wellness. Other areas discussed included construction worker suicide prevention, postvention, suicide prevention among veterans, adult substance-use prevention, and youth cannabis-use prevention.

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Key themes identified through the survey included stress, burnout, social isolation and loneliness; youth and family well-being; practical skills and training; connections to community resources; social connection and accessibility; and barriers residents experience when seeking assistance. Members expressed interest in presentations from community organizations, crisis-intervention training, cultural competency, localized resource mapping, and strategies for taking a more proactive approach to behavioral health.

Based on the preliminary survey results, future meetings and programming will consider **workplace mental health and wellness**, followed by **mental health and suicide prevention among older adults**, while incorporating other identified priority areas through presentations, training opportunities, and resource sharing.

Members agreed to revise the survey theme **"social isolation"** to **"social isolation and loneliness."**

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 AM 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.

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- ## 2.4.1 Community Resources, Postvention and Service Gaps
  - Laura Willimon shared that Grassroots' Mobile Crisis Team provides support following a suicide loss and that Grassroots offers a Survivors of Suicide support group on the first and third Thursday evenings of each month.
  - Discussion identified a potential community resource gap for individuals who have attempted suicide and for family members supporting someone following a suicide attempt. Members also discussed challenges locating intensive or residential mental-health treatment, particularly for individuals who are uninsured or underinsured. Jessica suggested the Coalition consider researching available resources and determining whether additional resource development or advocacy may be needed.

- ## 2.4.2 Behavioral Health Resource Database and CAREAPP
  - Members discussed Maryland's developing behavioral-health resource platform and the potential value of having clear, searchable information about licensed behavioral-health providers, psychiatric bed availability, and electronic referrals. The discussion also highlighted opportunities to encourage Howard County providers to maintain information in CAREAPP so residents can connect directly with available services.

  - Maryland Behavioral Health Connect/Bamboo Health was identified during the discussion as the platform being referenced. The group discussed the possibility of inviting a representative to a future HMSPC meeting to provide additional information about the system.

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2.5 Announcements

Christine shared information about Walktober, which begins October 1 and runs throughout October. Activities include partner-led events, Walk Maryland Day on October 7, and the Walktober Step Challenge. For more information, please visit the 2026 Howard County Walktober website for a list of events.

If you plan to host a walk or a physical activity event and would like to add it to the Howard County Walktober Calendar Events page, please submit the Walktober 2026 Interest Form.

2.5 Next Steps & Wrap-Up

Next HMSPC Meeting Date/Time:

- 🗓️ November 12, 2026
  🕑 2:00 – 3:00 PM
  💻 Via Zoom

Action Items/Resource Shared:

- **Maryland Behavioral Health Connect**
  - **Bamboohealth** - https://bamboohealth.com/md/

- **Nation Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Howard County Mental Health Education Classes**
  - **NAMI Basics**
  - **Family-to-Family Class**
  - **Peer-to-Peer Class**
  - **Educational Forums**
  - **FaithNet**

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  - **Howard County Walktober 2026** is a month-long celebration of walking and active living throughout October. The **Howard County Local Health Improvement Coalition's (HCLHIC) Healthy Lifestyle**

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Workgroup invites your support by hosting at least one walking or movement event during Walktober 2026.

- **How to get involved:**
  - **Complete** the HoCo Walktober 2026 Interest Form.
  - **Add** the Howard County Walktober 2026 logo to your event's promotional materials.
  - **Complete the 2026 Howard County Walktober Flyer Request Form to receive** Walktober flyers for your communities, offices, and networks. *Let's walk, roll, ride, MOVE! Get active in Howard County during Walktober 2026: https://www.howardcountymd.gov/walktober.*
  - **Email** your promotional materials to Christine Ballou at cballou@howardcountymd.gov**.**

- **Howard County Health Department (HCHD) Request for Proposals (RFP) for Youth Mental Health Case Management Services.**
  - **August 2026**
  - **Eligibility:** Mental Health Case Management Providers
  - **Purpose:** The intent of the Mental Health Case Management Care Coordination for Children and Youth services is to improve the overall quality of life of eligible youth with serious emotional disturbance or co-occurring disorders and to promote their long-term recovery. The purpose of mental health case management care coordination is to assist participants in gaining access to needed medical, mental health, social, educational, and other services.
  - **Number of Awards:** Up to 2
  - **Application Deadline:** September 18, 2026, by 12:00 Noon
    - Submit Proposals Electronically via email to Howard County Health Department, LBHA designee, **Attn: Jennifer Clarke, Child and Adolescent Coordinator.**
    - **Email: YouthCoordinatorBH@howardcountymd.**

- **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:**

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- **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 #7:** Tuesday, September 15, 2026 | 10:00–11:30 a.m. EST
      - 📌 Register here

- **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
  - **Participants were encouraged to register for the walk:**

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  - 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

- **988 and Beyond: Maryland's Crisis Response System**
  - Learn what happens when someone contacts Maryland's 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, when to call 988, and how the system connects Marylanders with behavioral health crisis services and resources.
    - 🗓️ **Date and Time:**
      - September 30, 2026 | 10:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m.
      - Virtual
      - 🔗 Register here

- **CAMS-CARE Training – Collaborative Assessment and Management of Suicidality**
  - Behavioral health clinicians are invited to participate in this upcoming training hosted by the Howard County Health Department. CAMS is an evidence-based, suicide-focused treatment framework designed to help clinicians assess and treat individuals experiencing suicidal thoughts and behaviors.
    - 🗓️ **Date and Time:**
      - 🗓️ Tuesday, October 6, 2026 | 8:00 a.m.–4:30 p.m.
        📍 Howard County Health Department, 8930 Stanford Blvd., Columbia, MD 21045
    - Participants who complete the full training will receive **10 FREE CEUs**.
    - Register at https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/CamsTraining
    - For additional information, email **SuicidePreventionBH@howardcountymd.gov**.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 3:00 pm.