



**Howard County Local Health Improvement Coalition (HCLHIC)**

**Growing Healthy Families Workgroup Meeting**

February 11, 2026

2:00 – 3:00 pm

Virtual via Zoom

**Minutes**

**Co-Chairs Present:**

Sam Cribbs, Howard County Health Department

Erica Taylor, Howard County Office of Children and Families

**Members Present:**

Erin Anderson, Howard County Health Department

Marsha Dawson, Howard County Office of the Local Children’s Board

Dawn Duignan, Community Member

Lidymar Gonzalez, Howard County Health Department

Nayanie Henríquez, Howard County Health Department

Allysin Houle, Howard County Health Department

Stacey Ibekweh – Loving Support Center, Inc. (LSC)

Johnette Josiah, United Healthcare Community Plan

Tricia L. Mangold, Howard County Health Department

Nancy Moreno, Howard County Health Department

Marcus Ponder, Sankofa Yoga & Wellness Center

Dr. Tamisha Ponder, Sankofa Yoga & Wellness Center

Reena Rambharat, Howard County Health Department

Tamala Reid, Howard County Health Department

Lauren Soummers, Howard County Health Department

Shay Stancil, United Healthcare Community Plan

Patrice Tucker, United Healthcare Community Plan

Amber Wilson, Howard County Library System, Savage Branch

**Staff Present:**

Stephanie Foster, Howard County Local Health Improvement Coalition (HCLHC)

Maribet Rivera-Brute, Howard County Local Health Improvement Coalition (HCLHC)

Topic/Agenda	Discussion	Action/Follow-up
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<p><b>Welcome, Introductions, and Previous Meeting Recap</b></p>	<p>Ms. Stephanie Foster, Howard County Local Health Improvement Coalition (HCLHIC), called the meeting to order at 2:01 PM, welcomed members, invited attendees to introduce themselves, and provided a recap of the November 12, 2025 meeting.</p>	<p>LHIC's website: <a href="https://www.hclhic.org/">https://www.hclhic.org/</a></p> <p>Email LHIC with any other announcements or questions: <a href="mailto:lhic@howardcountymd.gov">lhic@howardcountymd.gov</a></p> <p>Access previous meeting minutes: <a href="https://www.hclhic.org/home/meeting/2024?catelid=366">https://www.hclhic.org/home/meeting/2024?catelid=366</a></p>
<p><b>Announcements</b></p>	<p><b>Belly Buddies® – Howard County, MD</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A FREE pregnancy support circle for expecting parents. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 📅 Starts February 18</li> <li>○ 🕒 5:30–7:30 pm</li> <li>○ 📍 Hybrid format: Virtual Mondays   In-person Wednesdays</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Eligibility: Participants who are 28 weeks pregnant or less</li> <li>• This program is made possible by Trinity Maternal Wellness Inc., in partnership with Healthy Start, and offers a welcoming space for pregnant individuals seeking education, support, and meaningful connection. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ ✨ Yoga • Childbirth Education • Nutrition</li> <li>○ 🍽️ Dinner &amp; childcare provided on Wednesdays 🧒👶</li> <li>○ 🚗 Transportation available</li> <li>○ 📱 <b>Register here:</b> <a href="https://form.jotform.com/260144239056150">https://form.jotform.com/260144239056150</a></li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>Save the Date – 2026 HCHD Black Maternal Health Week</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The <b>Howard County Health Department</b> invites community-based organizations to participate in <b>Black Maternal Health Week 2026</b>, themed <i><b>Rooted in Justice &amp; Joy.</b></i></li> <li>• 📅 <b>April 18, 2026   11:00 am–2:30 pm</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>🕒 Vendor setup begins at <b>9:30 am</b></li> <li>📍 <b>Harriet Tubman Cultural Center</b> 8045 Harriet Tubman Lane, Columbia, MD 21044</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ We welcome organizations interested in sharing resources 📁, connecting with the community 🤝, expanding their reach 📣, and celebrating and supporting Black families across Howard County 👨👩👧👦.</li> <li>• 🖱️ <b>Interested in being a vendor?</b> Please click on the link to submit the <a href="#">Vendor Interest Form</a>. A staff member will follow up with additional details. <i>Vendor space is limited, and submission does not guarantee placement.</i></li> </ul> <p><b>📅 Full LHIC Coalition Meeting</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 📅 Thursday, April 16, 2026</li> <li>• 🕒 9:00 am</li> <li>• 📍 In-person and virtual options available</li> <li>• 🔗 Register <a href="#">here</a></li> </ul>	
<p><b>Sankofa (Yoga and Wellness) Presentation – Marcus Ponder, Co-Founder</b> <b>Sankofa Yoga &amp; Wellness Center</b></p>	<p>Mr. Marcus Ponder, Co-Founder of Sankofa Yoga &amp; Wellness Center, gave a presentation on the organization’s maternal wellness program.</p> <p>The Sankofa Maternal Wellness Initiative is a coordinated program designed to strengthen the mental, emotional, and physical well-being of pregnant and postpartum individuals in Howard County. Anchored at Sankofa Yoga &amp; Wellness Center in Laurel, Maryland, the initiative builds on a foundation of community-based maternal wellness programming that has served local families since 2019.</p> <p>Dr. Tamisha Ponder, Co-Founder and Owner of Sankofa Yoga &amp; Wellness Center, described the organization’s mission to support pregnant and postpartum individuals and their partners in Howard County. She detailed the center’s staff composition and facility resources, including yoga teachers, doulas, licensed mental health professionals, and pelvic floor therapists, and explained the program’s practice- and place-based approach.</p> <p>Dr. Ponder outlined the program’s three pillars—prenatal/postpartum yoga, the therapist-led Mother Circle, and quarterly Family Room workshops—and described an eight-week sprint model with recurring cycles that address weekly mental health themes such as rest, stress, identity, and emotion regulation.</p>	<p>For more information about Sankofa Yoga &amp; Wellness Center in Laurel, MD, click <a href="#">here</a>.</p>

	<p>She also reviewed the weekly schedule and modality options: Saturday extended prenatal yoga plus Mother Circle (90 minutes), Sunday hybrid and Tuesday in-person community check-ins (75 minutes), and Thursday virtual prenatal yoga sessions.</p> <p>The Family Room quarterly workshops were described as hybrid sessions for mothers, partners, and families, focused on emotional, relational, and practical transitions. Workshop topics include postpartum identity, communication, and family dynamics. The program noted the addition of pelvic floor therapists and announced that the first workshop will be held on March 21, 2026.</p> <p>Lastly, Dr. Ponder demonstrated the maternal wellness program webpage and reviewed the registration form, which collects demographic information for residency verification. She explained that staff can verify identification at the studio and that non-residents may participate through a membership option. The web link and homepage placement were highlighted for ease of access.</p> <p>Ms. Stephanie Foster will share the presentation slides along with the meeting minutes.</p>	
<p><b>Women’s Health Focus Group (WHFG) Update – Erica Taylor, Co-chair, Home Visiting Program Manager Howard County Office of Children and Families Department of Community Resources and Services</b></p>	<p>Ms. Erica Taylor, Co-Chair, reported the conclusion of the three Women’s Health Focus Group sessions held from November through January. The sessions included a total of 17 participants and were scheduled at varied times and offered in multiple modalities to increase accessibility.</p> <p>Ms. Taylor noted that the sessions were intentionally designed to be small and intimate to create a comforting and calm environment, allowing participants to feel safe sharing their personal experiences when seeking maternal health care in Howard County. A draft summary report is currently under review and is anticipated to be shared at the next GHF Workgroup meeting in May.</p>	
<p><b>2026 Black Maternal Health Week Event Group Discussion - Samantha Cribbs, Co-chair, Maternal &amp; Infant</b></p>	<p>Ms. Samantha Cribbs, Co-Chair, provided an update on planning for Black Maternal Health Week. She announced that the event will be held at the Harriet Tubman Cultural Center on April 18, from 11:00 AM – 2:00 PM. She reviewed the planning committee cadence, noting that meetings will be held monthly</p>	

<p><b>Health Program Supervisor, Bureau of Family Health Services, Howard County Health Department</b></p>	<p>through the event, and invited additional volunteers to join the planning subcommittee. Upcoming meeting dates will be shared by Ms. Stephanie Foster.</p> <p>Ms. Cribbs reviewed components of past events, including panels, vendors, massage services, and lunch. She explained the decision to move away from a single panel format this year in favor of more free-flowing breakout sessions and increased vendor interaction. The group emphasized retaining successful elements such as vendor tabling and wellness activities while creating more intimate, focused breakout options.</p> <p>Workgroup members proposed three primary breakout themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Health information with an emphasis on vaccines</li> <li>• Family-friendly nutrition and cooking demonstrations</li> <li>• Moderated story-sharing, journaling, and self-care sessions</li> </ul> <p>The group discussed the value of each theme for attendees seeking practical guidance and meaningful community connection.</p> <p>In addition, members discussed breakout session durations and formats, agreeing on approximately 45 minutes for demonstration or practical sessions and one hour or longer for journaling and self-care sessions. The possibility of repeating popular demonstrations was discussed to allow attendees to participate in multiple topics.</p> <p>Ms. Foster, explained the reason for delaying the opening of registration to help boost overall turnout. She plans to finalize a draft agenda following a site visit and proposed sending a follow-up form to registrants to allow them to select breakout sessions in advance. This approach would help reduce no-shows and balance attendance across sessions</p>	
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<b>Wrap up and Next Steps</b>	Ms. Stephanie Foster concluded the meeting by thanking all participants for their engagement and dedication and announcing that the next meeting is scheduled for May 13, 2026, at 2:00 pm via Zoom.	Please visit the <a href="https://www.hclhic.org">LHIC Growing Healthy Families</a> webpage and send any updates needed to <a href="mailto:kfoster@howardcountymd.gov">kfoster@howardcountymd.gov</a>  Email <a href="mailto:lhic@howardcountymd.gov">lhic@howardcountymd.gov</a> with any questions.
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Respectfully submitted by:  
Ms. Stephanie Foster  
Community Engagement Coordinator  
Howard County Health Department, HCLHIC