



**GOVERNOR'S  
COMMISSION ON  
SUICIDE PREVENTION**  

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**MARYLAND**

Governor's Commission on Suicide Prevention Meeting  
January 19, 2022 1:00pm-3:00pm

**Commission Members on Zoom**

Robert Anderson	Department of Juvenile Services
Ed Bartlinski	Police, Local Corrections, or Fire and Rescue
Lynda Bonieskie	Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services
Dana Burl	Department of Veterans Affairs
Amanda Celentano	Department of Aging
Delegate Bonnie Cullison	Member of the Maryland House of Delegates (Represented by Brígida Krysztokif)
Johanna Dolan	Substance Use Recovery Community
Senator Adelaide Eckardt	Member of the Maryland Senate (Represented by Taylor Blades)
Monica Guerrero Vazquez	Hispanic/Latino Community
Kevin Johnson	Faith Community
Dorothy Kaplan	Suicide Prevention Group
Georgette Lavetsky	Deputy Secretary Public Health
Cynthia Macri	Asian American/Pacific Islander Community
Julie Matheny	Family Member of an Individual who has Died by Suicide
Henry Meiser	High School Representative
Lynne Muller	Maryland State Department of Education
Kirsten Robb-McGrath	Department of Disabilities
Susan Schwarten	Survivor of a Suicide Attempt
Andrea Walker	Maryland Health Officers
Kristin Washington	Representative of Active/Former Armed Forces Member
Holly Wilcox (Vice-Chair)	Academic Community
Eileen Zeller (Chair)	Mental Health Association of Maryland

**Maryland Department of Health (MDH) Staff**

Alex Walker	Behavioral Health Administration
Indu Radhakrishnan	Behavioral Health Administration
Barry Page	Behavioral Health Administration



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**MARYLAND**

Kathy Rebbert-Franklin

Behavioral Health Administration

**Welcome**

Holly Wilcox welcomed all attendees to the Commission meeting and wished the group a Happy New Year. The newest commissioners introduced themselves. Commissioners introduced themselves via alphabetical order.

**Approval of November 19, 2021 Minutes**

The November 19, 2021, meeting minutes were approved without revisions.

**Remarks from the New Chair**

Eileen Zeller gave her remarks as she transitioned into her new role. She outlined her background for new commissioners. Eileen retired in 2017 after career in public health and suicide prevention, spending the last decade at the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), where she was lead public health adviser in the Suicide Prevention Branch.

**Process Goals - 2022**

Eileen outlined her process goals for 2022 for the Commission, which include the following:

- Enhance the Commission's impact
- Optimize meeting process and productivity, and increase collaboration among and input from Commissioners

**Achieving the Commission's 2022 Priorities**

Eileen discussed the two tasks the Commission is committed to working on in 2022:

- Develop a 2-year comprehensive, coordinated, strategic plan for suicide prevention, intervention, and post-suicide services across the State. (Due December 1, 2022) As directed by Executive Order 01.01.2018.26.
- Develop an actionable postvention plan with a diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) lens.

Eileen asked the group to consider and discuss the following questions regarding the **strategic plan**: How can each commissioner contribute? How can you be the voice of your constituency? Is your organization or agency already doing suicide prevention work that needs to go in our plan? Are you in a group that has a suicide prevention plan that can inform our work?



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- Monica Guerrero Vazquez raised the importance of evaluating plan impact and incorporating lessons learned from previous plans. She also suggested creating ad hoc working groups to develop sections of the plan.
- Holly mentioned the importance of funding. The Commission is not able to apply for grants itself, but could help Executive Branch agencies and member organizations develop grant proposals. Eileen emphasized the need for the plan to be available for reference when funding opportunities become available and mentioned that SAMHSA's Garrett Lee Smith Youth Suicide Prevention and Intervention grant announcement will be posted soon and Maryland plans on applying.
- Dorothy Kaplan described the American Foundation of Suicide Prevention's Project 2025, a national initiative to reduce the rates of suicide by 20% by 2025 by targeting critical areas that would have the most impact: firearms, healthcare systems, emergency departments, and corrections systems.
- Dana Burl serves as co-lead of the Maryland Governor's Challenge to Prevent Suicide among Service Members, Veterans, and their Families (SMVF). Their plan and work should be coordinated with the Commission's. They recently received funding to develop a curriculum to train primary care providers in lethal means counseling, especially in reducing firearm access. Dorothy suggested expanding that initiative to include pediatricians.
- Georgette Lavetsky has committed to updating the data and statistics for the 2022 strategic plan but is limited due to technical issues resulting from the recent hacking of the MDH website. She explained the Maryland Violent Death Reporting System (MVDRS): a systematic way to collect information about the circumstances of different types of violent death from multiple sources and put that all in one place to get a complete picture of circumstances surrounding the death. The primary data sources for the MVDRS are death certificates, medical examiner reports, toxicology reports, and law enforcement reports. The two most common types of violent deaths are homicides and suicides, including fatal overdoses.
- Andrea Walker recommended that the Commission add a representative from the Maryland Association of Behavioral Health Authorities, since those local entities are responsible for planning and implementing all behavioral health policies and programs across the state. She also recommended reviewing local jurisdictions' behavioral health plans before developing our own.



# GOVERNOR'S COMMISSION ON SUICIDE PREVENTION

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## MARYLAND

- Dana suggested using the intercept model to visually map suicide prevention services and to identify resource gaps and opportunities for implementing best practices at each intercept point.
- Kirsten Robb-McGrath is now chair of the Behavioral Health Advisory Council's Prevention Sub-committee. She and Eileen will discuss coordination.

Dorothy Kaplan has agreed to chair or co-chair a task force to work on a **postvention plan**. She described the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention's Healing Conversations program, which connects loss survivors to their peers. Henry Meiser volunteered to co-chair the task force. Other commission members that are interested in this task force can email Alex Walker ([alexandria.walker@maryland.gov](mailto:alexandria.walker@maryland.gov)).

### **Suicide Fatality Review Committee (SB94 and HB48) Update**

Senator Eckardt's representative, Taylor Blades, informed the commission on the Suicide Fatality Review Board Bill, (SB94 and HB 48). Senate Bill 94 is a piece of legislation to establish a suicide fatality review committee, to identify and address factors contributing to suicide deaths, and then to facilitate system changes in the state to prevent suicide deaths. The hearing in the Senate Finance Committee was on 1/18/2022. The fiscal note (estimated cost) was 40% lower than last year. Commissioners can email Taylor Blades ( [Adelaide.Eckardt@senate.state.md.us](mailto:Adelaide.Eckardt@senate.state.md.us)) with questions.

### **BHA Update**

Commission staff, Indu Radhakrishnan, announced the Office of Suicide Prevention's (OSP) current updates. Indu is leaving her position at BHA. The office is in the process of re-staffing and appreciates your patience. The Commission thanked Indu for her expertise and numerous contributions.

OSP has launched several youth suicide prevention initiatives: Keeping Our Kids Safe Toolkit for professionals who work with youth and the MD Young Minds messaging platform. Youth and young adults can sign up for periodic text-messages with tips, psychoeducation and self-care resources by texting MD Young Minds to 898-211.

OSP is planning to host a suicide bereavement clinician training on March 15 and 16 from 9am to 12:30pm. Developed by the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention and American Association of Suicidology, this is a training for clinicians who work with people who have lost loved ones to suicide. The commission members voted to co-sponsor the event, which



provides 6.5 continuing education units for social workers and psychologists. Continuing Medical Education units (for physicians) are not currently available.

### **Open Discussion**

Cynthia Macri reminded the group that implementing culturally competent suicide interventions requires knowledge of cultural nuances among different communities and sub-groups within those communities. Different cultures have varying beliefs, attitudes, and language for suicide, bereavement, prevention, and treatment. Materials must be worded and translated with an understanding of those nuances.

Rob Anderson, who supervises clinicians, asked for materials on how to address suicide within different populations. He also asked for a copy of the peer-reviewed study showing that 63% of youth who completed suicide in Utah had contact with Juvenile Justice, with a direct correlation between number of referrals and increased suicide risk.

Monica will send Alex information about the annual Hopkins Latinx Mental Health Conference on May 19, 2022. CEUs and CMEs will be available.

### **Action Steps**

- Alex Walker will schedule an orientation meeting with all interested commissioners for the last week of February.
- Eileen will send the group her and Lanny Berman's testimony for the Suicide Fatality Review Committee legislation.
- If anyone has experience with psychiatric boarding, please contact Eileen (ezeller62@gmail.com).

**The meeting was adjourned at 2:55 pm.**

**The next Commission meeting will be held on March 16, 2022 from 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm.**