



Mental Health & Addictions  
Advisory Council



**Public Health**  
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**Harford County  
Health Department**



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**Mental Health and Addictions Advisory Council (MHAAC)  
Local Health Improvement Coalition (LHIC) Behavioral Health Workgroup  
Harford County OCCC Opioid Intervention Team (OIT)**

**Meeting Agenda | November 28, 2023 | 8:30-10:00 AM  
Harford County Department of Emergency Services (DES)**

**Opening: Jennifer Redding and Marcy Austin**

- Marcy Austin opened the meeting by thanking Bari Klein, the past chair, for all her hard work over the last three years, especially over COVID. Ms. Austin then welcomed Jennifer Redding as the new Chair of the MHAAC, LHIC, OIT.
- Jennifer Redding welcomed the group and thanked all the partners and stakeholders for attending the meeting.
  - Ms. Redding discussed the mission and the vision of the MHAAC, LHIC, OIT to set the stage for the upcoming year.
  - Mission: The MHAAC Mission is to expand, strengthen, and sustain an integrated and comprehensive prevention, intervention, and treatment services system to reduce the incidence and consequences of substance abuse and mental health problems in Harford County, Maryland.
  - Vision: The MHAAC envisions a comprehensive, culturally-sensitive and recovery-oriented substance abuse and mental health system in Harford County.
  - Values: Collaboration, Dignity & Respect, Community-Driven Integrity, Health Equity
  - There will be a new format to the meeting to better keep the mission, vision, and values on the forefront of our minds & work.

**Special Presentation: Harford County Public Schools (HCPS), Joseph Harbert, Bernard Hennigan, and Christina Alton, Wellness Survey**

- Presented health and mental health data that was collected on 25,000 Harford County Public Schools students.
- HCPS is focusing on collaborative interventions with the help of many stakeholders.
- Mr. Hennigan mentioned that there was an increasing need in mental health help in four- and five-year-old children.
- What they know: For the majority of students who are struggling with temporary mental health concerns, they are related to everyday life issues and not trauma or ACES (Adverse Childhood Experiences). Mental health problems are common, such as anxiety, depression, and ADHD.

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- The response that is needed requires a need to identify the signs of the conditions mentioned that occur early on in life so that children can thrive. There is also a need to reduce stigma (mental and physical health) and to get all community agencies and parents involved in the helping process.
- The approach that is taken now is updated, the old model focused on ACES, trauma focus, and deficit model, new model focuses on hope, has a more positive focus and strengths model.
- Mr. Hennigan discussed the impact of ACES and the need to get the child to a place where they are ready to learn.
- Mr. Harbert discussed HOPE: Healthy Outcomes from Positive Experiences. HCPS had 14 staff members trained and will continue to get more trained in HOPE. HOPE also works with PTAs (parent teacher associations) to help train parents. Research indicates that the absence of the PCEs (positive childhood experiences) may be more damaging to long term health outcomes over ACES.
- PCEs also protect adult mental health, the more PCEs reported the higher percent of adults reporting good mental health.
- The four building blocks of HOPE: relationships, environment, participation, and social and emotional learning
- Reintegration meetings help students who were out of school due to a mental health incident and it allows for the student and parent to know what to expect when they return so that it does cause added anxiety.
- “Handle with Care” Model is trauma focused and is a partnership with law enforcement and HCPS. If an incident happens a message is sent to administrators at the school to let them know the “handle the child with care.”
- Suicidal Ideation Report (SIR), an online reporting platform for suicide, was developed in 2019 and the supervisor of school counseling reviews each report and notifies parents. Many students who make self-harm statements have an outside counselor either in the community or school, the school counselors then will facilitate the resources when needed if not already in place.
- The Wellness Needs Assessment was created in the Summer of 2021 and was implemented districtwide in Fall of 2021. This was then revised in 2023 to incorporate physical wellness and HOPE related questions. The assessment is voluntary for students, differentiated for elementary students and middle and high.
- Ms. Alton discussed targeted trainings that HCPS has been doing such as Youth Mental Health First Aid, Mental Health First Aid, Question, Persuade, Refer (QPR), HOPE, and the Brain Architecture Game.
- School-Based Mental Health is HCPS partnering with outside Mental Health Providers to place one more outpatient provider in every building, they provide therapeutic services during the school day, removes barriers for students who would otherwise not access services, and provides additional support beyond out school-based staff. Parents must be involved in the process.
- Therapy dogs are also involved and attend trainings, meet with HCPS staff, and work across many schools.
- Lastly, Ms. Alton discussed Care Solace, thanks to funding from the Harford County Health Department, which is a free mental health care coordination service to all HCPS students’ staff, and their families
- Resources for help can be found online at the HCPS website, specifically under the “Mental Health Zone”

- The group then broke out to discuss the Wellness Needs Assessment:
  - Can these questions and answers be shared with parents next year?
    - Individual responses will not be shared, but group responses are.
  - Would it be possible to include questions about extracurricular activities?
    - These questions were included this year.
  - Discussed on brainstorming about mental health help for minority populations.

**Ms. Redding closed the meeting and reminded everyone of the next meeting.**

**Upcoming Meetings: Tuesday, January 30, 2023, 8:30-10 a.m. Harford County DES 2220 Addy Rd, Forest Hill, MD 21050**

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