

	Mental Health Advisory Committee Minutes – June 3, 2025
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Members Present	Members Absent	Ex-Officio and Staff Present	Ex-Officio and Staff Absent	Guests
Lucy Absi-Lopez	Jennifer Grinnell	Capt. Kathy Estrada	Kelly Gruitt	Angela Belisario
Nick Foley	Bethany Lee	Monica Martin	Samar Khleif	Craig Shapiro
Michelle Grigsby-Hackett		Sara Rose	Michael Mayer	Laura Mitchell
Daozhong Jin			Meredith Peace	
Stephanie Joseph				
Renee Johnson				
Susan Kerin				
Libby Nealis				
Joi Nolen				
Alan Orenstein				
Crystal Reeves				
Celia Serkin				

- I. **Welcome** - The Mental Health Advisory Committee (MHAC) was called to order at 7:01 pm by Libby Nealis, Committee Chair.
- II. **Update on finalized LBHA plan** – Sara Rose provided an overview of the LBHA plan's highlights and achievements. This included opioid treatment for adolescents; a crisis stabilization room; increased utilization of targeted case management work on the Sequential Intercept Model; and expansion of the mobile crisis units.
- III. **Discussion on Priorities for FY-27** – Libby shared last year's MHAC priorities and then solicited from others their opinions for next year priorities. Following is feedback:
 - **Community-based Peers** – Susan Kerin and Celia Serkin wanted to ask again for this priority since it wasn't approved. Susan asked to have data (salary rates for county employees versus county-funded community programs) to bolster the case. Alan Orenstein was concerned that there would be no new services.
 - **Expanding Advisory Responsibilities** – Susan advocated that this be included again and that the MHAC is the only voice for those with lived experience to county employees. Libby and Diane Lininger shared efforts on this and stated that modifications seem to have improved the situation.
 - **Sequential Intercept Model** – Susan noted that the State has hired an expert outside consultant to work on this, so we don't need to advocate for it.
 - **Medicaid for School-based Services** – Libby noted that there was some progress made but there still needs to be more.
 - **Unhoused populations** – Libby shared that HUD has redefined "unhoused" to not include couch-surfing and others noted that this is a social determinant that is being unmet.
 - **Sickest of the Sick** – Alan was concerned that those with severe mental illness diagnoses aren't being served at high enough rates by the public system compared to rates other areas across the country.
 - **Budget Cuts** – Monica Martin noted that because of the potential budget cuts (including to Medicaid), MHAC may want to be in the mode of protecting current services rather than promoting new ones.
 - **Workforce Shortages** – This was mentioned in Sara's presentation and Libby also noted some examples.
 - **Process to Develop the Priorities** – This is just an initial discussion and there will be more opportunities to discuss priorities. The final decisions need to be made in the early fall to align with the budget cycle.
 - **Coordination with AODAAC** – Given the recent joint meeting, Diane suggested that there be alignment with AODAAC priorities.
 - **MHAC's Role** – Celia, noted that MHAC's past priorities have been successful (e.g., mental health court, mobile crisis services). Diane reminded members that the committee is small so there are limits to the work. Alan noted that MHAC

should have more data to do evaluation of the county's work as part of their advisory responsibilities.

IV. Old Business

- A. **Minutes** – The March and April minutes were approved by unanimous vote.
- B. **Joint AODAAC meeting** – There was positive feedback on the joint meeting and also the intent to focus on co-occurring disorders.

V. New Business

- A. **AODAAC** – Laura Mitchell noted that AODAAC will have their elections this month and also will be working on their priorities.
- B. **Spring Forum** – Libby shared that there will be a debrief meeting on the Forum but there was generally positive responses. There were about 95 attendees, including 10 students.
- C. **CAYAS** – Celia reported that the committee changed their focus from implementing a parental survey to instead serving as an informational repository of data.

VI. Upcoming Meetings

– There is no meeting in August. While the priorities will be discussed during upcoming meetings (July and September), Libby encouraged members to suggest any other topics and speakers.

VII. Announcements

– Following are MHAC announcements:

- Award to Sara Rose – Sara Rose received the “Partners for Education” award from the MCCPTA (Montgomery County Council of Parent-Teacher Associations) Congrats to Sara!
- **Closure of On-Track Program for First Psychosis** – Renee Johnson shared that the imminent closure of this Sheppard Pratt program is causing a hardship for families. Sara shared that the county will be finding alternative vendors for the adolescent clubhouse (moving to the Tree of Hope) but they can't replace all the services.
- **Expansion of Services for Children and Youth** – Sara shared that Maryland has [received approval from CMS](#) to expand its access for behavioral health and community-based services for children and youth.
- **Upcounty Wellness and Recovery Center** – Michelle Grigsby-Hackett shared that the Center will officially open on June 9th. The current hours are Monday through Friday from 9 to 5 but hours may be expanded in the future.
- **Lead for Impact** – Stephanie Joseph was accepted into this program and her project will focus on ending homelessness. She will be participating in an open panel discussion in September and invited MHA members to attend.
- **Sequential Intercept Model** – Monica and Sara shared that Maryland has hired an expert consulting firm to support this work. The firm is led by Judge Liefman who was instrumental in designing Miami's model diversion program.

Monica noted three aspects of Maryland that are different from Miami: 1. Miami has more legal and legislative options for deflection and diversion, 2. Miami has embedded peers all across the criminal justice continuum, and 3. Montgomery County's housing issue is particularly difficult to address.

VI. Meeting Adjourned – The MHAC meeting was adjourned at 8:54 pm.