

**Montgomery County Commission on Health
Meeting Minutes**

Date: April 17, 2025

Location: Virtual

Time: 6:00-7: pm

Present: Betty Smith, Gabriela Lemus (Chair), Susan Emery, Arthur Summerville, Beth Barrows, Brent Berger, Milan Patel, Rashida Dokes, Venchele Saint Dic

Absent: Dr. Davis, Adam Finkelstein, Marcela Campoli, Laurel Fain, Donna Cawley, Tara Clemons Johnson

DHHS Staff: Felicia Hugee

1. Roll Call

- Conducted by Felicia Hugee. 9 attendees. Quorum reached.

2. Approval of Minutes

- Motion to approve minutes: Susan Emery
- Seconded by: Arthur Summerville
- Minutes approved.

3. Chair and Vice-Chair Nominations

- COH Chair presented nominees for Committee Chair and Vice-Chair:
 - **Chair Nominee:** Arthur Sommerville
 - **Vice-Chair Nominee:** Susan Emery
- Betty Smith expressed appreciation to both nominees for their willingness to volunteer and contribute to the Commission's work.

4. Updates and Reports

A. Council Member Meetings

- Upcoming meetings with:
 - **Councilmember Luedtke** – April 21
 - **Councilmember Sayles** – April 24
- Betty Smith and Venchele St. Dic shared updates regarding:
 - **Montgomery County Diversion Center** located on Executive Boulevard. Additional information is available on the website.

- **Tree of HOPE** – school-based center focused on building trust and engagement among youth; efforts to connect young people with mental and behavioral health services.
- **Access to Care Group** – expanding services for mental and behavioral health.

B. Reports on Councilmember Engagements

- Brief mention of reports concerning Councilmembers Albornoz and Stewart.

C. Retreat Priorities for 2025-2026

COH Members were reminded that the Annual Retreat is taking place on May 15, 2025 in Rockville.

Public Schools and Community Communication

- Concerns expressed regarding the lack of messaging to community members and families on accessing care.
- Clarification that community members are welcome to meet and speak with staff.
- Updates shared on discussions with public school representatives regarding sustaining grant funding sources.

Healthcare Workforce and Violence Concerns

- Recent incidents in **Germantown Holy Cross Hospital** involving **violence against healthcare workers**, with limited consequences unless charges are pressed by staff.
- Ongoing **post-COVID burnout** among nurses and doctors – need for initiatives to "take care of the caretakers."
- Testimony provided to the **HSCRC** regarding the **AHEAD model**, highlighting critical workforce shortages in both primary and behavioral healthcare.
 - Emphasis on the need to include workforce capacity in future healthcare reform models.

1) Licensing and Access for Foreign-Trained Health Professionals

- Case was made regarding a foreign-trained professional licensed in Illinois, who met the Board of Nursing's requirements but faced barriers in Maryland, including language testing and interview procedures.
- Noted issues with forms not being available in regional languages for physical therapy licensing.
- Suggested advocacy for streamlined and equitable licensure pathways for qualified international graduates.

2) Violence Against Healthcare Workers

- Discussion noted that unless a nurse or provider presses charges, patients are not held accountable for violent actions.
- Need to explore legislative or policy avenues to protect healthcare staff. Is this something that can be addressed at the County level?

G. New Business: Workforce Development Presentation Proposal

- Proposal to invite a speaker from **Montgomery College** or local **workforce development** to a future meeting.
- Purpose: Share information about healthcare workforce recruitment efforts and student engagement in health-related fields to close gaps. Need a multi-level approach.
- Reminded COH Members that the Commission on Health Vacancies have been posted. The deadline to apply, or re-apply, is April 30th.

5. Adjournment

- Motion to adjourn by: Brent Berger.
- Seconded by: Venchele Saint Dic.
- Meeting adjourned 7:02 pm.