



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Health and Human Services
Department of Mental Health
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Secretary

BROOKE DOYLE
Commissioner

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Statewide Mental Health Advisory Council
(Via Videoconference)
January 16, 2025

PRESENT: Chuck Weinstein, Joan Cho Sik, Eno Mondesir, Dave Brown, Catherine Vuky, Jean Giagrande, Autumn Versace, Heather Henderson, Vivian Nunez, Cynthia Piltch

ABSENT: Ilya Ablavsky, Susan Martin, Karran Larson

STAFF: Brooke Doyle, Commissioner, Glenda Hazard, DMH Communications Director, Daniela Harrigan, DMH Community Engagement Director

GUESTS: Rabbi Dan Slipakoff, Rev. Katie Cole, Rev. Dr. Daniel Auguste, Rev. Richard Reid, Rev. Renel Richardson, Rev. Daphne Germain-LaRoche, Rev. Jean Clerveau, Rev. Manny Daphnis

Call to Order – 8:30a.m.

Welcome by Chair

- Welcome Guests; Review of On-line Etiquette, Guest Policy, Open meeting policy

Approval of Minutes

- November 24, 2024 minutes approved.

Commissioner's Update – Brooke Doyle

- Governor's budget will be released later this month.
- The State of the Commonwealth address is tonight.
- The Governor has made some recommended changes to The Right to Shelter law. This is an emerging situation. DMH has had a supportive place in the effort to be responsive to newly arriving people.

Advancing Health Equity in Massachusetts – Commissioner Brooke Doyle

- The 10 communities that were identified by AHEM in Mass as being the communities as the highest degree of need had procurements that brought resources into those communities. Efforts are ongoing. Daniela Harrigan of DMH participates on the committee for the community engagement piece of the group. One of the next areas that will be looked at is contracting language to identify vendors who are part of this process. General information on AHEM can be found at:

- <https://www.mass.gov/advancing-health-equity-in-ma>.
- <https://www.mass.gov/news/healey-driscoll-administration-lays-out-plan-for-health-equity-initiative>
- <https://www.mass.gov/news/healey-driscoll-administration-announces-new-partnerships-to-improve-maternal-health-and-cardiometabolic-health-in-new-bedford-and-chicopee>

Panel of Faith Based Leaders on Communities Resilient in Hope Amidst the Challenges of Current Affairs – Dr. Eno Mondesir

- Dr. Mondesir introduces faith-based leaders from various parishes across the state to provide updates and concerns about their challenges working with members of their communities who have behavioral health needs. They are constantly faced with a real need in real time.

Rev. Katie Cole, Pastor Hartford Presbyterian Church, Natick

- Pastor Cole is encountering quite a few members with increased anxiety of meeting basic needs.
- Community members are trying to understand, navigate and deal with their anxiety over future access and support and the anxiety of the new administration.
- There has been an increase in community members turning to isolation. They believe isolation is the better solution. The increased uncertainty exacerbates internal uncertainties. Anxiety over access to services, resources, basic needs and fear that leads to isolation has increased.
- Pastor Cole works with members on Know Your Rights, especially with migrant families. Housing issues, know your rights as a renter, know your right about mental health access and care, etc. Any information DMH can provide on Know Your Rights for mental health would be welcomed.

Rev. Dr. Daniel Auguste, Chaplain and Campus Ministry

- Community is facing challenges that require humanitarian support of federal, state, faith-based and community agencies.
- Haitians are driven to leave their country due to widespread poverty, political instability, natural disasters, gang violence, lack of economic opportunities.
- The congregation has faced many challenges, primarily housing. Many are homeless or staying in state shelters. Many Haitian migrant families face language barriers, lack of legal representation, lengthy immigration proceedings, denials leading to deportation.

Rev. Jean Mary Clerveau, President, Fellowship of Haitian Pastors of New England

- Shares the same issues as the other pastors. The problem is very complicated.

Rev. Richard Reid, Pastor, North Baptist Church of Brockton

- Pastor Reid is an immigrant to the US. When he came to this country, he was told by Immigration that he had to be able to financially support himself in the first year - which he did. People coming to this country aren't always able to.
- Mental health of the citizens of Brockton is of great concern.
- Congregation is small but many nations are represented.
- Resources are needed, restrictions released from organizations that are trying to help but can't help due to the restrictions on specifics for housing requirements.
- Churches are opening their buildings to bring people in to keep warm at night and give food and clothes. 20 degrees is the temperature that they're allowed to do that.

Rabbi Dan Slipakoff, Temple Israel, Boston

- Changes going on in DC has created a lot of anxiety coupled with the goings on in Israel and an uptick in antisemitism across the world. People are afraid to be openly Jewish.
- Loneliness is an issue people are facing.
- Rabbi Slipakoff is opening his doors as much as they can to help people feel a sense of belonging and have a community. They are partnering with community Jewish organizations to have a social worker share time with them and other organizations to meet with different groups.
- Would like resources and phone numbers from DMH at the ready to hand out to anyone in need that is beyond his scope of help.

Pastor Manny Daphnis, Restoration Community Church, Brockton

- Greatest wish is for permanent housing. People are grateful for shelter. The instability of housing hinders people from advancing and taking the next steps. There are people who don't have an opportunity at shelters.
- How can we seamlessly support people as they transition. How can we get rid of the red tape. There are people who were doctors, lawyers, professionals in their community who are willing to work.

Minister Daphne Germain-Laroche, Church of God in Christ

- Works to help stabilize parents – getting basic needs met.
- Resources are needed to help parents stay strong mentally for the sake of their children.
- Commissioner Doyle will make sure to have the Behavioral Health Helpline <https://www.masshelpline.com/> materials sent to any clergy who would like them. Anyone can order materials free of charge as well <https://www.mass.gov/lists/dmh-promotional-materials>. Daniela Harrigan, Director of Community Engagement and Glenda Hazard, Director of Communications for DMH will work with congregations to share information and materials.
- Commissioner Doyle appreciates all the work that is being done and offered to people in the communities. She pledges to come and visit and talk with any congregation or attend any business meetings of associations if it will help in any way. She would like to partner in whatever way she can. She doesn't have the authority to change the regulations that are related to occupancy permits, those are local government. She can help listen and help bridge and help find the right people. She welcomes this partnership.
- Some churches are partnered with police departments which has been very helpful. This builds a relationship.
- DMH understands that churches are where people go when they have trouble and clergy know their congregation. DMH would like to give churches a way to reach out to DMH when they need help.

Old & New Business

- March agenda - Catherine Vuky will present on building access to mental health care in the Asian community.

Next Meeting

March 20, 2025

Future 2024 Meetings: Thursday's 8:30-10:00am

May 15, September 18, November 20

Meeting adjourned 10:00am.