



Massachusetts Department of Public Health

Special Commission on Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

March 3, 2025

Agenda

1. Welcome
2. Oath of Office
3. Open Meeting Law and Conflict of Interest Overview
4. Introductions
5. Charge of the Commission
6. Goals and Expectations
7. Review Topics & Establish Working Groups
8. Upcoming Meetings and Next Steps
9. Adjournment (Vote)

Oath of Office

I, (*STATE YOUR NAME*), do solemnly swear that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and will support the Constitution thereof – So help me God.

I, (*STATE YOUR NAME*), do solemnly swear and affirm that I will faithfully and impartially discharge and perform all the duties incumbent on me as a member of the Rest Home Task Force, according to the best of my abilities and understanding, agreeably, to the rules and regulations of the Constitution, and the laws of this Commonwealth – So help me God.

I, (*STATE YOUR NAME*), do solemnly swear that I will support the Constitution of the United States.



Massachusetts Department of Public Health

Open Meeting Law and Conflict of Interest Overview

Sheila York

Board Counsel for the Bureau of Health Professions Licensure

Open Meeting Law

- The purpose of OML is to ensure transparency in the deliberations on which public policy is based.
- The OML requires most meeting of public bodies be held in public and establishes rules that public bodies must follow in the creation and maintenance of records related to those meetings.
- The MA Attorney General's Office has the authority to promulgate regulations to carry out the OML, create educational materials, provide training to public bodies, and enforce violations of the OML.
- M.G.L. c. 30A §§ 18-25
- 940 CMR 29.00

What Constitutes as a Public Body?

A multiple-member board, commission, committee or subcommittee within the executive or legislative branch or within any county, district, city, region or town, if established to serve a public purpose

Bodies that do not constitute a public body:

- The MA Legislature or the committees of the MA Legislature;
- Bodies of the judicial branch; or
- Advisory Bodies appointed by a constitutional officer solely for the purpose of advising that constitutional officer

Deliberation

- A meeting is “a deliberation by a public body with respect to any matter within the body’s jurisdiction.”
- **Deliberation** is defined as “an oral or written communication through any medium, including electronic mail, between or among a quorum of a public body on any public business within its jurisdiction.”
- Deliberation does not include scheduling or procedural information.
- If a quorum of a public body wants to discuss public business within that body’s jurisdiction, they must do so during a properly posted meeting.
 - ***NOTE: If a public body member sends an email to a quorum of the public body expressing an opinion on any matter that could come before that body, the communication violates the OML, even if no recipient responds.***

Posting Notice of Meetings

- A public body must post notice of its meetings on the public body's website or the parent agency's website at least 48 hours before the meeting, excluding Saturdays, Sundays, and legal holidays.
- The notice must include the following:
 - Date;
 - Time and place; and
 - List of topics the chair reasonably anticipates will be discussed at the meeting.
- The list of topics should provide sufficient information to inform the public of the issues to be discussed at the meeting.
- Notice of Emergency meetings must be posted as soon as reasonably possible prior to the meeting.

What is Quorum

A **simple majority** of the members of a public body, unless otherwise provided in a general or special law, executive order, or other authorizing provision. G.L. c. 30A, § 18.

Vacant seats on the public body must be counted in determining quorum.

Operations of the Meeting

- Announce whether meeting is being recorded.
- Do not discuss confidential information during the public meeting.
- A member of the public may not address the public body without permission of the chair.
- A member of the public may not disrupt the meeting.

Remote Participation

Remote participation is permitted under certain circumstances, however, a public body must adopt remote participation. If a body votes to allow remote participation it must follow the following minimum requirements for participation:

1. Members of a public body who participate remotely and all persons present at the meeting location shall be clearly audible to each other.
2. A quorum of the body, including the chair or, in the chair's absence, the person authorized to chair the meeting, shall be physically present at the meeting location.

Other procedures for remote participation:

1. Remote participation is allowed for a member of the public body only if physical attendance would be unreasonably difficult.
2. Members who wish to participate remotely must notify the chair as soon as practicable before the meeting that the member wishes to participate remotely and their reason for requesting remote participation.
3. At the start of the meeting the chair must announce the name of any member who will be participating remotely and that information should be recorded in the meeting minutes.
4. All votes where a member is participating remotely must be conducted by roll call.
5. If a public body enters into executive session with a member participating remotely the remote member(s) must state at the start of the executive session that no other person is present and/or able to hear the discussion, unless the presence of that person is approved by a simple majority of the public body.
6. When feasible, the chair shall distribute to the remote participants any documents necessary for the meeting.
7. If the public body decides to use video conferencing as its means for remote participation the remote participant must be clearly visible to all persons present at the meeting.

Remote Participation – COVID flexibilities

- Public bodies are permitted to have live “adequate, alternative means” of public access, including video conference until March 31, 2025.
- Remote participation is allowed by all members of the public body; and
- All votes taken during a meeting in which a member participates remotely must be by roll call vote.

Executive (Closed) Sessions

- Convene in open session
- State the reason for the executive session, stating all subjects that may be revealed without compromising the purpose for which the executive session was called
- State whether the public body will reconvene in open session at the end of the executive session
- Take a roll call vote of the body to enter executive session
- All votes must be roll call

Executive (Closed) Sessions Continued

- Ten Purposes for Executive Session
- Commonly used purposes:
 - Discuss reputation, character, physical condition or mental health of an individual; discuss discipline or dismissal of an individual (Purpose One)
 - Discuss strategy regarding litigation (Purpose Three)
 - Discuss security personnel, devices, and strategies (Purpose Four)

Avoiding OML Violation-Best Practice Recommendations

- Public body members must not engage in “serial deliberations”—a series of separate, independent conversations outside of a meeting among a quorum of the members regarding a topic within its jurisdiction
- In order to avoid even the appearance of an OML violation, the AGO advises public body members to refrain from communications over email except for distributing agendas, scheduling meetings, and distributing documents created by nonmembers

Avoiding OML Violation-Best Practice Recommendations

- Do not use chat function
- The hand raising function is permissible
- Votes should be audible, not hand signals
- Cameras should be on

Public Meetings – Miscellaneous

- The public body must create and maintain minutes of all meetings.
- Records reviewed by the public body during the meeting are public records.
- A member of the public may file a complaint alleging an OML violation, first with the public body, and subsequently with the Attorney General's Office if necessary.

Additional References

Office of Attorney General, Open Meeting Law Website and Guide:

- <https://www.mass.gov/files/documents/2017/09/25/2017%20Guide%20only.pdf>
- <http://www.mass.gov/ago/government-resources/open-meeting-law/>



Massachusetts Department of Public Health

Introductions

Commission Members

- **Robert Goldstein (Chair)**
Massachusetts Dept. of Public Health
- **Michael Allard**
Massachusetts General Hospital
- **Amy Bonneau**
Massachusetts National Guard
- **Donald Boyd**
Executive office of Public Safety and Security
- **Brooke Doyle**
Department of Mental Health
- **Kevin Flanagan**
Massachusetts Corrections Officers
Federated Union
- **Michael Jefferson**
Professional Fire Fighters of Massachusetts
- **James Machado**
Massachusetts Police Association
- **Adrian Madaro**
Massachusetts House of Representatives
- **Dr. Vanja Pejic**
Boston Children's Hospital
- **John Rodolico**
Executive office of Veteran Services
- **Isabelle Rosso**
Harvard University
- **Hema Sarang**
Jane Doe Inc.
- **Sonya Taly**
Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee
Advocacy (MIRA) Coalition
- **John Velis**
Massachusetts State Senate
- **Eliza Williamson**
National Alliance on Mental Illness Massachusetts



Massachusetts Department of Public Health

Statute

Section 149 of Chapter 178 of the Acts of 2024

Legislative Charge (full text):

SECTION 149. (a) There shall be a special commission to study post-traumatic stress disorder in the commonwealth.

(b) The commission shall consist of: the secretary of health and human services, or a designee, who shall serve as chair; the secretary of public safety and security, or a designee; the secretary of veterans' services, or a designee; the commissioner of mental health, or a designee; the house and senate chairs of the joint committee on mental health, substance use and recovery; a representative of the National Guard appointed by the adjutant general of the Massachusetts National Guard; and 9 members to be appointed by the secretary of health and human services, 1 of whom shall be an expert from the Anxiety and Traumatic Stress Disorders Laboratory at Harvard University in consultation with their relevant specialty chapters, 1 of whom shall be a representative of Boston Children's Hospital, 1 of whom shall be a representative of the Massachusetts Police Association, Inc., 1 of whom shall be a representative of Jane Doe Inc.: The Massachusetts Coalition Against Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence, 1 of whom shall be a representative from Massachusetts Immigrant and Refugee Advocacy Coalition, Inc., 1 of whom shall be a representative of Professional Fire Fighters of Massachusetts, 1 of whom shall be a representative of the Massachusetts Corrections Officers Federated Union, 1 of whom shall be a representative of a research advocacy or support organization primarily serving individuals with post-traumatic stress disorder and 1 of whom shall be a representative of Massachusetts General Hospital Home Base program.

Charge of the Commission

Four Charges of the Special Commission on PTSD

The commission shall:

- (i) assess and summarize the advances made in research on and treatment and diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder;*
- (ii) assess and summarize the advances made in access to care for individuals with a diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder;*

Charge of the Commission Continued

(iii) assess and summarize research services and support activities for post-traumatic stress disorder across the commonwealth, including coordination of the commonwealth's activities and programs with respect to post-traumatic stress disorder; and

(iv) develop a comprehensive strategic plan to improve health outcomes for individuals with a diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder including, but not limited to, recommendations to:

- (A) advance research on post-traumatic stress disorder;*
- (B) improve the treatment of post-traumatic stress disorder;*
- (C) improve public awareness and recognition of post-traumatic stress disorder;*
- (D) improve mental health care delivery for individuals with a diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder;*
- (E) improve the early and accurate diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder; and*
- (F) systematically advance the full spectrum of biomedical research on post-traumatic stress disorder.*

Report

(d) The commission shall submit its findings and recommendations to the clerks of the house of representatives and senate not later than July 1, 2025.



Massachusetts Department of Public Health

Working Groups

Goals & Expectations

- **Goals:**
 - Study post-traumatic stress disorder in the commonwealth.
 - Complete the Charge of the Commission.
 - Submit all findings and recommendations to include in the report.
- **Expectations:**
 - Commission members meet internally with their assigned working group in March, April, and June to complete the Charge of the Commission.

Working Group Assignments

Charge of the Commission	Working Group
(i) assess and summarize the advances made in research on and treatment and diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder;	James Machado Adrian Madaro John Rodolico Isabelle Rosso
(ii) assess and summarize the advances made in access to care for individuals with a diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder;	Michael Allard Amy Bonneau Hema Sarang John Velis

Working Group Assignments Continued

Charge of the Commission	Working Group
iii) assess and summarize research services and support activities for post-traumatic stress disorder across the commonwealth, including coordination of the commonwealth's activities and programs with respect to post-traumatic stress disorder;	Kevin Flanagan Michael Jefferson Sonya Taly Eliza Williamson
(iv) develop a comprehensive strategic plan to improve health outcomes for individuals with a diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder including, but not limited to, recommendations to: (A) advance research on post-traumatic stress disorder; (B) improve the treatment of post-traumatic stress disorder; (C) improve public awareness and recognition of post-traumatic stress disorder; (D) improve mental health care delivery for individuals with a diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder; (E) improve the early and accurate diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder; and (F) systematically advance the full spectrum of biomedical research on post-traumatic stress disorder.	Donald Boyd Commissioner Doyle Commissioner Goldstein Dr. Vanja Pejic

Topics

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder in:

- Veterans
- Maternal Health
- Substance Use Disorder
- Positive & Adverse Childhood Experiences (PACEs)
- Men's Mental Health
- Traumatic Brain Injuries & Sports Concussions
- Generalized Workplace Wellness and Accommodations
- Victims of Sexual Violence
- Victims of Domestic Violence

Upcoming Meeting and Next Steps

Date	Time	Location
Friday, April 11 th	10:00 am – 11:30 am	Virtual/Zoom
Friday, May 16 th	10:00 am – 11:30 am	Virtual/Zoom
Friday, June 13 th	10:00 am – 11:30 am	Virtual/Zoom
Tuesday, July 1 st - <i>Submission of Report to the clerk of the House of Representatives and the Senate</i>		

Webpage

Meeting notifications and copies of meeting materials, such as approved minutes, will be posted on the Commission's Mass.gov webpage:

<https://www.mass.gov/orgs/special-commission-on-post-traumatic-stress-disorder>