

Massachusetts 988 Commission

Meeting Minutes

11/18/2024

1:30pm – 3:00pm

Date of meeting: Monday, November 18th, 2024

Start time: 1:40pm

End time: 3:04pm

Location: Virtual Meeting (Zoom)

Count	Members participating remotely	Vote 1	Vote 2		Vote 3
1	Rebecca Ames – Riverside Trauma Center, Riverside Community Care	-	-	-	-
2	Danielle Bolduc – Director of the Suicide Prevention Program	X	X	O	X
3	Patrick Bowlin - Current or former consumer of mental health or substance use disorder supports or services	-	-	-	-
4	Kelly Casey, PhD – Department of Forensic & Clinical Services at William James College	-	-	-	-
5	Courtney Chelo – Mass. Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (MSPCC)	X	X	X	X
6	Undersecretary Kerry Collins – Executive Office of Public Safety and Security (EOPSS)	A	X	X	X
7	Commissioner Brooke Doyle – Department of Mental Health	-	-	-	-
8	Rebekah Gewirtz – National Association of Social Workers - MA & RI Chapter	X	A	X	X
9	Sharon Hanson – Mass. Behavioral Health Partnership (MBHP)	X	X	X	X
10	Debbie Helms – Samaritans Merrimack Valley	X	X	X	X
11	Jennifer Honig – Mass. Association for Mental Health (MAMH)	X	X	X	X
12	Jacqueline Hubbard, Esq – National Alliance on Mental Illness Massachusetts (NAMI-MA)	A	X	X	X
13	Charmain Jackman, PhD – InnoPsych, Inc.	X	O	X	X
14	Karin Jeffers – Clinical & Support Options (CSO)	X	X	O	X
15	Kathy Marchi – Samaritans, Inc.	-	-	-	-
16	Paul Mina – United Way of Tri County & United Way of Pioneer Valley, Mass 211	X	X	X	X
17	Ivy Moody – Mental Health Legal Advisors Committee (MHLAC)	X	X	O	X
18	Pam Sager – Parent/Professional Advocacy League (PPAL)	X	X	X	X
19	Pata Suyemoto - National Asian American Pacific Islander Mental Health Association	X	X	O	X
20	Joan Taglieri - Cambridge Health Alliance	-	-	-	-
21	Monna Wallace – State 911 Department	X	X	X	X
22	Chair Kelley Cunningham – Division of Violence and Injury Prevention, DPH	X	X	O	X

* (X) Voted in favor; (O) Opposed; (A) Abstained from vote; (-) Absent from meeting or during vote

** Vote 1: Roll Call and Minutes Approval; Vote 2: 3 Recommendations; Vote 3: To Adjourn Meeting

Vote 2 - Recommendations

- Recommendation 1: Draft a statute establishing a reasonable user fee amount for all phones within the commonwealth. Funding would be deposited into a trust fund designated specifically for 988 services and only to be used for 988 centers for phone, text, chat services or other 988 related services. The Department of Public Health will be responsible for maintaining and distributing funds.
- Recommendation 2: Establish a designated appropriation line within the DPH Suicide Prevention Program to maintain and distribute funds for 988 centers and services. DPH will evaluate said appropriation each year to anticipate further growth of funding based on increase of service to the line.
- Recommendation 3: Combine funding sources between state appropriation and user fees. User fees will be deposited into a designated trust fund for this service. State appropriation will be a set funding amount with any additional funding needed to be obtained through the trust fund.

Proceedings

Chair Kelley Cunningham, Director of the Division of Violence and Injury Prevention at the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, welcomes members and attendees. She apologized to the commission for the late start and called the meeting of the 988 Commission to order.

The participants were informed that this meeting is subject to Open Meeting Law. Votes will be conducted via roll call. Commission members should remain muted unless speaking, and the chat feature is not available to the public. Members are encouraged to use the raise hand feature for comments or questions and to state their names before speaking for accurate minutes. Rebecca Ames and Rebekah Gewirtz were asked to use their last initials for clarity in the minutes.

Chair Kelley Cunningham announced the following:

- Two new members joined the commission:
 - **Jacqueline Hubbard**, Representative for National Alliance on Mental Illness of Massachusetts (NAMI)
 - **Patrick Bowlen**, Community Member representative. He is not currently present but may join later
- Three members left the commission:
 - **Chris Carleton**, 911 dispatcher designated by the Massachusetts Chiefs of Police Association
 - **Kristen Rhodes** designated by ACLU
 - **Eric Gasse**, representative for Massachusetts Ambulance Association.
- Efforts are being made to actively fill these seats.
- Introduced Lisa Swanson, a consultant assisting with the final report due in March as well as supporting the meeting facilitation by taking meeting notes and conducting roll calls.

September Meeting Minutes: Approval of draft minutes from the last commission meeting on September 30th. Open the floor for comments or edits to the minutes, draft was sent to all members: Charmain is listed incorrectly, update Representing the ~~NWSCP~~ NAACP Boston chapter.

Vote 1 on approval of meeting minutes: Paul Mina introduced a motion to approve the amended September 30th meeting minutes, seconded by Karin Jeffers and approved by roll-call vote.

Geo-Routing

On September 17th Verizon and T-Mobile partnered with Vibrant emotional health to implement geo-routing of 988 calls. Since then, the federal communication commission released a ruling that all carriers will be

required to implement geo-routing for all 988 wireless calls over the next two years. Additionally, discovery for geo-routing text messages is underway.

Pam: Sought clarification on local tower routing, and not the geo location equivalent to 911.

Charmain: Requested geo-routing is first defined.

Kelley: Geo-routing is specific to 988 and brings the call to the closest tower so it connects the caller to the closest local center. Text geo-routing is under discovery and not yet implemented.

Jennifer: When the federal government accepted feedback on geo-routing, questions were raised about callers close to borders and they were addressing this issue.

Monna: Asked if calls can route to the next state as they sometimes do with 911 calls. Also noted that before 988, calls were routed the area code of the caller, and this is a big win to route the calls to local centers.

Kelley: Echoed that geo-routing is a big improvement. For example, if a caller from CA with California area code is in MA calling 988, the call will remain in Massachusetts, and they will receive local service.

Paul: Acknowledged that 211 has the same issue as 911 and may have a signal bleed, and that geo-routing is a huge improvement.

Kelley: Informed everyone that she will provide updates especially on the geo-routing texting aspects.

Commission Recommendations:

Chair Kelley Cunningham moved to discuss the recommendations reviewed in September and that each member should have received a copy. Asked Brenda-Liz to share the recommendations on screen for discussion, make live updates to the recommendations, and then vote on each recommendation to solidify next steps for the commission. Read each recommendation and then open the floor for discussion and comments.

Recommendation One: Implement a statute establishing a user fee for all phones within the commonwealth. Funding would be deposited into a trust fund designated specifically for 988 services and only to be used for 988 centers for phone, text, chat services or services within the Department of Public Health who will be responsible for maintaining and distributing funds.

Kerry Collins: Emphasized concerns for imposing a fee on top of fees consumers are already paying for the 911 service especially in communities being impacted by other issues. Reminded the commission that she is the 911 Commission Chair and oversees the State 911 department with the current consumer fee set at \$1.50/month five years ago and must remain by statute. It is very labor intensive to justify expenditures and change requests must be submitted to the Department of Telecommunications and Cable (DTC) to set carrier rates. Advocated for a designated appropriation instead of an additional fee. It works with the cell phone fee and gives cities and towns relief without adding more consumer fees.

Ivy: Agreed with implementing a fee and inquired on funding oversight and granular details of the fund such as monitoring, tracking, and reporting on fund management for the commission to review.

Kelley: Explained the Suicide Prevention Program manages the RFR for 988 and tracks funding. DPH in general would oversee the fund as noted in the recommended language. Shared concerns regarding inter-agency oversight and ensuring appropriate fund placement.

Ivy: Reiterated 911 needed to provide a detailed account of how the funds were used. proposed A bill could be drafted for 988 to specify requirements for accounting on how funds received and spent.

Paul: Acknowledged that 211 was without funding available or access and there was no state funding resulting in private program management. The only way these programs sustain themselves is to have stable funding. State funding is not a viable option due to legislation and difficulty in adding a budget line for funding. The only option is assessing a small fee, free of politics.

Kelley: Reminded the commission that more than one recommendation may be submitted, a recommendation for the fee and a recommendation for state appropriation. Although it may be stronger to put forth only one recommendation, both can be proposed if members feel strongly about one over another.

Jennifer: Voiced support for the fee with a suggestion on the recommendation language in the last sentence to separate DPH into a new sentence to clarify responsibility for maintaining and distributing funds. For the long-term, 988 programs and services may not continue to be managed by DPH and may want to amend the language so 988 remains funded.

Kelley and Brenda-Liz edited recommendation one per Jennifer's comments.

Kelley: Acknowledged 988 is currently the local centers and additional services under SAMSHA's pillar are offered by other entities and receive their own funding. This surcharge would only be for the 988 centers and DPH programming of 988 not the other services.

Charmain: Inquired about fee calculation, percentage or flat rate, and suggested details would be helpful in the recommendation for the commission to know exactly what user fee they are proposing. Suggested a range or formula based on family income.

Kelley: Stated the user fee amount was originally submitted to leadership and advised to remove. In alignment with the fees implemented across other states and research finding 9 million phone lines in Massachusetts, a monthly fee of 25 cents per number and line would total approximately 24 million to help pay for technology, data, tracking, monitoring, and reporting on 988 in addition to funding the call centers.

Charmain: Asked if a funding limit could be stated to ensure the user fee does not exceed a specific amount to prevent further marginalizing groups that may need the service.

Pam: Suggested adding "reasonable" user fee in first sentence to trigger an assessment of what the average person can afford.

Debbie: Questioned if 911 stipulates a fee during the reassessment process for updated amounts and how it works in comparison with 988.

Kerry: Clarified that the 911 fee is established by statute which states if 911 wants to raise the surcharge it must petition the DTC, Dept of Telecommunications and Cable. The Bill passed for the statute states the fees and fee changes process and includes checks and balances for 911 funding. Posed a question to the commission if they want a statute telling Massachusetts residents/rate payors to pay more for this service.

Kelley: Reminded members about the NAMI national survey and link to the public opinion poll. When asked about implementing a fee, public acceptance was low but after explaining what happens with 911 and the services provided by 988, the opinion poll notably increased in support of the 988 fee.

Rebekah G: Continued the funding oversight conversation and stated the commission is required to assess funds on a regular basis and recognize marginalized populations.

Ivy: Highlighted that 911 services are solely funded through the surcharge and not part of the Governor's budget.

Kerry: Clarified that DTC sets the rate because carriers are charging the customers, individuals and companies.

Jennifer: Suggested the recommendation language is kept simple and clear with a set fee, fee review, and role of the commission for providing direction but mindful not to get lost in the details for recommendations.

Paul: Confirmed in regard to establishing oversight that DPH already has 988 oversight.

Recommendation Two: Establish a designated appropriation line within the DPH Suicide Prevention Program to maintain and distribute funds for 988 centers and services. This funding will be evaluated each year to anticipate further growth of funding based on increase of service to the line.

Kelley: Reminded everyone that the Suicide Prevention Program has its own appropriation line and right now the funding for 988 services are in that line which has sustained the program to-date. This recommendation would provide a separate line specific to 988 with exact expenditures and oversight for the Suicide Prevention Program at DPH to evaluate annually and anticipate growth. Noted that it is more challenging to request an increase every year once it's part of the budget.

Jennifer: Asked to clarify second sentence to be more active and stipulate that DPH will evaluate the fund. The recommendation language was updated with the suggestion.

Danielle: Echoed Kelley's comments on the challenges with a line item in the budget. By the time evaluation is complete for year-end and assessed growth, the annual budget has already been submitted and approved making it nearly impossible to request additional funding, if needed.

Recommendation Three: Combine funding sources between state appropriation and user fees. User fees will be deposited into a designated trust fund for this service. State appropriation will be a set funding amount with any additional funding needed to be obtained through the trust fund.

Karin: Concerned this recommendation undercuts the funding and may only result in the user fee. The legislation may issue a lower user fee and the program could be insufficiently funded.

Pam: Approves of recommendation three but suggested to shift the recommendations so this appears at the beginning as then initial recommendation.

Kelley: Reiterated that this recommendation stipulates that the state appropriation must continue until the trust reaches the full amount.

Debbie: Agreed with Pam that this recommendation dilutes the user fee and provides alternative options rather than being addressed by legislation or the DTC. Suggested a variable amount instead of a set amount to fill gaps or the deficiency amount, amount remaining after user fees are collected.

Paul: Stated respectfully that it dilutes both the appropriation and user fees. If the user fee can work, it avoids adding to taxes and annual struggles for funds.

Debbie: Inquired about the purpose of recommendation three as it could add complexity if the commission prefers a user-fee then the commission should submit the one user fee recommendation.

Kelley: Stated the three recommendations originated at a previous meeting to make the case for both funding sources, user fee and appropriation and added to accommodate requests, and then vote on each individually.

Pam: Suggested recommendation three is the second recommendation to state the commission recommends establishing user fee and the legislature is charged with any deficiency. If a deficiency exists, the appropriation line will cover the deficient funds.

Paul: Explained that the commission does not have legislative authority and unable to dictate that they will fund the deficiency. The commission sets forth recommendations and they are more likely to accept user fee then the deficiency proposal.

Kelley: Recommended the commission to move to a vote and clarified the vote is for what recommendations the commission wants to put forward in the annual report.

Vote on Recommendations

A vote was taken on each recommendation for inclusion in the annual report. Kelley Cunningham read each recommendation, and Lisa Swanson conducted the roll call vote for each recommendation.

Vote 2 on Recommendations: A motion was made to vote on recommendation one as stated by Kerry Collins and seconded by Debbie Helms:

- Recommendation 1: Draft a statute establishing a reasonable user fee amount for all phones within the commonwealth. Funding would be deposited into a trust fund designated specifically for 988 services and only to be used for 988 centers for phone, text, chat services or other 988 related services. The Department of Public Health will be responsible for maintaining and distributing funds.

Charmain Jackman made a motion and Paul Mina seconded motion to vote on recommendation two as stated:

- Recommendation 2: Establish a designated appropriation line within the DPH Suicide Prevention Program to maintain and distribute funds for 988 centers and services. DPH will evaluate said appropriation each year to anticipate further growth of funding based on increase of service to the line.

Kerry Collins made a motion to vote on recommendation three as stated with Paul Mina seconding the motion:

- Recommendation 3: Combine funding sources between state appropriation and user fees. User fees will be deposited into a designated trust fund for this service. State appropriation will be a set funding amount with any additional funding needed to be obtained through the trust fund.

The vote to pass on each recommendation based on commission quorum (detailed record of votes above):

- Recommendation One: Passed
- Recommendation Two: Passed
- Recommendation Three: Did not pass

Next Steps

- Plan to draft a final report to send out to the commission in January for review and comments to have a final vote on the report at the next meeting on **Monday, January 27th, 2025** from 1:30pm – 3pm.
- Annual report must be submitted by March 1st so January is the final meeting before the report is due and needs go through the approval process with the Secretary's Office.
- January Meeting: discuss plans for future commission meetings and share recommendation concerns.

Vote 2 to adjourn: A motion to adjourn was made by Charmain Jackman and seconded by Monna Wallace and approved by roll-call vote (see detailed record of votes above).