

Massachusetts 988 Commission

Meeting Minutes
November 27, 2023
1:30-3:00 pm

Date of meeting: Monday, November 13, 2023

Start time: 1:32 pm

End time: 2:58 pm

Location: Virtual Meeting (Zoom)

Count	Members participating remotely	Vote 1	Vote 2
1	Emily Bailey (chair) – Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS)	X	X
2	Rebecca Ames – Riverside Trauma Center, Riverside Community Care	X	X
3	Damien Cabezas – North Suffolk Community Services	X	X
4	Chris Carleton – Northborough Police Department	A	X
5	Kelly Casey, PhD – Department of Forensic & Clinical Services at William James College	X	X
6	Courtney Chelo – Mass. Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (MSPCC)	A	X
7	Kerry Collins – Executive Office of Public Safety and Security (EOPSS)	X	X
8	Kelley Cunningham – Division of Violence and Injury Prevention, DPH	X	X
9	Brooke Doyle – Department of Mental Health	-	X
10	Eriq Gasse – Cataldo Ambulance Service	-	-
11	Rebekah Gewirtz – National Association of Social Workers - MA & RI Chapter	X	X
12	Gloria Gonzalez – Samaritans Merrimack Valley	X	X
13	Sharon Hanson – Mass. Behavioral Health Partnership (MBHP)	-	-
14	Debbie Helms – Samaritans Merrimack Valley	X	X
15	Jennifer Honig – Mass. Association for Mental Health (MAMH)	X	X
16	Charmain Jackman, PhD – InnoPsych, Inc.	A	X
17	Karin Jeffers – Clinical & Support Options (CSO)	X	X
18	Kathy Marchi – Samaritans, Inc.	X	X
19	Paul Mina – United Way of Tri County & United Way of Pioneer Valley, Mass 211	-	-
20	Ivy Moody – Mental Health Legal Advisors Committee (MHLAC)	X	X

Count	Members participating remotely	Vote 1	Vote 2
21	Kristen Rhodes – City of Northampton Division of Community Care	A	X
22	Myisha Rodrigues, PhD, LMHC – National Alliance on Mental Illness Mass. (NAMI-MA)	-	-
23	Pam Sager – Parent/Professional Advocacy League (PPAL)	A	X
24	Monna Wallace – State 911 Department	X	X

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

Proceedings

Chair Bailey called the meeting of the 988 Commission to order. Since the last meeting, Kristen Rhodes has joined as a new member. Kristen is the Director of the City of Northampton Division of Community Care. This seat is held for a representative of the ACLU of Massachusetts.

Ms. Ames introduced a motion to approve the November 13th meeting minutes, which was seconded by Ms. Jeffers and approved by roll-call vote (see detailed record of votes above).

The main portion of the meeting consisted of discussing the next iteration of recommendations for the report due March 1, 2024, now organized into topical sections. This draft was circulated in advance of the meeting. Discussion included the following themes and key take-aways:

- **Overall**
 - 988 is supported by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), with an understanding that each state has unique infrastructure and, therefore, should tailor implementation to the resources and needs of any given state.
 - The 988 number launched in July 2022 and the Massachusetts Behavioral Health Help Line (BHHL) launched in January 2023; the Commission should focus its report on what has been achieved in its first year with less emphasis on what needs to change, as it's likely that more time needs to pass for the systems to mature before any decisions can be made.
 - At last report-out, 98% of calls to 988 are addressed by 988, so it's not yet obvious what might need to change to improve the response.
 - Through the 911/Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) training on the BHHL and Community Behavioral Health Centers (CBHCs), it has become evident that PSAP staff still need time to feel more comfortable in understanding when to make a warm hand-off to the BHHL and how that's different from 988; in short, the system still has more room for optimal operation.
 - The Commission's role is to make recommendations (e.g., a change in implementation, adding staff to DPH's Suicide Prevention Program), but any operational or implementation changes are the responsibility of DPH (for 988) and DMH (for the BHHL).
 - The group needs more discussion about the purpose of an interagency group or a single point of contact at EOHS or EOPSS to determine if such a recommendation would facilitate collaboration and coordination or if it would add unnecessary complexity.
 - The group will think through whether the user experience could be improved by operational changes versus clearer communication/marketing.
- **Interoperability & streamlining the user experience**

- Commission members are working toward a shared understanding of what “**interoperability**” of phone lines means; for the purposes of Commission recommendations, interoperability should refer to whether the technology platforms supporting each respective phone line can “talk” to each other and facilitate the most high quality consumer experience and seamless warm hand-offs.
- A separate (but related) question about accessibility and the consumer experience is whether to **streamline** the various phone lines to avoid caller confusion about which number to dial when in crisis (e.g., 988 and BHHL).
 - Consumer feedback should inform whether any lines can/should be streamlined to promote ease and avoid redundancies; this must be balanced with the reality that the system was set up decades before the 988 number rolled out when it was still a 10-digit number.
 - The 988 system provides a different type of support than the clinical care and local response offered by the BHHL.
 - At present, there are consumers who still directly call the local 10-digit line that 988 routes to, therefore getting to the 988 services without dialing 988.
 - Operationally, 988 is routed nationally by area code, and the BHHL deploys Mobile Crisis Intervention (MCI); 988 isn’t set up to directly deploy MCI because there needs to be a clinical assessment and rapid deployment, which the BHHL can achieve.
- **Evaluation and Quality Assurance**
 - **Staff:** Samaritans currently conducts quality assurance on the call takers to ensure that they are following protocol and expectations of accreditation.
 - **Callers/User experience:**
 - The group discussed the need to evaluate the caller experience (e.g., an optional survey assessing user satisfaction, did the caller de-escalate, etc.) and/or conduct feasibility of whether such an evaluation is possible; any effort would need to take into account that callers are anonymous and that there is a risk to asking too much or creating barriers for people who reached out.
 - The Parent/Professional Advocacy League (PPAL) regularly conducts surveys on families, including their experience with 988 and the BHHL; PPAL could continue to collect this and even add additional queries, as well as work with an organization that represents people who regularly use 988, such as the National Alliance on Mental Health (NAMI) or Kiva Centers, to collect informal qualitative data.
- **Budget/Financial Strategy**
 - The Commission wants to consider whether there are any budget line items that exist for both 988 and the BHHL that could be streamlined to avoid duplicating efforts, such as for marketing or public education.
 - A key recommendation is to continue to monitor the budget so currently-funded services remain (e.g., call center staff, 24/7 response) and anything additional is requested when needed and accounted for in funding priorities; current funding is through supplemental budgets, which aren’t guaranteed year to year.

The next meeting of the Commission will take place on Monday, December 18th from 1:30-3pm to continue the discussion of draft recommendations.

Vote to adjourn:

Chair Bailey requested a motion to adjourn. Ms. Gewirtz introduced the motion, which was seconded by Mr. Carleton and approved by roll-call vote (see detailed record of votes above).

Vote 1 on approval of November 13th meeting minutes:

Rebecca Ames introduced a motion to approve the November 13th meeting minutes, which was seconded by Karin Jeffers and approved by roll-call vote (see detailed record of votes above).

Vote 2 to adjourn:

Chair Bailey requested a motion to adjourn. Rebekah Gewirtz introduced the motion, which was seconded by Chris Carleton and approved by roll-call vote (see detailed record of votes above).

The meeting was adjourned at 2:58 pm.

Meeting Materials

1. Draft meeting minutes from September 18, 2023
2. Draft bullets for 2024 annual report to the Legislature