**MA Commission on Falls Prevention Meeting**

**MA Department of Public Health (DPH)**

**Virtual Open meeting via Webex Platform**

**December 14, 2020; 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM**

**Meeting Minutes**

*(Accepted 4-27-21)*

**Members Attending Remotely:** Rebekah “Bekah” Thomas (Chair), Colleen Bayard, Almas Dossa, Ish Gupta, Melissa Jones, Jennifer Kaldenberg, Joanne Moore, Annette Peele, Emily Shea, Deborah Washington

**Pending Member Attending Remotely:** Brian Doherty

**Members Not in Attendance:** Helen Magliozzi, Mary Sullivan

**Others Attending Remotely:** Carla Cicerchia (staff), DPH-Div. of Violence and Injury Prevention/Injury Prevention and Control Program

**1)****Welcome/Introductions/Commission Business:** (Bekah Thomas, Chair)

* Commission Chair Bekah Thomas opened the meeting by greeting all in attendance (remotely). Since it had been more than a year since the Commission formally convened, she proposed that each member/staff introduce themself and their affiliation.
* After introductions and before getting started on the primary focus of the meeting (acceptance of the Phase 3 Report) the Chair acknowledged the challenging times that all have been facing with the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic, especially with so many of the Commission members working in the health care and service delivery sectors. As an icebreaker she asked members to share anything positive or lessons learned from their experiences during the ongoing pandemic. Members offered some of these thoughts (composite):
* using a virtual platform has afforded better attendance at various meetings and more engagement by stakeholders
* lots of things are non-essential (the pandemic has put this in perspective)
* raised awareness of equity issues/disparities on many levels especially concerning people of color
* the commitment and hard work of people in community-based organizations, the health care field, and local government in trying to help our citizens during this crisis has been amazing
* figuring out how to adjust services and pivot to meet the needs and demands of clients and patients has been impressive
* it has been a time to learn new skills, become more efficient, and find new ways to stay calm and mindful
* The Commission members were then asked to review a draft of the minutes from the last meeting which took place on 4/24/19. The Chair requested a motion to approve the minutes, which was received and seconded; the minutes were unanimously accepted.

**2) Discussion/Vote: Final Draft of 2020 Legislative Report of Recommendations:** *Phase 3 Report: Improving Integration of Falls Risk assessment and Referral in Health Care Practices*(Bekah/All)

* Bekah began discussion of the Phase 3 Report by sharing some updates about the development of the report. She noted that this final draft had been through intensive vetting over the last few months through DPH and the Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHSS). The report and/or proposed recommendations were also shared with certain agencies and stakeholders such as the Board of Registration in Medicine and the MA Medical Society for review and feedback.
* She made a point of thanking and acknowledging the contributions and hard work of the volunteer Commission members comprising the 2020 Report Drafting Work Group, who along with Bekah, met multiple times in open meeting beginning in 2019 to assemble the first draft of the report: Annette Peele, Jennifer Kaldenberg, and Melissa Jones. She also thanked Julie Ray, Senior Editor of Communications at JSI for reviewing and editing the first draft, Jennifer Raymond, Director of the Healthy Living Center of Excellence/Chief Strategy Officer, Elder Services of Merrimack Valley and the North Shore for serving as a content advisor, and Carla Cicerchia the Commission staff.
* Bekah invited members to comment about the report or ask any questions about it. Several members expressed how pleased they were with the final report, e.g., “a stellar piece of work” (Deborah Washington).
* Brian Doherty asked for more explanation about the needs assessment performed by the MA Executive Office of Elder Affairs (EOEA) that is a focus of recommendation 5 of the report: *The Massachusetts Executive Office of Elder Affairs, should add falls prevention programming to its statewide needs assessment to improve our understanding of the landscape of services, especially those that cater to culturally diverse and disabled older adult populations.* Annette Peele the Commission member representing EOEA explained how performing this statewide needs assessment and survey (which happens every 4 years) helps the agency determine how federal dollars will be spent under the [Older Americans Act](https://acl.gov/about-acl/authorizing-statutes/older-americans-act). Ted Zimmerman is the person at EOEA who oversees this process and is currently working on developing fall-related questions to capture the information proposed by the Commission in recommendation #5. She noted that results of these assessments end up in EOEA’s MA State Plan report that is submitted to the federal government (Administration on Community Living). The reports are publicly posted on the EOEA website: [About the Executive Office of Elder Affairs | Mass.gov](https://www.mass.gov/service-details/about-the-executive-office-of-elder-affairs)
* Before taking a final voice vote on the report for acceptance, Bekah reminded members how this Phase 3 report was different from the Commission’s previous Phase 2 report in that the recommendations were structured to provide actionable steps for external entities, e.g., primary care providers to promote reduction of older adult falls, rather than directing the Commission to initiate the action.
* Bekah recommended that the Phase 3 Report be formally accepted by the Commission. Commission staff read aloud the names of each member and they indicated a “yes” or “no” vote. All 10 members present voted “yes” to approve the report for official submission to the MA Legislature (Joint Committee on Health Care Financing) and Secretary of EOHHS.

**3) Future Plans and Closing Remarks** (Bekah Thomas)

* Before concluding the meeting, Bekah shared some brief additional updates:
* DPH Injury Surveillance epidemiologists will be preparing a new data report focused on older adult falls in 2021; this is significant because they will be using a new federal definition for falls. This change in definition coincides with the switch from ICD-9 -CM (International Classification of Diseases, Ninth Revision, Clinical Modification) to ICD-10-CM injury data codes. The new definition and classification system may change the way the fall-related data has looked in the past; the epidemiologists will pay close attention to identifying any trends with these data, as well as any disparities applying a racial equity lens.
* The Commission’s next report will be due in September 2022. Commission members should start thinking ahead about the focus for this next report, for example, best practices revealed during the pandemic should potentially be explored. The process for developing this report can be discussed at the Commission’s next meeting (not yet scheduled) in 2021.
* Bekah thanked everyone for their involvement and contributions as Commission members and wished them good holidays. The meeting was then adjourned.

*Meeting concluded at 11:45 AM.*