

MassHealth Member Advisory Committee (MAC)

Meeting 1 (virtual)

February 24th, 2025, from 2:00 pm to 4:00 pm

Make-Up Meeting on March 20, 2025, from 12:00 pm to 1:30 pm

Attendance

- 14 out of 17 MAC members attended the first MAC meeting, while 3 members attended the make-up meeting
- MassHealth team: Malinda Ellwood, Mike Levine, Viveka Prakash-Zawisza, Celia Segel
- UMass Team: Hilary Deignan, Catie Geary, and Jennifer Hitchcock

Logistics

UMass gave an overview of meeting logistics, including a brief Zoom tutorial and an overview of the note-taking process:

- The UMass team will draft notes from each meeting
- MAC member feedback will not be paired with names as part of the notes
- MAC members will have an opportunity to review the notes from each meeting before they are finalized.

Members may request accommodations at any time.

Welcome and Introductions

Malinda Ellwood and Viveka Prakash-Zawisza, of MassHealth, the meeting facilitators, introduced themselves and welcomed the MassHealth Member Advisory Committee (MAC) to its first meeting.

Jennifer Hitchcock and Hilary Deignan, of UMass Medical School, also introduced themselves.

MassHealth shared a map showing that MAC members come from areas across the state. MassHealth and MAC members participated in an activity where they were asked to share some background information on themselves and their hopes for the MAC. These hopes are reflected later in the notes under the “MAC Hopes and Goals” section.

MassHealth leadership, including Mike Levine, Assistant Secretary for MassHealth, and Celia Segel, Chief of Staff at MassHealth, introduced themselves.

Mike highlighted how important it is for MassHealth to regularly consult members and seek their advice in order to create the best possible programs. He talked about the importance of the MAC and thanked all of the members for participating.

He recognized that the MAC is representing over 2 million members and emphasized MassHealth’s commitment to understanding what members care about, listening to what they have to say, and being transparent and accountable to following up, whether it’s an idea that MassHealth can change, or implement or not.

Mike also acknowledged the rapid pace of activity at the federal level with the new Administration. MassHealth has been in a similar position before with previous Administration changes. There have been no changes to MassHealth’s programs or policies. MAC members will be updated if changes are made.

He closed by reiterating how much he appreciated the commitment of the MAC members and his certainty that they would be improving care for everyone.

Background on the MAC

MassHealth shared background on how the MAC came about:

- MassHealth started work on the MAC over three years ago, when MassHealth was looking to increase member engagement and observed that members (and their caretakers) were often missing from existing stakeholder groups
- Based on feedback from community members, MassHealth contracted with [Collective Insight](#) (CI), a Massachusetts woman-owned community engagement firm, with expertise and experience in consumer engagement to help launch the MAC
- In spring 2024, MassHealth worked with the CI team to host community-brainstorming sessions, which were attended by members, providers, advocates, and other community participants, which helped inform key aspects of the MAC
- More background and other information on the MAC can be found at: [MassHealth Member Advisory Committee | Mass.gov](#)

Objectives for First Few MAC Meetings

The first few MAC meetings will be led by MassHealth and will focus on establishing MAC processes and procedures. Objectives will include developing Meeting Guidelines, goals, and bylaws, and discussing how the group will engage with other MassHealth committees, like the MassHealth Program Advisory Committee (MPAC).

Group Discussion on Meeting Guidelines

MassHealth led the group in a discussion on developing meeting guidelines. Meeting guidelines:

- Describe expectations for how everyone will engage with one another
- Create a safe and welcoming place for everyone
- May change over time to reflect the needs and preferences of the group

In conjunction with the guidelines shared in the slide, MAC members made the following recommendations:

- Be respectful of others and assume others have the best intentions
- Join meetings on time and end meetings on time
- Come to meetings prepared, having read materials in advance
- Establish a parking lot for topics that cannot be covered in a particular meeting but should be discussed by the MAC at a later date
- Speakers should avoid using acronyms and jargon
 - MassHealth will work on a list of acronyms for people to refer to
- Incorporate icebreakers into each meeting as part of the guidelines as a way to get to know each other and to check in with everyone about how they're doing
- Meeting guidelines should be specific, and include the "how" of implementing them
- The group did not create any requirements on camera usage for virtual meetings, as members had different perspectives on this issue:
 - For example, some people noted that they appreciated being able to connect with one another face to face, and that being on camera can be helpful for lip reading
 - Others felt being on camera should be a choice, and noted that being on camera might be harmful for individuals who are having a bad day, are disabled, or experiencing body dysmorphia

Potential Suggestions for MAC Bylaws

Some ideas were also shared that may be helpful to consider when developing MAC bylaws, including:

- developing processes for creating workgroups or subcommittees to work on specific topics (e.g., gender affirming care, women's health, or supporting members with disabilities)
- documenting guidelines for in-person meetings, including transportation support and maintaining a virtual option
- stipend policies
- sharing the MAC's activities and recommendations with the broader community
- clarifying how the MAC will make decisions as a group
- creating guidelines around consensus building

Purpose of the MAC

MassHealth gave an overview of the MAC's purpose:

"The purpose of the MAC is for MAC members to provide advice to MassHealth on topics related to policy development and program implementation to improve quality and access to care for MassHealth members."

MassHealth would like the MAC to give advice on policy and implementation, which could include, for example, looking at what services are covered, who can access different types of services, the settings services are received in, and how providers and members know how to access services.

MassHealth also noted there may be issues MAC members raise that MassHealth is unable to address or act on. In some cases this may be because there are other agencies involved in particular programs or because of particular state or federal rules that apply. MassHealth will aim to be transparent and accountable about actions taken or not taken.

Members also shared their thoughts on the MAC's purpose:

- MAC members were supportive of the purpose and affirmed their belief that learning about MassHealth members' experiences is very important and will help improve MassHealth programs
- Members suggested that the purpose could also be strengthened by:
 - Simplifying the wording and putting into plain language so that it can be more easily understood.

- Clarifying the “where, what, why, when, who” or adding this information as part of a mission statement

Hopes and Goals for the MAC

MassHealth shared their goals for the MAC, which include:

- Learning about member experiences with the MassHealth program
- Learning about member priorities for MassHealth
- Working together to help guide programs and policies that ultimately improve quality and access to care for members

During meeting introductions and as part of this discussion, MAC members also shared their hopes and goals for the MAC. All emphasized wanting to make a positive impact on MassHealth members and their families, as summarized below.

Themes included:

- Making the MAC meaningful:
 - Ensuring people are actually being heard and understand how to make change and not just ticking a box
 - Working on something innovative and not just the usual things consumers are supposed to do
 - Identifying an initiative that the MAC and MassHealth can achieve together
 - Hope that the MAC will lead to real, impactful and positive change over time
 - Acknowledging the help some MAC members have received and wanting to pay it forward
 - Designing a MAC that is meaningful and sustainable so that it benefits others to come
- Highlighting existing barriers to programs by:
 - Sharing personal experience
 - Learning from each other and supporting one another
 - Connecting with other organizations to identify barriers their consumers face (for example, reaching out to the Mass Commission for the Blind or the Mass Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing)
- Strengthening awareness of MassHealth eligibility, benefits, and services, for example, by:
 - Improving MAC members’ skills and knowledge of MassHealth to share with their communities

- Strengthening information sharing with all MassHealth members so that everyone gets the same experience
- Increasing awareness of targeted programs, like the Frail Elder Waiver (FEW)
- Identifying available services to support specific communities, e.g., people with disabilities, immigrants, and Deaf and Hard of Hearing communities
- Exploring creative ideas for outreach, such as having specialized teams that focus on communicating with different populations, such as those in nursing homes or those under the age of 21
- Strengthening MassHealth's social media presence
- Improving member communication and customer service support, by e.g.:
 - Sharing examples of actual member interactions with customer service as learning opportunities
 - Identifying potential trainings for customer service representatives
 - Ensuring appropriate follow up is provided to members
 - Improving written notices to members
- Simplifying MassHealth processes
 - For example, by working to understand and address the complexity faced by members with disabilities and their families when navigating MassHealth
- Improving care, including:
 - Advocating for coverage of new or more comprehensive services
 - Working to improve continuity of care
 - Promoting health equity and reducing disparities across populations, including, for example, strengthening access to care for:
 - Deaf and Hard of Hearing communities
 - Disability communities (including parents and family caregivers)
 - Immigrant communities
 - Transgender communities
 - Improving quality of life and care for families and children by ensuring family voices are heard, including:
 - families of adopted children and
 - families caring for loved ones with disabilities
- Increasing transparency, including:
 - Promoting member understanding of the "whys" behind services and program decision making
 - Improving clarity with respect to MassHealth processes
 - Increasing overall member engagement

Determining MAC Agenda Topics

The group is eager to begin discussions on MassHealth policy and programs and discussed some ideas for determining discussion topics moving forward. These included:

- Providing more opportunities for MAC members to share their personal experiences related to MassHealth
- Sending out a survey to determine what MAC members are most interested in
- Reviewing all of the challenges that MAC applicants had identified in their applications
- Spending time in meetings learning about proposed topics to determine whether the topic should be explored further.

MAC members will work together with MassHealth in upcoming MAC meetings to determine agendas and set priorities.

Parking Lot

MAC members also highlighted the importance of staying on track with agenda items by noting when some ideas are important, but not necessarily on topic, and putting those ideas into a parking lot for future discussion.

MassHealth will track the “parking lot” issues and the MAC will periodically review them.

The following were suggested for the parking lot:

- Request that MassHealth provide an overview of its internal staffing structure as well as an overview of programs and plans from a member perspective
- Request that MassHealth provide information on how quality of care is measured, including member surveys and how MassHealth uses survey results.
- Requests for discussion of specific topics, including:
 - The types of providers required to perform specific services in different settings, such as the types of providers or caregivers who can help families with catheter changes
 - Improving access to specific benefits, including gender affirming care services like hair removal, by simplifying administrative processes and expanding provider network capacity.

Wrap Up and Closing

MassHealth reiterated the common themes heard throughout the discussion:

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- the desire for members to continue to get to know one another and learn more about each other's experiences
- goal setting related to, e.g., increasing awareness and understanding of MassHealth programs and services, improving customer support and communication, strengthening benefits and services, and promoting transparency
- general excitement to get to the concrete parts of MassHealth that members want to work on.

Agenda for Meeting 2

MassHealth outlined the objectives for Meeting 2, which will include:

1. Reviewing Meeting Guidelines
2. Learning about federal requirements for the MAC and the relationship to the MassHealth Program Advisory Committee (MPAC)
3. Beginning to develop MAC bylaws
4. Continuing to discuss goals of the MAC

Next Steps

- MAC members will continue thinking about guidelines and goals, and start to think about ideas for MAC bylaws
- MAC participants will complete the Reflection Survey
- MassHealth will:
 - simplify the description of the MAC's purpose
 - synthesize the meeting guidelines and goals that were discussed
 - work on an acronym list
 - send out meeting notes for review by the group
 - share results of the Reflection Survey and use the information to improve future meetings
 - send around a list of future MAC meeting dates and times for 2025