

Ollie's Law Advisory Committee Meeting
Minutes November 18th, 2025 | 9 AM – 10:30 AM
Approved 12.17.25

Advisory Committee Attendance

Mike Cahill
Louis Pacheco
Jeni Mather
Carmen Rustenbeck
Dr. Erin Doyle
Francine Coughlin
Debra Cameron
Kara Holmquist
Kevin Sullivan
Katherine MacKenzie

Advisory Committee Absence

Mark Hogan-absent for meeting
Amy Baxter-absent for meeting
Noelle Wilson-absent for meeting

MDAR Attendees

Katherine Foote
Sheri Gustafson

Public Attendees

15 additional ZOOM attendees

This open meeting was held virtually over the ZOOM webinar platform. 853 6891 2471
Meeting ID: Passcode: animal

Agenda with Minutes

I. Attendance-Advisory Committee Roll Call

Mather started meeting at 9:12 AM by roll call. Meeting started late due to technical issues. Pacheco-present, Doyle-present, Rustenbeck-present, Coughlin-present, Holmquist- present, Sullivan-present, MacKenzie-present, Cahill-present, Cameron-present

II. Approval of Minutes-from October 21st, 2025 (vote required)

Mather asked for two edits to the minutes then Cahill motioned, Mather second to accept minutes from 10.21.25. Pacheco-approved, Doyle-approved, Rustenbeck-abstained (not present at last meeting), Coughlin-approved, Cameron-approved, Holmquist-approved, Sullivan-approved, , MacKenzie-approved, Cahill-approved. Minutes from 10/21/25 accepted.

III. Operator Education and Training competencies to be required

- A. Foundational animal behavior knowledge and baselines**
- B. Baseline competencies in husbandry, medical awareness, and basic first aid**
- C. Review of Potential Learning Platforms for Kennel Staff**
- D. Review Potential Testing Platform**

Mather started the discussion on education, clarifying that they were talking about the education and knowledge needed for kennel staff, not dog training. Mather felt that it is important that the kennel owner be trained in topics such as basic first aid, breaking up dog fights, safe dog handling, and dog body language.

Coughlin stated that she felt it would be a minimum requirement that the business owner be trained, and that it is important for all kennel staff to know the basics. Coughlin said staff should be able to recognize when medical treatment is needed for a dog and when a dog needs to go home or be removed from the kennel. She said that first aid is minimal, but that CPR is not quite as important. Coughlin reminded the AC that she submitted a list of her recommended areas of education at the last meeting.

Doyle stated that she also sent a list of the medical issues she felt were important for staff to recognize and plan for at the last meeting.

Mather said she felt it was important for staff to recognize urgent medical issues like bloat and to have a relationship with a nearby veterinarian. She said that she agreed with the list of topics that Coughlin presented previously.

Coughlin stated that she felt it is important for staff to know how to properly exercise dogs and that, while education can prevent certain things, it won't prevent everything, so action plans are important.

Doyle said that she felt knowing first aid and CPR was not as critical for staff as recognizing medical issues and knowing what steps to take to address them. She stated that it's very important that staff have plans they can follow and know who to call if a medical concern is discovered.

Mather asked the AC to consider what would be heavy lifts for the people in the industry to meet. Coughlin and Mather both stated that focusing on basic education was important.

Cameron stated that she had designed a form called "Medical Incident Agreement" and shared it with the AC. Some of the items she highlighted on the form were that there were three contacts who needed to be listed for incidents to be reported to, and that various protocols were listed. She further stated that she felt the education requirements for staff on dog body language, how to break up fights, etc., are important, but that unless the AC provided very specific sources, it feels like an empty resource.

Pacheco said he agreed that recognizing medical issues was important but asked what resources MDAR had to ensure the education would be completed. Does MDAR have the ability to test or train?

Cahill said he felt MDAR would not be able to conduct either testing or training. He said that MDAR's role would be more reactionary. MDAR would investigate incidents if they happen. Cahill emphasized that MDAR does not have the staffing or ability to police for prevention purposes.

Pacheco asked whether there are any regulations that could be enacted to shift enforcement towards a more preventive approach.

Cahill said that the Ollie's Law statutes are under MGL Chapter 140, but MDAR's authority is under MGL Chapter 129; therefore, it is unclear what action we can take. MDAR cannot write authority into regulations if it is not clearly stated in the MGLs.

Holmquist said she will review the statutes to see if there are small tweaks that can clarify authority.

Mather said that when the Ollie's Law bill was passed, it authorized the promulgation of regulations. Regulations may need to be adjusted or changed as more data from kennels is reported. Mather also stated that she felt a simple disclosure form was reasonable, but that Cameron's document would take too much manpower to enforce. Mather said she did agree with requiring every incident to be reported. For testing, Mather said that she felt PACC is a good platform to explore, but that required training may need to be instituted later.

Cameron said that the form she presented might be available to use if the organization doesn't have its own form.

Coughlin expressed that she liked Cameron's form but did not feel it was necessary, since groups may already have their own system in place.

Cahill said that MDAR maintains an Ollie's Law Information webpage, which can serve as a place to keep created forms and resources. If we decide to include a disclosure requirement in the regulations, then a form can be created for that purpose. On the training side, we would have to keep any requirement loose, since it would be very labor-intensive to enforce and track.

Mather asked whether there could be a website listing training resources that states the resources are not endorsed.

Pacheco asked whether they could obtain information on the ACO training requirements and compliance.

MacKenzie stated that MDAR posts a list of preapproved training options, many of which are available online.

Sullivan stated that ACOs have access to approved CE ACO training on the MDAR page; however, training for kennels may need to be looser, such as listing topics only. Keeping the training requirements loose would keep them more enforceable for all sizes of kennels.

Mather asked for clarification on whether Sullivan was recommending required CEs for all kennel staff or only for the owner/operator. Mather said she supports required education for the owner/operator, but not for all staff.

Sullivan stated that he believed requiring annual CE for all kennel staff would not be overreach, as it would benefit the business and reduce liability.

Coughlin said that she liked Sullivan's idea but did not see it as enforceable without a standardization of training. She felt it was important to go back to the basics.

Rustenbeck said that she felt the training in the outline is already very broad, and that ongoing awareness is important for staff.

Mather said that she supports leaving training broad and allowing owners to determine the courses needed based on the general topics.

MacKenzie said she felt that encouraging positive change and offering best-practice recommendations for education would be better than issuing penalties. She also stated that she will need time to think about the enforcement side and thinks handling issues on a case-by-case basis will be important.

Cameron said she supports broad education, language and a disclosure form. She also said that it would be easy for an organization to simply check things off on a disclosure form, so it may be hard to know if the training was actually completed.

Rustenbeck said that IBPSA believes in education and training at all levels, but she feels that, for Ollie's Law purposes, a broader perspective on the matter is needed at this time.

Mather said she supports the broad approach and that education may need to be addressed further depending on the number of issues that arise.

Rustenbeck asked whether an MDAR page could include a link to an IBPSA page listing subjects, courses, and prices.

Foote said that MDAR will have to be careful not to make it seem like they are endorsing one training platform over another; however, she sees the benefit of getting information out. She mentioned that she will think about options and get back to the AC as needed.

Mather asked whether the AC agreed that education requirements should be based on broad competencies. Mather stated that it is also in support of PACC testing, even though it may not currently be something that can be regulated.

IV. New Business

A. Open forum for additional committee input

B. Topics for future agenda development

Coughlin mentioned that she will not be able to make the next meeting, but should be available for other meetings.

Pacheco asked if they could get data on how many ACOs there are and how much they collaborate on enforcement.

Cahill said there are roughly 500 ACOs in Massachusetts, and kennel enforcement will be addressed through the Ollie's law process.

Mather asked if there are any lingering topics that MDAR would like addressed at the next meetings.

Cahill said he currently does not have a list and that he will be drafting regulations and can ask for clarifications on matters as needed at future meetings.

MacKenzie mentioned that she will not be at the next meeting.

Mather asked for a motion to adjourn. Rustenbeck gave a motion. Cahill gave a second. Meeting Adjourned at 10:34 AM.