

October 6th, 2026
1:30p to 4:30p
Meeting Minutes

Meeting Focus

The task force reviewed draft recommendations developed through its prior sessions, focusing on actionable next steps to strengthen disability-inclusive crisis response. Members discussed implementation oversight, training, community engagement, coordination across response systems, data transparency, and accountability. The meeting was intended to refine recommendations for final consideration.

Approval of Previous Minutes

The previous meeting minutes were approved. The discussion referenced revisions to the community survey approach.

Implementation, Oversight and Accountability

Members emphasized that recommendations should lead to sustained action rather than conclude with the task force's report. Discussion centered on a smaller implementation or steering committee, potentially established by executive order or another formal mechanism, with clear responsibilities, staffing, resources, timelines and measurable outcomes.

Members considered whether certain measures should ultimately be codified in legislation to ensure continuity across administrations. The group also discussed having the implementation body convene short-term, topic-specific community groups while identifying issues requiring longer-term formal action.

Members recommended continued community engagement, including reporting back on survey findings and progress. A letter to the incoming administration requesting continuation of the work was also proposed.

Representation and Meaningful Participation

Members called for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, autistic individuals and other people with lived disability experience to participate meaningfully in all areas of the task force's recommendations.

Discussion included accessible recruitment and applications, orientation and practical supports, and appropriate compensation. Members considered amending relevant legislation to designate seats for people with IDD on existing bodies. Language preferences were discussed, including avoiding "living with" formulations and respecting both person-first and identity-first language.

Training for County Employees and Crisis Responders

The task force discussed assessing existing training for police, emergency medical services, dispatchers, crisis call takers and other personnel. Identified needs included de-escalation, scenario-based practice, trauma-informed approaches, effective communication with people with I/DD or autism, responding when a call changes from a criminal matter to a behavioral

health crisis, and interactions with caregivers and family members. Members emphasized involving self-advocates in the review and development of training.

Participants also discussed potentially more specific language than general calls to “improve” training. Suggested measures included documenting training content, hours and frequency; assessing refresher instruction; evaluating learning and outcomes; and tracking which personnel have completed training.

Education, Outreach and Community Partnerships

Members discussed the need to include social service, health, housing and other community providers in first responder trainings. Discussion also elevated the need for cyber safety education, accessible and translated materials, plain-language communication, ASL access, outreach to underrepresented communities and funding for community-based behavioral health supports.

Crisis Response Protocols and Coordination

The group discussed improving coordination among 911, 988, mobile crisis and law enforcement responses, including call transfers, decision-making protocols and follow-up. Members raised the value of including people with lived experience in the existing MDH/HCHD collaborative.

Members also discussed providing an alternative crisis response model and strengthening the independent action review process.

Data, Evaluation and Transparency

Members emphasized the need for reliable data on crisis calls, police interactions with people with disabilities, referrals, follow-up and outcomes.

There was agreement the need for coordination between 911 and 988 data and a publicly reported dashboard. A periodic (i.e., annual) report was also proposed, to give context to the dashboard data. Participants discussed the challenges of interpreting cross-agency data and called for meaningful metrics and regular review rather than reporting without follow-through.

Crisis Intervention Capacity and Less-Lethal Options

The task force discussed assessing the current capacity and role of the Howard County Police Department Crisis Intervention Team section and whether expansion is necessary to meet community needs. Members also considered recommendations for viable intermediate-range less-lethal options, with appropriate training and attention to officer safety.

Adjournment and Next Steps

- The meeting concluded with thanks to members for their participation in the task force.
- Next steps:
 - Revise recommendations using clearer, action-oriented language and incorporating the meeting’s feedback, and circulate for final review.
 - Reconvene on October 15 @ 10 am for a final voting session.