



MARYLAND OVERDOSE RESPONSE
ADVISORY COUNCIL

**Citizen Advisory Workgroup
Meeting Minutes
October 8, 2026**

Attendance: Thomas Higdon, Jessie Dunleavy, Tammy Collins, Sean Baker, Jim Raley, Jacqueline Salb, Erin Sibel Sezgin, Amy Young, Johanna Dolan, Barbara Allen, Megan Murnane, Joe Rogers, Yngvild Olsen

Meeting Minutes

Unanimous approval of the meeting minutes for September 21, 2026

Review action items from last meeting

- Ben to follow up on distribution plan for report; committee briefings - *in progress*
- Erin Sibel to follow up on HRI and Medicaid changes information, specifically about contingency planning - *in progress*
- Teresa/ Ben: Send out invites for future meetings - *Invites sent through 12/14*
- WG Members: submit list of future discussion topics by 9/30 to Thomas and Barbara - *Thomas compiled*
- Barbara and Teresa to prep ORF-related presentation to CAW - *will present at the next meeting*

Discussion:

- **Discussion on Group Continuity and Staggered Terms:** Members discussed term length. Staggered terms—similar to the ORF advisory council where appointments span one, two, or three years—were also discussed. Jessie Dunleavy and Barbara Allen expressed support for continuity and staggered terms, with Barbara noting that staggering brings new blood without starting from scratch. Thomas Higdon noted that Teresa was inviting recommendations for MOOR and the Lt. Governor.
- **Future Scope and Perpetuity of the Citizens Advisory Workgroup:** Barbara Allen suggested continuing the group in perpetuity to maintain a focus on lived and living experience. Teresa Heath clarified that MOOR and the Lt. Governor are interested in continuing with the workgroup and invited the

workgroup to advise on what its future structure, service length, and leadership changes should look like.

- **Timing of Terms and Onboarding New Members:** Amy Young asked about the group's one-year mark, which Thomas Higdon identified as January 13th. Thomas suggested discussing term lengths and staggering broadly without creating unnecessary bureaucracy. Barbara Allen suggested an informal buddy assignment system to help new members get acclimated, while Jessie Dunleavy felt natural turnover and welcoming new voices worked well.
- **Current Membership and Geographic Representation:** Teresa Heath noted that current membership stands at 14 people across all five regions, including seven from central Maryland, two from the capital region, one from western Maryland, two from southern Maryland, and two from the Eastern Shore. Teresa noted they lost another member from Western Maryland who had not attended since May, suggesting it is a good time to recruit a replacement from that region.
- **Legislative Initiatives and Value of State Engagement:** Jim Raley noted that MORAC or state leadership should dictate whether the group continues, but emphasized that the group brings significant value through legislative initiatives and written testimony. Sean Baker asked about future tasks, and Teresa Heath -MOOR- clarified that an annual report to the General Assembly via MORAC is required by November 1st every year, with the next report due around the same time next year.
- **Role of the Advisory Group and Government Collaboration:** Sean Baker expressed about continuing the workgroup if their recommendations will lead to changes, citing a past experience with other workgroups.

Teresa Heath clarified the group's role as a formalized opportunity for individuals with lived experience to advise state agencies, noting that state agencies deeply value their input as it helps to advance incremental progress on issues.
- **Long-Term Recommendations and Advocacy Boundaries:** Several members agreed that many recommendations require longer than a year to adopt and that the group will be valuable for tackling post-legislative session items. Yngvild Olsen raised the tension between acting as an advisory group versus an independent advocacy group. Thomas Higdon emphasized that members have a unique opportunity to shape the group's identity and function beyond initial limitations.
- **Report Formatting and Interim Submissions:** Thomas Higdon proposed producing smaller interim reports on subtopics like housing and recovery

culture rather than cramming everything into one annual report. Jessie Dunleavy argued that topics have significant overlap and gain more impact when combined, noting that they had previously requested an extension from July 1st to August. Thomas Higdon maintained misgivings about massive single reports, while Yngvild Olsen suggested chapter-based comprehensive reports to balance depth and timing.

- **Upcoming Statewide Strategy and Strategic Plan Review:** Teresa Heath reported that Secretary Keller presented a high-level overview of the report to MDH yesterday, receiving positive engagement. Teresa outlined that MORAC's focus next year will shift to tracking implementation of a statewide strategy that is currently being updated. Thomas Higdon asked if the group could comment on this strategic plan, and Teresa Heath confirmed they would provide concrete information at the next meeting.

Action Items:

- **MOOR** - Identify another member from Western Maryland
- **Thomas & Barbara** will draft a proposal re: terms and structure
 - **All members** - review draft referenced above and provide feedback
- **All members** - add comments to the potential [topics document](#)
- **Teresa & Barbara** - prepare presentation on ORF for the next meeting

Next meeting: Monday, October 19th at 3pm