



MARYLAND OVERDOSE RESPONSE  
**ADVISORY COUNCIL**

PREVENTION · HARM REDUCTION · TREATMENT · RECOVERY · PUBLIC SAFETY



## Inaugural Meeting Minutes

Thursday, February 15, 2024

10:00–11:30 a.m.

### Welcome

*Lt. Governor Aruna Miller*

### Introductions

- Emily Keller, Special Secretary of Overdose Response
- Alyssa Lord, Deputy Secretary of Behavioral Health, MDH
- Heather Zenone, Assistant Secretary for Policy, Dept of Human Services
- Stuart Campbell, Special Advisory for Economic Mobility, Dept of Housing and Community Development
- Casey Tiefenwerth, Special Grants Program Manager, Division of Workforce Development and Adult Learning, Dept of Labor
- Jerel Registre, Chief of Staff, Dept of Commerce
- Reginald Burke, Director, Youth Development Branch, Division of Student Support, Academic Enrichment, and Educational Policy, Dept of Education
- Michael Richards, Director, Substance Use Disorder Treatment Services, Dept of Public Safety and Correctional Services
- Anna Sierra, Chief Development Officer, Dept of Emergency Management
- Dana Burl, Communications, Outreach, and Advocacy Program, Veterans Affairs
- Barbara Sigler, Communications Director, Dept of Aging
- Kirsten Bosak, Director of Health and Behavioral Health Policy, Dept of Disabilities
- Martin Hammond, Director of Criminal Justice Programs, Governor's Office of Crime Prevention and Policy
- Melissa Rothstein, Chief of External Affairs, Office of the Public Defender
- Richard "Gray" Barton, Executive Director of the Judiciary's Office of Problem-Solving Courts
- Lieutenant Colonel Rosemary Chappell, Bureau Chief, Criminal Investigation Bureau, MD State Police
- Randy Linthicum, Associate Director, Maryland Institute of Emergency Medical Services Systems

*\* A representative from the Department of Juvenile Services was not present at this meeting.*

## Opening Remarks

*Lt. Governor Aruna Miller*

- The Moore-Miller Administration's vision for addressing the overdose crisis
- Purpose of the council & council duties
- Member roles and expectations

## Overdose Trends in Maryland

*Special Secretary of Overdose Response Emily Keller*

- Overdose trends
- Office role and responsibilities
- Process for updating Maryland's Inter-Agency Overdose Coordination Plan
- Discussion/overview of town hall feedback

Meeting materials available at <https://stopoverdose.maryland.gov/morac/>.

## Discussion

### Department of Veterans Affairs

Do we have data on overdoses among veterans?

*Maryland's Office of Overdose Response will send SUDORS data.*

Do we perform overdose fatality review or psychological autopsies to gain a better understanding of the circumstances?

*The Maryland department of Health (MDH) coordinates with Overdose Fatality Review Teams in the local jurisdictions. These teams review cases related to overdose deaths and make recommendations on how to improve gaps in services.*

The Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs (MDVA) is interested in the intersection of overdose and suicide.

### Department of Health

There is a need to address upstream factors and social determinants of health related to substance use disorder.

There is a healthcare workforce shortage and this council has an opportunity to recommend actions that will help build up the workforce.

BHA is looking to further deploy SOR (State Opioid Response) funds from SAMHSA to community based organizations to partner with local jurisdictions.

Maryland is one of only three states that doesn't currently offer assisted outpatient treatment (AOT). MDH has a departmental bill ([SB 453/HB 576](#)) in this session to change this. AOT is meant to serve as one part of the continuum of care. The bill seeks to establish court mandated evaluations in an effort to reduce homelessness, needless hospitalizations, arrests, and incarcerations. The federal government will be releasing funding soon.

### **Department of Labor**

The Maryland Department of Labor recently launched a Recovery Friendly Workplaces pilot that supports employers in adopting policies and procedures that are more recovery friendly.

### **Department of Education**

Q: What does the drug education curriculum look like in public schools?

*In 2021, the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) revised the health curriculum framework and added another 0.5 credit of health education. Updates included language regarding fentanyl awareness in the curriculum beginning in the third grade. MSDE has collaborated with the MDH Behavioral Health Administration (BHA) and other MDH offices to create an online curriculum for all teachers around substance use disorder with an elementary and secondary component. They have also supported the use of other programs, including Botvin Life Skills and DARE.*

### **Department of Emergency Management**

Due to the lack of transportation and access to care, local jurisdictions are seeing individuals use emergency services to get to the emergency department, who ultimately does not provide the kind of care that they truly need. This cycle repeats itself.

### **Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services**

They are concerned about K2, and other substances that are available for sale at gas stations, being used in state detention facilities.

### **Department of Aging**

Does the increase in overdoses among older people in Maryland relate to the reduction in opioid prescribing for pain?

*The Department of Aging believes that the aging population that have been using drugs for a long time were not prepared for fentanyl, which has resulted in an increase in overdoses in this age group.*

Drugs are more potent and more difficult to recover from.

### **Department of Housing and Community Development**

Reducing barriers to housing and providing priority to unhoused individuals with substance use disorder are priorities for the Department of Housing and Community Development. They are working with MDH to determine which support services can be funded with Medicaid dollars.

[SB 1107](#) proposes a licensing program that will result in a reduction in barriers for individuals seeking housing.

### **Office of the Public Defender**

There is a lack of residential treatment for youth in Maryland. Are there plans to address this?  
*MDH has plans to address this issue. More information will be available soon.*

### **General Discussion**

The council discussed whether or not the group should collaborate on testimony in future legislative sessions. It was decided that the council will discuss policy and present various points, but will not pursue joint testimony through the council.

Can Maryland's Office of Overdose Response help share information related to funding availability with agencies and locals?

*MOOR will connect with the state's federal investment team.*

The council discussed inclusion of the following items in future meetings:

- Education on topics related to substance use disorder and overdose
- Emerging drug trends, such as the prevalence of adulterants in the illicit drug supply, as well as substances such as cannabinoids, kratom and tianeptine.
- Priorities for each agency