



Allegany County Health Planning Coalition

Meeting Minutes

July 14, 2026

This meeting was held via Google Meets.

INDIVIDUALS PRESENT

Melissa Nething, ACHD
Ashley Lane
Brittanya Brown, SCORE
Corey Edmonds, Mountain Laurel Medical Center
Diane Donham, CarePoint
Gail Kenner, ACHD
Jordan Harman, ACHD
Maureen Lauder, ACHD
Krista Llewelly, ACHD
Michele Walker, CUW
Paula Hostetler, Cumberland Housing Authority
Renee Kniseley, DHS
Sheila Robertson, Tri-State Women's Health
Clayton Norman
Lindsay Butler, Pinnacle Strategies
Wendolyn McKenzie, HRDC

Haley Guillot, ACHD
Jennifer Lee-Steckman, ACHD
Jennifer Smith, ACHD
Dr. Jennifer Corder, ACHD
Jill Kefer, MPC
Jim Raley, Archway Station
Jordan Rhoads, ACHD
Ellie Folk, ACHD
Lisa Beardsley, ACHD
Nancy Giunta, Frostburg State University
Rhonda Pick, Family Crisis Resource Center
Sarah Milbourne, DNR
Theresa Stahl, ACHD
Stacey Blank, UPMC
Tara Wetherell, MPC
Andy Valentine, WMD Food Council

I. INTRODUCTIONS/WELCOME/ANNOUNCEMENTS

Melissa Nething welcomed the participants and confirmed that the meeting was being transcribed for public access.

II. ADOPT MINUTES OF May 12, 2026

Melissa asked if there were any changes or additions to the May 12, 2026, minutes. There were no responses and Theresa Stahl moved to approve the minutes, and Gail Kenner seconded the approval. The meeting minutes will be posted on the Allegany Speaks website under our Coalition group.

III. PRESENTATIONS

Nature as Medicine: How Maryland State Parks Support Physical, Mental and Community Health

Sarah Milbourne, Western Region Manager, Maryland Park Service

As the Manager of the Western Region for the Maryland Park Service, Sarah is currently responsible for overseeing 24 state parks from Frederick County to Garrett County. The Maryland Park Service plans to divide the region soon to better manage the growing number of state parks.

Sarah presented on the concept of nature as medicine, using personal experiences in Yellowstone to illustrate how outdoor spaces provide calmness, peace, and stress reduction. She emphasized that getting people outside to connect with nature offers biological benefits, including reduced stress and improved physical and mental health. Statistics show that being in nature correlates with lower cardiovascular disease and reduced anxiety. Additionally, with mental health issues on the rise, connecting with people through nature can help reduce anxiety and depression.

The Maryland Park Services holds about 155,000 acres of land in the public trust. The mission of the agency is to provide stewardship and recreational opportunities. Creating family recreational opportunities and intergenerational activities and volunteerism is the goal throughout the state. The agency is seeing where the gaps are and is adding land to the portfolio as they can. Most recently, there was a grand opening of a new park in Wicomico County. The Maryland Forest Service and the Wildlife Management Services also have land for recreational services.

The state developed the Office of Outdoor Recreation several years ago and this agency is trying to expand outdoor recreation experiences to strengthen local economies. A lot of this is happening in Western Maryland. The Maryland Park Service wants to connect with local businesses and health care professions to work together to educate the public about the benefits of outdoor activities, either on their own or through their local park initiatives.

Sarah explained the Healthy Parks, Healthy People initiative at Rocky Gap State Park, which was developed to encourage healthy lifestyles through nature-based activities. The program focuses on providing accessible, free opportunities for physical and mental wellness. She also highlighted the Senior Ranger program at Patapsco, which aims to serve the senior population and encourage outdoor volunteerism.

Sarah discussed the Miles for Maryland initiative, created for the America 250 celebration, which encourages participants to hike 250 miles in one year. She also talked about the Track Your Trails program, which is a community science partnership using the Field Scope platform to track changes in the landscape. This initiative encourages public participation in collecting data, such as water levels at Rocky Gap, to better understand climate impacts.

Sarah mentioned the acquisition of the former Savage River Lodge, now part of Savage Highlands State Park. She described this as a strategic addition to the park system and noted that a soft opening for the lodge and cabin accommodations is planned for August.

- Theresa Stahl asked if reservation fees for state parks are refundable if a visit is canceled due to inclement weather. Sarah acknowledged the question and agreed to follow up with details regarding the refund policy and day-of payment options.

Sarah provided an update on Wills Mountain State Park, which is currently in the planning stages for a soft opening this fall. The project involves remediating a former plastics plant on the property to ensure visitors' safety while preserving the unique ecological community on the mountain which includes some of the rarest plants and beetles in the state.

The Department of Natural Resources aims to be actively present in the communities surrounding their parks rather than waiting for visitors to come to them. Sarah expressed an interest in further partnering with the Coalition to ensure public lands are utilized effectively.

- Theresa Stahl suggested reviving the Healthy Parks, Healthy People prescription pad program, which previously allowed healthcare providers to "prescribe" nature-based activities to patients. Sarah confirmed that they are interested in re-establishing this program, which was previously supported by health department grants. Theresa also suggested promoting nature-based programs through community channels such as the H.E.A.L. Mobile, Healing Allegany events, and through community health workers and nutritionists.
- Melissa Nething invited Sarah Milbourne and Emily Hendershot to join the Coalition.

Allegany County: A Focus on Cancer Rates and Select Prevention Strategies

Dr. Jennifer Corder, Medical Deputy Health Officer, Allegany County Health Department

Dr. Corder presented data on cancer rates in Allegany County, reporting an overall incidence rate of 523 per 100,000, which is 16% higher than the Maryland state average.

- The incidence of oropharyngeal cancer in Allegany County is 16 per 100,000, which is 46% higher than the state average. She noted that HPV is a primary cause of this cancer and emphasized that HPV vaccination is a critical prevention strategy. The HPV vaccination completion rate for youth aged 13 to 17 in Allegany County is 47%, compared to 69% for the state. The Health Department will be working to raise awareness for this age group and college-age students regarding the effectiveness of the vaccine and the need to increase the vaccination rate to prevent oropharyngeal cancer in our community.
- Ovarian cancer incidence in Allegany County is 18.7 per 100,000, which is 90% higher than the state average. Recent research suggests many deadly ovarian cancers originate in the fallopian tubes and that removing the fallopian tubes when no longer needed for reproduction can serve as an effective prevention method.
 - Dr. Corder announced a one-year grant with Dr. Becky Stone at Johns Hopkins to raise awareness about fallopian tube removal as a cancer prevention strategy. She also noted that Dr. Stone is backing legislation to require insurance coverage for this procedure, and that ACHD plans to pilot this educational initiative in Allegany County before scaling it to the state level.

IV. Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP)

- The next CHIP work group meeting is scheduled for August 18th at 3:00 p.m.

V. LHIC Updates

- Melissa has received requests to share materials with the LHIC group, so she proposed a newsletter format to distribute coalition information, including shared flyers and materials. She requested that group members provide feedback on the newsletter format.
- The health planning group is updating the look and theme of the Allegany Speaks website, which houses the Coalition site. The site update is expected to be launched soon, potentially in August or September, and will be more user-friendly and have additional features.

Ellie Folk, Director of Cancer & Tobacco Cessation Programs, ACHD

- Ellie provided an update on the Allegany County Health Department's cancer programs, including the CDC-funded Breast and Cervical Cancer Screening Program (BCCP) and the CPEST program, which covers colorectal, lung, and skin cancer screenings. She noted that while there is potential for adding prostate cancer screening this year, there has been no confirmation. The program provides nurse case management and financial assistance for screening and barriers, such as transportation and prescription costs, to eligible clients in Allegany, Garrett, and Washington counties. Referrals can be made by fax, phone, or via the Google referral form on the Health Department's website.
- The cancer team will be at the Allegany County Fair with the H.E.A.L. Mobile and will provide tobacco cessation information to the public. The department is also planning breast cancer awareness events for October.

Miscellaneous

- Melissa proposed recording the bimonthly Coalition meetings to allow members to review presentations later. She is currently investigating the best method to host these videos, such as on the Coalition website. She asked for any objections to be communicated to her and noted that this feature would not be ready by September.
- The H.E.A.L. Mobile will be present at the Allegany County Fair for most of fair week, featuring various programs.

VI.

INTRODUCTIONS OF COALITION MEMBERS

- **Theresa Stahl** - Nutritionist with the Allegany County Health Department, vice chair of the Western Maryland Food Council, and a member of the Appalachian Farm and Food Alliance.
- **Jennifer Lee-Steckman** – Director of Reproductive Health (RH) at the Allegany County Health Department and a nurse midwife. Services provided in the RH clinic include well-woman preventative care, contraception, STI testing, and comprehensive gynecologic care. The RH team will have the H.E.A.L. Mobile at the Allegany County Fair on July 22nd, the National Night Out on August 4th, and the Frostburg Block Party on September 9th.
- **Corey Edmonds** – Manager of Business and Community Development at Mountain Laurel Medical Center. Corey announced the Cardiac Climbers community pool day scheduled for August 14th from 11:00 to 3:00 at Dan’s Mountain State Park. The event offers free activities and resources to the community.
- **Nancy Giunta** - Program Director of the Social Work program at Frostburg State University. Nancy described the undergraduate program’s internship placements across Allegany and Garrett counties, the Eastern Shore, and Baltimore. She serves on the Board of the Women’s Health Center and is a founder of the Wholesome Harvest Food Co-Op. She requested contacts for social workers interested in mentoring interns.
- **Gail Kenner** – Medical Care Program Associate for the Administrative Care Coordination Unit at the Allegany County Health Department. Gail assists clients with Maryland Medicaid benefits, including education, resource connection, and resolving billing issues.
- **Haley Guillot** – Haley works in the Tobacco, Chronic Disease, and Nutrition Education unit at ACHD. She announced that her department is initiating new programs regarding education in those areas. She highlighted the Healthy Heart Ambassador program, noting that they recently concluded a second cohort and are opening new sessions in August or September.
- **Jennifer Smith** - Nurse Coordinator for the Tobacco and CPR programs at the Allegany County Health Department.
- **Jim Raley** - Executive Director at Archway Station, reported on the initiative to repurpose the St. Peter and Paul’s Convent Building into a recovery house for women with children. A \$1.6 million renovation project is scheduled to begin within the next six months.
- **Jordan Harman** - Jordan is the Director of Prevention at ACHD. Her department does a lot of work for cannabis and opioid prevention, naloxone training, test strips, and school-based education.
- **Jordan Rhoads** - Jordan is Coordinator of Special Programs in ACHD’s Prevention department. She does education in schools on certain topics relating to prevention.
- **Lindsay Butler** – Lindsay is a consultant with Pinnacle Strategies, which is currently advising ACHD on several projects. Lindsay has worked in clinical and public health, as well as with nonprofit advocacy groups in healthcare for the last 20 years.

- **Lisa Beardsley** - Lisa is the Grant Manager for ACHD's MedTrans department which provides medical appointment transport for individuals with Maryland medical assistance. MedTrans coordinates van, wheelchair van, and stretcher transport, and can provide bus passes for clients in certain cases.
- **Maureen Lauder** – Maureen is the Executive Assistant to Health Officer Gena Spear at ACHD and provides meeting minutes for the Coalition meetings.
- **Paula Hostetler** – Paula is the new Resident Service Coordinator for the Cumberland Housing Group.
- **Renee Kniseley** - Renee is the Executive Director of the Local Management Board in Allegany County. The group is currently working on year two of plan development for the "Enough" communities near John Humbird and South Penn elementary schools, as well as capacity building for the "Enough" grant.
- **Sheila Robertson** - Sheila is the Office Manager at Tri-State Women's Health and described the clinic as the FQHC OBGYN located at UPMC. She noted that the clinic accepts patients regardless of payment ability and offers OB, gynecological and primary care services and they are accepting new patients.
- **Stacey Blank** - Stacey is the Manager for Community Health and Wellness at UPMC Western Maryland and her department's focus is on health coaching. They offer free health coaching for community members aged 18 and older, which requires no provider order. They also offer free community exercise programs, such as yoga and bingo balance, and several Smart Recovery programs.
- **Andy Valentine** - Andy is a board member of the Western Maryland Food Council and the Appalachian Farm and Food Alliance. He works to support the current initiative called CARAT (Community & Agriculture Resilience Audit Tool) that is mapping the community's food systems, as well as working with Teresa Stahl at ACHD on a smaller grant focused on community food security.
- **Brittanya Brown** - Brittanya is a Community Health worker with the SCORE (Sickle Cell Outreach, Resources and Engagement) program. SCORE is a state funded program designed to bridge the gap between health and social services for individuals living with sickle cell disease with the aim of improving their overall health outcomes. It's a newer program and Brittanya is also new to community health, so she would like to learn about the resources in Allegany County that provide services that address the social determinants of health.
- **Diane Donham** - Diane is the Mobile Crisis Response Director for Western Maryland Care Point and they provide 24-7 mobile response services to individuals experiencing mental health and substance use related crisis.

VII. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, September 8, 2026 at 1:30 p.m.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 2:55 p.m.

Submitted by: Maureen Lauder