



Aging in Community Committee Minutes  
April 8, 2025

Attendance:

CoA: Betsy Carrier, Joyce Dubow, Laurie Pross, Dixie Butler, Kendell Matthews, Linda Bergofsky, Mary Sweeney, Norman Goldstein, Sibio Ncube, Vernell DeWitty, Wayne Berman

Guests: Avital Graves, Jim Resnik, Beth Anne Nesselt, Mark Steinbach

Staff: Pazit Aviv

Meeting called to order at 9:30

**Overview of Presentations**

How Montgomery County Fire And Rescue (MCFR) Help Older Adults Age In Place

Presentation by Avital Graves, MBA, MHA, CPM, NRP, Manager, described how the Mobile Integrated Health (MIH) Program serves patients who have frequent 911 calls and may have unmet chronic needs. MIH addresses the growing disparity between the volume of emergency 911 calls and the limited availability of EMS resources. Through partnerships with local hospitals, the health department, and various community groups, MIH works to pair these high utilizing patients with a variety of existing community-based medical and social programs.

Presentation by Beth Anne Nesselt, Manager of Community Risk Assessment and Jim Resnick (retired Battalion Chief), Program Manager, Senior Outreach and Education – part of MCFRS Community Risk Reduction Program

They described the safety and community risk reduction programs that help older adults age in place. These educational and outreach programs provide resources, education, training and leadership to enhance public awareness about fire and life safety issues.

## **Details from presentations:**

### **Presentation on mobile integrated health (MIH):**

MIH is a national program that is not unique to Maryland. It is the intersection of public safety and public health. It focuses on people who are frequent, non-emergency users of 911 services. MIH is non emergent care and provides services after a 911 call and follows up with patients. Montgomery County's MIH team includes two full time paramedics, a nurse and a social worker. The team goes out with the paramedics to do assessments, evaluates people for needed resources and services and creates care plans. The focus of their visits is to help facilitate better care coordination to connect people to programs that already exist. They can do medication management and reconciliation.

They don't just deal with frequency issues; they also intervene before a person becomes a high utilizer. They do not provide an open door to services as they could not meet the demand, everyone must come from the 911 system. They work with people who have used or encountered the 911 system and the EMTs or firefighters, will make a referral. They also occasionally get referrals from community partners including hospitals and behavioral health providers.

Some EMS data for 2024: There were 46 patients who generated over 2000 calls to 911. They had 979 unique patients referred to MIH. This was a 13% increase over 2023, and in 2025 they are on track to top 1200 unique patients referred.

One of the issues they are concerned about is hoarding. MIH does not have a budget to help people address this this issue and it is expensive to treat. They have modeled a program after the Gaithersburg City Hoarding Task Force. They have a group that now meets monthly to review a list of individuals they are concerned about.

Nursing Home cooperation is one area they work on as call volume from nursing homes is dramatically rising. In 2021 they transported around 8000 patients from County nursing homes. In 2024 they transported close to 10,000 patients from nursing homes. Today nursing homes are dealing with people with higher acuity needs, more acute illnesses, and longer stays. This all has a downstream effect. MIH is discussing with nursing homes alternatives for low acuity patients. For example, not every patient who needs to go to the hospital has to go by a 911 ambulance. There are private ambulances in the county, and most of these nursing homes have contracts with those private ambulance companies, so MIH is leaning on nursing homes to make the right call and call the right resource at the right time.

Presentation by Jim Resnik. Jim is the program manager for fire safety program for older adults. This program is very important as many of the fires in the County occur in the homes of older adults. Recently there have been nine fires in Montgomery County that resulted in fatalities. All of those nine fatalities were adults over 60. All nine of them were living in single family homes or townhouses that

did not have fire sprinklers. Also, several of these people had either physical and or cognitive challenges that perhaps prevented them from being able to escape the fire.

Statistics: Most recent year Fire and Rescue ran more than 130,000 calls for fire and emergency medical services calls. The EMS calls actually take up about 80% of those calls, that means last fiscal year, they had approximately 115,000 patient contacts. The Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Service (MCFRS) has long recognized the need for specialized services for members of the community. In 2006 they created the Senior Citizen Fire Safety Task Force that developed the MCFRS Senior Outreach and Education Program. This program has provided approximately 1000 group presentations and completed more than 3000 home safety checks. The Senior Outreach and Education is now an active and essential part of the MCFRS Community Risk reduction Section, that falls directly under the Office of the Fire Chief.

One of the most effective ways that the MCFRS can build relationships and trust with communities of older adults is through public speaking and participation in group presentations and events. MCFRS Senior Outreach speaks to older adults at senior centers, recreation centers, places of worship, neighborhood associations, Villages, and other locations. These programs are available in-person (preferred) or via Zoom.

The typical presentation is 60-90 minutes long and always includes an opportunity for a question-and-answer period. And with advanced notice we will work out having a speaker that can present the information in a language other than English.

#### Home Safety Checks

The program also helps to ensure that homes have current, up-to-date, and working smoke alarms. This greatly increases the chance of surviving a fire. Residents of Montgomery County can request a free home safety visit. The installation of free alarms is targeted to high-risk individuals and families that live in owner-occupied homes. These individuals or families can include older adults and senior citizens, individuals with mobility, vision, or hearing impairments, and residents who may have a disability or be economically challenged. A combination of these factors typically increases the risk of fires significantly.

The typical MCFRS Home Safety Check lasts about an hour. A uniformed MCFRS representative will check a home's smoke alarms to see if they are working properly. Back-up batteries in hard-wired smoke alarms or carbon monoxide alarms will be changed if necessary and alarms found to be outdated (over 10 years from the manufacturer date printed on the alarm) or not working properly will be recommended for replacement. Trained MCFRS personnel will identify hazards that are often overlooked in homes, assist with home fire escape plans, and discuss trending fire safety topics. In most cases, a few simple maintenance and housekeeping procedures can make your home much safer. MCFRS personnel will also fully explain how your smoke alarm functions and how to maintain it.

New business:

1. It was suggested that as part of the CoA Ambassador Program that information be included about the home safety check services provided by Montgomery County Fire and Rescue be included.

2. A question was raised whether the County billed Medicaid or other insurers for the Mobile Integrated Services program. This had been looked into in the past and it was determined that there was not a cost benefit to billing, as collections would be offset by the cost of billing.
3. Discussion about starting a smaller work group that could do a deeper dive into the data shared and produce infograms or leave behind graphics of information that might help tell the story of the diversity in the County, family size, income, health status, social engagement, housing etc. Linda, Kendell, Vernell, Laurie, and Sibbo volunteered to work on this work group. A first step will be to gain an understanding from the TEBS department about their capacity to create additional reports. We will convene this committee after the Forum.

Meeting adjourned at 11:15.