



# **TOWN OF ORLEANS**

**19 School Road Orleans Massachusetts 02653-3699**

**Telephone (508) 240-3700 – Fax (508) 240- 3703**

<http://www.town.orleans.ma.us>

**A report prepared by the Safer Community Task Force (SCTF) for the Orleans Select Board relating to violence and behavioral health problems and concerns in the town of Orleans MA 02653**

**March 2024**



## Contents

<b>I.</b>	<b>Summary</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>II.</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>III.</b>	<b>Methodology</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>IV.</b>	<b>Findings</b>	<b>3</b>
	a.) Gun violence	<b>3</b>
	b.) Other violence	<b>4</b>
<b>V.</b>	<b>Mental Health</b>	<b>4,5</b>
<b>VI.</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>6,7</b>
<b>VII.</b>	<b>Collaboration Opportunities</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>VIII.</b>	<b>Financial Assistance and Grants</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>IX.</b>	<b>Monitoring and Evaluation</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>X.</b>	<b>Conclusions</b>	<b>8, 9</b>
<b>Appendix A</b>	Safer Community Task Force Members (SCFT).	<b>10</b>
<b>Appendix B</b>	Orleans Fire and Rescue mental health calls for fiscal year 2023	<b>11</b>
<b>Appendix C</b>	Orleans Police Department mental health incidents for a six-year period	<b>12</b>
<b>Appendix D</b>	Follow-up letter sent to Stakeholders.	<b>13</b>
<b>Appendix E</b>	Safer Community Definition	<b>14</b>
<b>Appendix F</b>	Safer Community Task Force Charge	<b>15</b>
<b>Appendix G</b>	Follow-up Questionnaires from Stakeholders	<b>16, 17, 18, 19</b>

## Summary:

The town of Orleans has not had problems with gun violence according to information and data provided by the Orleans Police Department. Over a five-year period (i.e., 2018 -2023) there were a total of four incidents involving a firearm and none of this involved violence towards self or others. Additional concerns in relation to violence were, however, voiced by several agencies who appeared before the Safer Committee Task Force (SCTF). These agencies included the Orleans Council on Aging, Independence House, and The Samaritans. All reported incidents of violence in the populations they serve. These varied in the reported totals with domestic violence cited as a significant concern in Orleans as well as every community on the Cape. Significant problems with school violence, including bullying, at the elementary, middle school and secondary levels are not noted in the Nauset Regional School District. School resource officers (SRO's) are strategically placed in schools to prevent inappropriate incidents of violence or entry into school buildings.

Stakeholders representing social service agencies, health care and behavioral health programs agreed with the Safer Community Task Force (SCTF) members in citing the need for increased access to behavioral health services for children, adolescents, and adults in Orleans as well as other lower and outer Cape towns. The situation sees reason for optimism however as several agencies (i.e., Outer Cape Health, Bay Cove Health Services, and the Department of Mental Health (DMH) cited the capacity for increased emergency on-site consultations occurring on a 24-hour basis; medication evaluations for children and adults; and increased access to counseling for children and adults. However, most facilities are in the greater Hyannis area posing a possible barrier to accessing assistance. Programs such as the Navigator program, currently housed in the Orleans Police Department and Nauset Regional High School, provide triage as well as in the latter case direct counseling service.

The SCTF Committee made seven recommendations:

- Continued allocation of funds to the Orleans Police and Fire-Rescue departments so that involvement with the Navigator program can continue.
- Explore regional collaborative efforts with lower and outer Cape towns to provide consultation and training opportunities with mental health personnel who would be available to Police and Fire Rescue to augment and expand service provided by the Navigator program.
- Develop a central file of behavioral health resources which the community could readily access - for example on the town website or in community sites, e.g., schools, Chamber of Commerce, library, medical offices.

- It is further recommended the town provide community-based learning opportunities focusing on the identification of behavioral health problems and subsequent measures helpful to mitigate or ameliorate these. Workshops, lectures, forums with community agencies and providers could be accessed in person or via Zoom for example.
- The Select Board should consider adding a mental health position to the Board of Health. This would help in the development and implementation of programs and interventions focusing on prevention and treatment, integrating physical and mental health, ultimately working toward the overall health and wellness of the town.
- No additional investigations of gun violence are currently needed. However, the Orleans Police Department will continue to monitor and analyze gun violence data in an ongoing basis.
- Both the Orleans Police and the Fire-Rescue Departments will also continue to monitor and analyze data relating to mental health incidents and calls.

### **Introduction:**

In May of 2022 another tragic school shooting occurred in Uvalde Texas. This sent shockwaves of horror and concern across the country and in Orleans it prompted local citizens to approach the Select Board and inquire about the safety of not only the schools but this community with respect to school shootings and gun violence. As a result of this the Select Board in July of 2022 directed the creation of a Safer Community Task Force (SCTF) to be composed of the following membership – Chief of Police, Chief of Fire - Rescue, Board of Health, Nauset Regional School District, Chamber of Commerce, a Select Board liaison, and three at- large members from the community, one of whom shall have experience in the field of mental health. A list of the specific SCFT members can be found in Appendix A.

The task force was given a very specific initial charge. First, the task force was to research and compile data related to violence in Orleans and Barnstable County including how many and what kinds of violence are seen each year, what kinds of weapons are used and how are the weapons obtained. The task force shall investigate circumstances in which violent incidents and Orleans have occurred and why they have happened. Second, the task force was charged with researching how the public safety and public health systems are currently used and could be improved to address individuals in need of behavioral health services who may be at risk to commit or be a victim of violence.

In the second meeting of the committee (i.e., 9/25/23) it became apparent that the issue of gun violence in Orleans was of negligible significance according to information provided by Police Chief Scott MacDonald although he as well as the committee unanimously agreed that the tragic fact is that gun violence can take place anywhere and at any time - in urban as well as rural areas and this is well documented by the unfortunate statistics which attest to this fact. It

was also agreed that there is not a profile available which reliably and validly identifies school shooters as well as other individuals who enact mass violence in the community, with their focus on institutions such as religious places of worship, shopping centers, business offices, retail stores and other community facilities and gatherings.

Shifting the focus of the committee both Police Chief MacDonald and Fire-Rescue Squad Chief Geof Deering highlighted the fact that their staffs were increasingly dealing with mental health issues (see Appendix B and C) and they felt very strongly that the focus of the committee should reflect not only issues of violence but also mental health problems and concerns with the acknowledgment these departments are being asked to often become involved in situations for which they feel ill prepared and not specifically trained to deal with.

After discussion it was decided that the focus of the committee would be altered and expanded to include investigating different types of violence involving specific populations such as the elderly, children, and adults. It was also decided to invite a variety of stakeholders who would have input regarding mental health issues as well as concerns about violence. It was specifically decided to invite representatives from various organizations who would present to the committee their programs, concerns, and recommendations to facilitate making Orleans better prepared to deal with situations relating to different types of violence as well as addressing mental health concerns, and recommendations. The stakeholders identified included: Orleans Police and Fire-Rescue Departments; Elder Affairs and the Orleans Council on Aging; The Samaritan Group; Department of Mental Health (DMH): Bay Cove Human Services; Independence House; Outer Cape Health Services/ Navigator Program; and the Nauset Regional School District.

## **Methodology:**

The primary methodology employed by the SCTF task force emphasized in-person interviews and these were conducted with the above-mentioned stakeholders. In addition, individual SCTF committee members weighed in with opinions and thoughts in relation to the charge given the task force. Data was obtained from both the Orleans Police and Orleans Fire-Rescue Departments regarding incidents involving gun violence, violence as recorded in specific incidents and data documenting specific mental health or behavioral health calls and events. This data may be reviewed in Appendices B and C. Lastly, follow-up questionnaires were obtained from stakeholders (e.g., Appendix G).

## **Findings:**

### **Gun violence:**

- The past year saw no incidents of gun violence in the town of Orleans reported by the police department. From 2018 to 2022 a total of four incidents involving firearms were reported and none of these were in any way related to violence.

- Some concerns were raised by the Orleans Council on Aging staff in relation to gun safety issues as reports emphasized that sometimes family members were concerned that they were dealing with situations where unsecure or unlicensed firearms might be a problem. This pointed to the need, in their opinion, for police education and advice regarding security and in some cases removal of firearms where they might not have appropriate licensing.
- The Samaritans reported a low incidence of suicide in Barnstable County but did emphasize that in Massachusetts as well as in the country that suicides by guns are more common and greater than gun homicides. They emphasized that males over 85 were individuals who were at the highest risk for suicide although this did not necessarily involve gun violence.
- No incidence of reported gun violence was reported in Orleans where someone with psychiatric issues was identified. One individual in Barnstable County was identified as making a threat to create mayhem at a school with a firearm and was also identified as a person with significant psychiatric issues. Media reports documented several incidents of gun violence including one involving minors. All occurred in the greater Hyannis locale.
- No incidences of students involved in gun violence or threats to create mayhem were cited by Nauset Regional School District personnel. And it is also emphasized that all the schools are physically secured by staff with police presence in place at the elementary, middle, and high schools. All school personnel and students are well trained in reactive school safety measures and procedures (i.e., shelter in place, lockdowns) should a crisis event materialize.

**Other violence:**

- Both Police and Fire-Rescue department chiefs report incidents where personnel may encounter violent situations and individuals, but these are of a low incidence variety, are adequately managed by the first responders and do not pose a threat to the greater community.
- Representatives from the Orleans Council on Aging report episodic incidents of domestic violence, again of a low incidence variety, and adequately managed by collaboration with appropriate community agencies and resources – mental health personnel, medical professionals, police and fire department consultation and referrals.
- School officials do not report significant problems with violence. Any identified episodes of bullying are dealt with in accordance with state regulations and mandates requiring thorough investigation and appropriate disciplinary action if necessary. Other types of violence, more prevalent in off Cape urban communities, is not a concern or problem within the Nauset Regional School District.

- Domestic violence is present in Orleans as it unfortunately is in most Cape towns. Personnel from the Independence House Program as well as the Orleans Police and Fire-Rescue departments reference calls involving domestic violence – sometimes overlapping with substance abuse issues – and not infrequently resulting in dispositions involving referrals to mental health services, district and probate court involvement, psychoeducational and community awareness programs.

### **Mental Health:**

- Police and Fire Department personnel respond to a significant number of psychiatric related incidents (see Appendix B and C) and these sometimes occur in the evening and early morning times when options other than transporting to the Cape Cod hospital emergency room for screening and evaluation are not possible.
- The Navigator program, under the auspices of Outer Cape Health, has provided the Orleans Police Department with a vital consultation and triage resource for the referral of people in need of behavioral/ mental health services to appropriate programs and agencies. This program is currently available to any citizen in the community of Orleans.
- Citizens and media reports repeatedly pointed to the lack of mental health resources in the outer and lower Cape, and this refers to psychiatric consultations, medication evaluations and treatment, availability of child and adolescent therapists, waiting lists, lack of inpatient beds, emergency services, and partial hospitalization for adults and child populations. Scarcity seems somewhat related to the fact that professionals can't afford to move here because of the high cost of housing along with limited opportunities for employment.
- The above situation appears to indicate recent improvement as evidenced by the presentations to the SCTF by stakeholders: Outer Cape Health, Department of Mental Health, and Bay Cove Human Service. Specifically, there now exists the potential for onsite emergency crisis evaluations on a 24 hour, seven days a week basis. Also, there is increased availability of child and adult counseling services as well as psychiatric medication consultations for child, adolescent, and adult patients.
- Despite this, there remain areas of concern in the mental health sector for both child and adult patients. And specifically, this would involve a lack of psychiatric inpatient beds, which is the case not only on the Cape but statewide along with a lack of partial hospitalization programs for adults and children although Cape Cod Hospital does have a partial program for adults. Day treatment programs for adolescents and children are currently lacking on the Cape. Both adults as well as children, requiring inpatient care, all too often must be admitted to off Cape hospitals, sometimes at significant distances posing hardships to the families.

- The Samaritan program does offer a telehealth opportunity for anyone experiencing psychological distress and mental health concerns separate from suicide. This is accessed by calling 988 which is the same hotline number as the suicide crisis line.
- The Nauset Regional School District is well equipped to handle threats to harm from internal (i.e., students) or external sources and is positioned to work with outside psychological professionals to procure risk assessments and or referrals to appropriate law enforcement agencies (i.e., local or state law enforcement, adult, and juvenile courts) if indicated. All schools are staffed with counselors and in one case a clinician from the Navigator program. All schools utilize curriculum based preventive programs and measures including an evidence-based social skills program, i.e., Second Step, as well as other interventions, e.g., conflict resolution skills, social emotional learning groups.

**Recommendations:**

- The Select Board in conjunction with the Town Manager should continue to support the Orleans Police Department's involvement with the Navigator Program by appropriating adequate funding allowing for the continued contracting and possible expansion of this service from the Outer Cape Health Program. The clinician who staffs this triage program has been an invaluable resource to the Police Department as requests for service, often made to the Police or Fire-Rescue Departments, are now dealt with by the Navigator clinician and immediately linked up with the appropriate community program or resource.
- The Select Board and other appropriate town officials should investigate where possible the opportunities for regional cooperation, primarily with lower and outer Cape towns, in sharing of resources to access training and consultation regarding specific populations and problematic situations identified by police and fire-rescue personnel. To wit: rural communities in western Massachusetts communities in the Pioneer Valley retain the services of part-time mental health clinicians who are available to law enforcement personnel with several communities banding together to share the cost. Accessing the resources of Department of Mental Health, Bay Cove Human Services or Outer Cape Health are local agencies who have recently expanded and could likely provide such contracted consultative services.
- With further consideration to how Orleans could expand and enhance access to behavioral health programs and services it is recommended that town resources be directed toward the creation of a central file (e.g. website, links to external sources, pamphlets, etc.) documenting a resource readily available to the community. Further it is recommended that the town provide community- based learning opportunities focusing on topics of behavioral health problems and measures helpful to mitigate or ameliorate

- them. Workshops, lectures, forums with community agencies and providers could be accessed in person or via Zoom for example. This might occur in partnership with the town library which already provides an array of online and in person educational programs.
- The Select Board should consider the feasibility of adding a mental health person to the Board of Health. This position would help in the development and implementation of programs and interventions focusing on prevention and treatment, integrating physical and mental health, ultimately working toward the overall health and wellness of the town. Mental health issues are public health concerns and incorporating this position within the Board of Health would enhance the capacity to address and promote overall wellness – both physical and mental health.
- No additional investigations are needed regarding gun violence in the greater Orleans locale including school shootings as the Orleans Police Department has a clear appreciation and understanding of the risk and threat issues involved and has taken appropriate steps and measures to ensure the safety of individuals, institutions, and agencies in the town of Orleans. However, it is the clear and total acknowledgment of the SCTF that gun violence is a ubiquitous phenomenon in our country and that it is impossible to profile who, when or where this might occur. This said, it is fortunate that we reside in a community where the Police and Fire Department personnel are well trained to act incisively and quickly in any situation where gun violence is a possibility.
- While no additional investigations of gun violence are currently needed. However, the Orleans Police Department will continue to monitor and analyze gun violence data on an ongoing basis.
- Both the Orleans Police and the Fire-Rescue Departments will also continue to monitor and analyze data relating to mental health incidents and calls.

#### **Collaboration Opportunities:**

- Early on the Safer Community Task Force decided that to better understand how to best meet the directives of the charge we would invite a series of community stakeholders who were dealing with issues involving violence and mental health issues. All the presenters utilizing various formats provided the committee with invaluable information which included demographics as well as detailed descriptions of their programs serving children and adults. It is recommended that the Select Board, private citizens, and relevant providers (i.e., Police and Fire departments, medical community, social services agencies, school personnel) recognize the following agencies as important resources providing direct services which can mitigate and ameliorate individual, family and community behavioral health and violence problems. A list, by no means all inclusive, but very worth noting would include the following: Outer Cape Health (Navigator Program), Orleans Council on Aging, Samaritans, Department of Mental Health

(DMH), Independence House, Gosnold Programs, Bay Cove Health Human Services, Children's Cove.

### **Financial Assistance and Grants:**

- The committee recognizes that consultation services and programs require funding and while it is beyond the scope of this committee to wade into the fiscal budgets and sources of funding which may be available from the town it would be strongly recommended the town explore accessing grant writing personnel in order to investigate what state or federal funds could be used to compensate individuals or agencies providing consultative service to agencies and possibly individuals in the greater Orleans community. The select board and town manager are advised to consider options to procure grant fund funding to secure mental health services as requested and needed by town departments, specifically Police and Fire-Rescue. Town officials should consult with state legislators to explore funding sources and potential grants. In addition, various stockholders repeatedly cited the lack of mental health services for both children and adults in the greater Orleans locale as well as in communities comprising the lower and outer Cape. Such funding could also be used to contract with agencies such as Outer Cape Health and Bay Cove Human Service to obtain on-site and outreach consultation to individuals and families who lack transportation needed to obtain ongoing assistance. Local satellite clinics could be created and housed in either existing medical or town facilities subject to legal and town sanctions.

### **Monitoring and evaluation:**

- The data provided by the Police Department and the Fire Rescue staff are metrics to evaluate whether interventions are having some success. The current statistics could be used as a baseline serving as an initial pre-intervention measure, and it would be reasonable to expect that probably a greater than 50% reduction in calls to both agencies for mental health related issues and incidents would occur.
- Follow up with some stakeholders as well as the Police, Fire-Rescue, and school personnel to obtain feedback regarding interventions such as the Navigator program.
- involvement with other programs and agencies providing behavioral health services, e.g., facilities such as the Outer Cape Health Center and the Bay Cove Health Systems, Cape Cod Hospital, local medical practices to monitor their concerns and areas of need.

### **Conclusions:**

- Gun violence is not a problem in the Orleans community.
- Domestic violence occurs in this community and contacts documented by Independence House reveal a high proportion of calls and direct involvement with agencies and individuals dealing with this phenomenon. It is a concerning and significant problem not only in Orleans but Cape wide, is well documented and addressed by a multiplicity of

local and statewide programs, coordinated by Independence House, who also work closely with local and state law enforcement and court programs on behalf of their clients.

- Suicide, an extreme form of self-inflicted violence, is of low incidence in this community but nonetheless must be viewed with concern for not only the victim but also the family and others that he or she leaves behind and the ramifications of this. This unfortunate mental health problem is well monitored by the Samaritan program and a particular concerning statistic they cite is that individuals aged 85 and greater are at high risk for suicide and there is a multiplicity of reasons that they document as to why this is the case. Of importance here is to recognize not only the fact that the Samaritans offer a specific hotline which can be used not only for suicide prevention but also may be accessed by anyone in need of counseling in the specific number is 988. On a final note, it is important to recognize the efforts and very comprehensive services that the Orleans Council on Aging provides for our seniors and those with the multiplicity of needs in this population.
- Stakeholders unanimously agreed and in concert with SCTF committee members that easily accessible mental health services currently remain a problem in this community and to some extent on the lower Cape communities as well with both children and adults being affected. On a positive note, the Department of Mental health, Bay Cove Health Services, and the Outer Cape Health Program have significantly expanded their services over the course of the past year, and this makes it more likely that psychological and psychiatric services for children and adults will be more available in this community and on the lower and outer Cape towns. This said, it is highly desirable that the lower Cape towns consider initiating dialogue with these agencies about the possibility of establishing a satellite facility in Orleans as it is often difficult for people to travel and access programs and services located in the greater Hyannis area.
- Orleans citizens and institutions enjoy a safer community status, and this is evident from descriptions describing what constitutes a safe community. See Appendix E.

## Appendix A

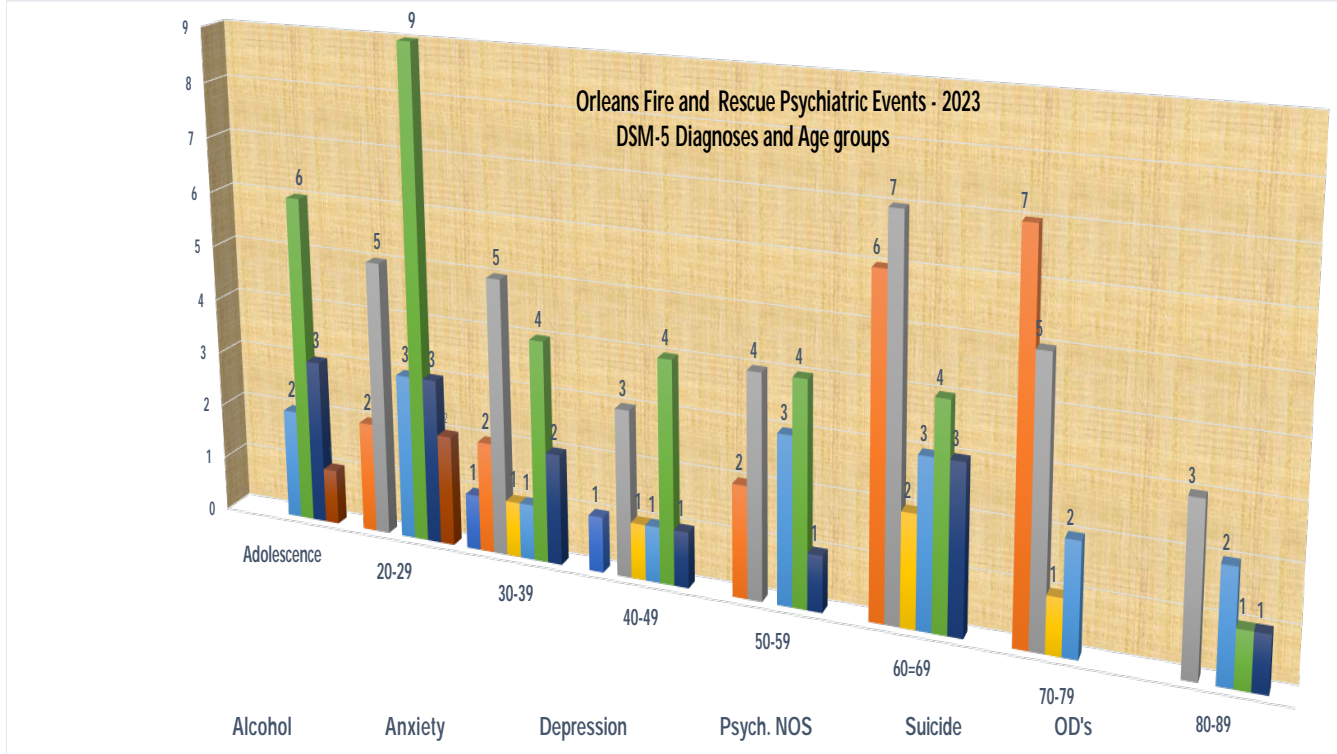
### Member composition of the Safer Community Task Force, Town of Orleans, 2023-2024

#### Safer Community Task Force

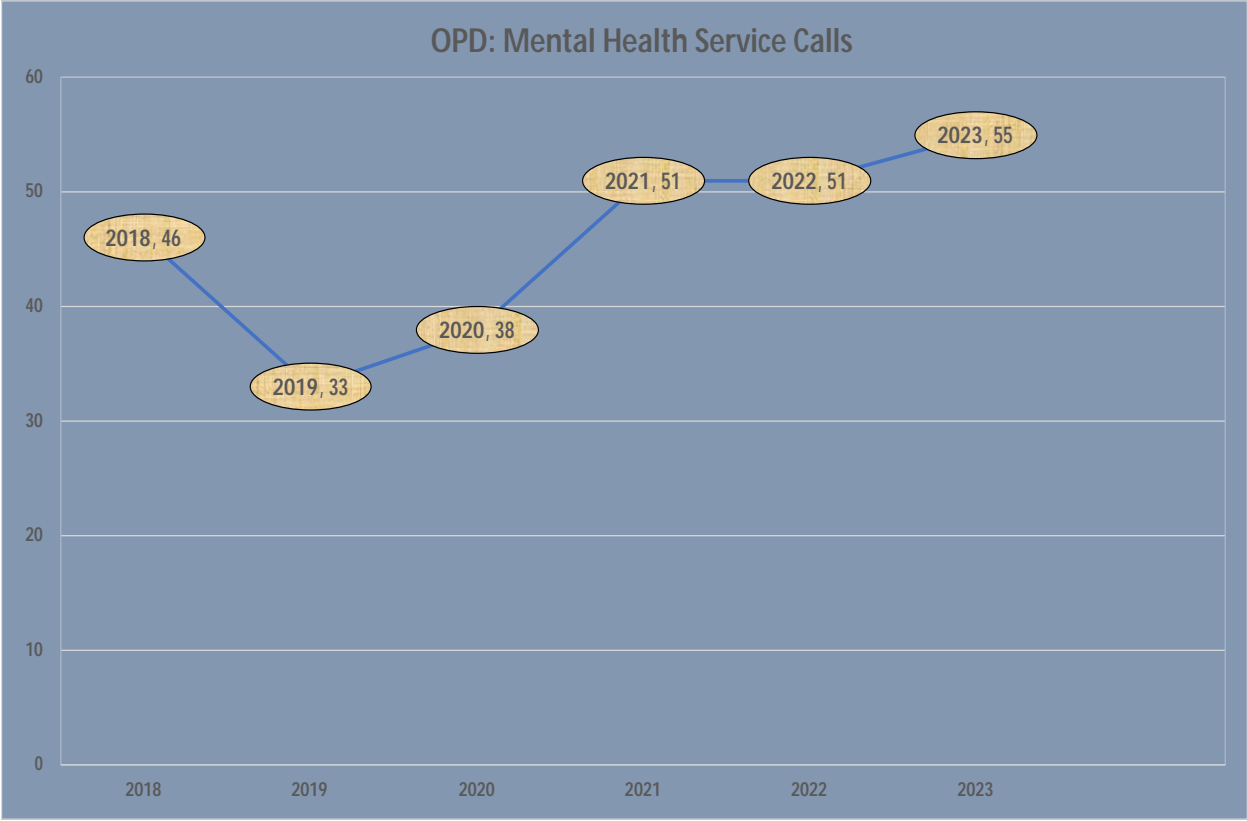
##### Members

Name	Title
<b>Fran Kelly</b>	<b>Member</b>
<b>Christine Berlane</b>	<b>Member</b>
<b>Robert Jones</b>	<b>Member</b>
<b>Chief Scott MacDonald</b>	<b>Police Chief</b>
<b>Chief Geof Deering</b>	<b>Fire Chief</b>
<b>Joe Hartung</b>	<b>Board of Health</b>
<b>Judy Lindahl</b>	<b>Director, Orleans Chamber of Commerce</b>
<b>Mark Mathison</b>	<b>Select Board Liaison</b>
<b>James Mackey</b>	<b>Ex-Officio</b>
<b>Matthew Kravitz</b>	<b>Nauset Regional School District Rep</b>

**Orleans Fire and Rescue mental health calls for fiscal year 2023 summarized by DSM-5 diagnoses and age groups.**



**Orleans Police Department mental health related incidents/involvements for a six-year period**



Follow-up letter sent to Stakeholders to obtain their thoughts and recommendations to the SCFT committee in relation to violence and behavioral health concerns.



Town of Orleans  
19 School Road  
Orleans, MA 02653  
508-240-3700

Thank you for taking the time to meet with the Orleans Safer Community Task Force (SCTF) and informing us of your organization's program and the concerns you have about violence and behavioral health issues among at-risk individuals in Orleans and surrounding areas. The initial charge of this committee was to investigate incidents of gun violence in Orleans. The committee expanded this to include: the documentation of all incidents of violence involving children and adults in Orleans; also, then identifying the number of mental health related incidents our community agencies and departments deal with in their work. So, as a follow-up to our meeting, we ask you to briefly provide the following information in no more than two typewritten pages so the SCTF task force can incorporate this into a more complete understanding of existing community resources and program needs. This information will be incorporated into a final report sent to the selectboard.

- I. Briefly describe your program and what services you provide to what populations. Please also include: the size of your staff, your mission, and the community agencies and departments who provide you with either direct or consultative program support.
- II. What suggestions and recommendations would you make to this committee regarding behavioral health programs and current/future needs for adults and children residing in the town of Orleans.
- III. Please add any additional thoughts or concerns you may have in relation to the overriding issue of how to ensure that Orleans remains a safe community with access to appropriate behavioral health services for all of its residents. Thank you on behalf of the SCTF and any questions or concerns related to this questionnaire may be directed to: Dr. Fran Kelly @ (413) 325-4542 or [fdpk2015@gmail.com](mailto:fdpk2015@gmail.com). Completed surveys may be sent to the above email or mailed to PO Box 773, South Orleans, MA 02662.

## Definition of a Safer Community

The definition of a Safer Community can vary depending on context and perspective, but generally, it refers to a locality or neighborhood that exhibits lower levels of crime, violence, and other threats to the well-being of its residents. A safer community is often characterized by a sense of security, where individuals feel protected and have confidence in their personal safety and the security of their property.

Key elements that contribute to a safer community may include:

1. **Low Crime Rates:** Communities with lower rates of crime, including offenses such as theft, burglary, assault, and other violent crimes, are considered safer.
2. **Effective Law Enforcement:** A strong and responsive law enforcement presence contributes to community safety. Effective policing can deter criminal activity and address issues promptly.
3. **Community Engagement:** Communities where residents actively participate in promoting safety, collaborate with law enforcement, and look out for one another tend to be safer.
4. **Access to Education and Employment Opportunities:** Adequate access to education and employment opportunities can contribute to a sense of community well-being and reduce the likelihood of criminal behavior.
5. **Social Services and Support:** Availability of social services, mental health resources, and support systems can contribute to addressing the root causes of crime and promoting community well-being.
6. **Infrastructure and Environmental Design:** Well-designed and maintained public spaces, streets, and infrastructure can enhance safety by reducing opportunities for criminal activity and improving overall community quality.
7. **Effective Criminal Justice System:** A fair and efficient criminal justice system that ensures accountability and rehabilitation can contribute to community safety.

**Addendum:** There also needs to be some consideration given to the role that affordable housing plays in contributing to a safer community. Affordable housing can be considered a component of a safer community for several reasons:

1. **Stability and Well-being:** Affordable housing provides stability and a sense of well-being for residents. When people have access to safe and affordable housing, it contributes to their overall mental and physical health. This, in turn, can positively impact the community's overall well-being.
2. **Reduced Crime:** Adequate housing can contribute to a reduction in crime rates. Communities with affordable housing may experience lower levels of property crime, as people are less likely to resort to criminal activities when their basic needs, such as housing, are met.

3. **Community Cohesion:** Affordable housing fosters community cohesion by creating a stable residential environment. When people can afford to live in a particular area over the long term, they are more likely to invest in the community, build relationships with neighbors, and

participate in community activities. This social cohesion can act as a deterrent to crime and contribute to a safer environment.

4. **Economic Stability:** Affordable housing helps to stabilize families and provides a foundation for economic stability. When individuals and families can afford housing, they are more likely to maintain stable employment, reducing the risk of economic instability that can sometimes lead to criminal behavior.
5. **Educational Opportunities:** Access to affordable housing in stable neighborhoods often means better access to educational opportunities. Children in stable housing are more likely to attend school regularly and perform well academically. This positive educational environment can contribute to the overall safety of the community.

While affordable housing is an important factor, it is essential to note that creating a safe community involves a multifaceted approach. Other factors, such as effective law enforcement, community engagement, access to quality healthcare, and economic opportunities, also play crucial roles in shaping the safety of a community. Affordable housing is just one piece of the puzzle in building a safer and more resilient community.

## Appendix F

### SCTF Charge



## TOWN OF ORLEANS

19 SCHOOL ROAD ORLEANS MASSACHUSETTS 02653-3699  
Telephone (508) 240-3700 – Fax (508) 240-3703  
<http://www.town.orleans.ma.us>

SELECT BOARD

TOWN  
ADMINISTRATOR

#### SAFER COMMUNITY TASK FORCE CHARGE

##### Background

Massachusetts has put in place several laws that promote the safe and responsible use of firearms. The Town of Orleans, primarily through the Police Department, has a proactive community based problem-solving approach for violent crime.

While we recognize the leadership here, in the Commonwealth, and the recently enacted Bipartisan Safer Communities Act of 2022 signed into law on June 25, 2022, national measures have failed to stop the loss of life to violence in the United States. In 2021 there were a total of 692 mass shootings and over 45,000-gun violence-related deaths in the U.S (<https://www.gunviolencearchive.org/past-tolls>).

Prevention of violence is critical to maintain the high quality of life enjoyed by our citizens.

##### Charge

On July 6, 2022, the Select Board directs the creation of the Town of Orleans Safer Community Task Force ("Task Force"). The Task Force shall meet with a frequency it decides necessary to perform its functions under this Charge, meeting at least once per month. The Task Force consists of the following nine (9) members, or their designee appointed by the Select Board: Chief of Police, Chief of Fire-Rescue, Board of Health, Nauset Regional School District; Chamber of Commerce; a Select Board member, and three (3) at-large members, one of which shall have experience in the fields of mental health.

The Task Force is an advisory body to the Select Board charged with researching how the public safety and public health systems are currently used and could be improved to address individuals in need of behavioral health services who may be at risk to commit or be a victim of violence.

The Task Force is also charged with researching and compiling data related to violence in Orleans and Barnstable County, including how many and what kind of acts of violence are seen each year, what kind of weapons are used and how are the weapons obtained. The Task Force shall investigate circumstances in which violent incidents in Orleans have occurred and how and why they happened.

The Task Force shall produce a report with actionable recommendations to keep Orleans a safe community. A preliminary report of the Task Force shall be provided to the Select Board summarizing its progress and initial findings by September 2023. The Task Force shall send a final report to the Select Board by December 31, 2023.



## Appendix G

### Follow -up Questionnaires from Stakeholders

#### **Independence House Mission/Vision**

To help all domestic violence and sexual assault victims, survivors and children by creating opportunities for safety and empowerment through crisis intervention, advocacy, counseling, referral, outreach, prevention and education. Our vision is an engaged community that actively prevents sexual and domestic violence.

#### **Our Guiding Principle**

"Centering the Last Girl"- This principle ensures access to services and support for survivors who are most oppressed and marginalized.

#### **Independence House Philosophy & Beliefs**

Independence House, Inc. values all members of our communities and provides services to adult and children regardless of race, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, nationality or creed. Independence House, Inc. is a member of Jane Doe, Inc., the MA Coalition Against Sexual and Domestic Violence.

Independence House, Inc. believes that survivors of domestic and sexual violence are an important voice in the development of our activities, and that they have the right to high quality, responsive, and ethical activities which respect their experiences and considers their safety and dignity. The staff of Independence House, Inc. are charged with fulfilling the mission of the agency and embrace ownership for the success of the organization.

Independence House, Inc. stays abreast of innovations and trends in the field of domestic and sexual violence in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and nationally. Independence House, Inc. embraces a leadership role as our community's most comprehensive organization addressing domestic and sexual violence.

Our staff numbers 48 which includes Shelter, administrative, court advocates, legal advocate and counselors.

For our annual report: [www.independencehouse.org](http://www.independencehouse.org) / scroll down to bottom of home page on the right and click on FY23 Impact Report

#### **Some of our Community Partners:**

##### **Cape Cod Domestic Violence High Risk Task Force**

Independence House is a member of the Cape Cod High Risk Task Force and in collaboration with the Cape and Islands District Attorney's Office, all Barnstable County Police Departments, Barnstable County Sheriff's Office, Department of Transitional Assistance, and the Intimate Partner Abuse Education Program

##### **Cape & Islands Regional Domestic violence Council**

Independence House provides leadership and facilitation for the CIRDVC, an alliance of human service and social justice organizations, prosecution, corrections, probation and law enforcement agencies, attorneys, and concerned individuals, that meet quarterly for the purposes of networking and professional development regarding the issues of DV

##### **Cape Cod Community College**

Independence House offers office hours for students of Cape Cod Community College. This free and confidential assistance is specific for students of the college and services are provided on campus.



**Massachusetts Maritime Academy**

Massachusetts Maritime Academy and Independence House are entered into a MOU with the object of providing off-campus alternatives for students and employees to receive sexual assault crisis services.

**Latinx in Action**

Independence House, Inc. and Latinx in Action established a collaboration made possible through a culturally specific partnership funding award. This collaboration will provide crisis intervention, individual and longer-term counseling for Black sexual assault survivors and immigrant survivors who speak Portuguese or Spanish as a first language.

**Health Imperatives**

Independence House provides on-site domestic and sexual violence services to Health Imperatives patients at their Hyannis location.

**Outer Cape Community Solutions**

Outer Cape Community Solutions (OCCS) is a nonprofit consortium to advance a rural health planning network for the Outer-Cape region. Independence House is a community partner in the area of domestic and sexual violence.

**Gosnold's Emerson House**

Independence House offers domestic and sexual violence services for patients of Gosnold's Emerson House who have been impacted by domestic and sexual violence.

**Duffy Health Center**

Independence House domestic and sexual violence advocates and counselors are available to clients of Duffy Health Center.

**Suggestions:**

The need for behavioral health services is tremendous and services are not readily available, for several reasons. From an Independence House perspective, there are a few community programs that are offered that address harm, that the town of Orleans could attend and promote within Orleans. Barnstable No Place for Hate offers workshops on Active Bystander Intervention. The Enough Abuse Campaign offers workshops on how adult community members can be part of the solution in preventing Child Sexual Abuse. Abuse of any kind continues because of silence. We need more town administrators/select boards to have a louder voice in supporting healthy relationships. Employees from the town could be part of the Outer Cape Community Solutions group to learn about services and enhance your voice in the community. Independence House is hosting a Prevention Conference on Friday, September 27<sup>th</sup> and it would be important to have a strong contingency attend from Orleans.

Thank you for your efforts in gathering information for the Safer Community Task Force and for the opportunity to share the work that Independence House does.

**Outer Cape Community College**

Independence House offers crisis services to students and employees of Outer Cape Community College. This program is available to students and employees who are impacted by sexual violence on campus or in the community.

## Orleans Council on Aging Follow-up Letter to SCFT

Please find the requested information to supplement our discussion at your October 23, 2023 meeting:

1. The Orleans Council on Aging exists to serve and empower older adults 60+ to age well in Orleans through support, enrichment, and advocacy. The twenty employees work to provide meals, transportation, a variety of programs and activities, supportive day services and outreach support. We embrace the needs of those aging in place to enhance their quality of life by **providing exceptional service and programming which support healthy aging**. The COA professional staff interacts with other town departments, particularly OFD and OPD, as well as community agencies such as Elder Services of the Cape and Islands, Homeless Prevention Council, Lower Cape Outreach, Alzheimer's Family Support Center, and the Visiting Nurses Association.
2. Older adults may experience increased difficulty in accessing mental health support for several reasons. There is a shortage of mental health providers on Cape Cod. Medicare does not reimburse for services provided by all types of mental health providers, and many providers don't accept Medicare coverage. Older adults may have transportation or mobility challenges, limiting their abilities to get to providers. Another consideration is that many providers now offer virtual appointments, however older adults may not have the technology skills or the resources to access providers this way as there is a generational digital divide. When we encounter an individual exhibiting behavioral health concerns, we are challenged to find support to help evaluate, assess, encourage, and help facilitate appropriate follow-up with mental health professionals. In addition, situations are often complicated as substance abuse, cognitive impairment, or self-medicating is often a contributing factor when an older adult presents with behavioral health concerns, and too often the individuals have a limited or non-existent local informal support network. Undiagnosed and treated cognitive impairment is as significant a concern for the COA, as untreated mental health needs.
3. Behavioral health care is health care, so it is important to educate the community about recognizing mental health issues and encouraging people to seek support. Perhaps consider having some public bulletin boards publicizing warning signs of a mental health crisis and noting the 988 Suicide and Crisis Hotline as well as availability of local support for substance use disorder. In addition, greater collaboration, and consistent communication between community supporters like the COA, health care providers, and police and fire department responders could improve community response.

Judi Wilson, Director  
Orleans Council on Aging & Senior Center  
150 Rock Harbor Rd.  
Orleans, MA 02653

