



**National Coalition on Mental Health and Aging
Meeting Minutes
February 9, 2009**

Deborah DiGilio, Chair of the National Coalition on Mental Health and Aging (NCMHA) and Director of the American Psychological Association Office on Aging called the meeting to order and reviewed the proposed agenda. There were 23 members present onsite and 5 via conference call.

National Institute on Aging Presentation

Marie A. Bernard, MD, Deputy Director of National Institute on Aging (NIA) presented a summary of NIA involvement in mental health issues. She noted that in FY 2008, NIA funded \$63 million in mental health projects. The funded areas include: aging and mental health, cognitive function, psychosocial issues, stress including caregiver stress, the immune system, and menopause and depression. She noted that in the 2007 National Health Interview Survey, adults aged 45--64 years were more likely than adults aged >65 years to have experienced symptoms of serious psychological distress in the past six months. It was emphasized that stress is implicated in the onset and course of depression. Also, lack of sleep/circadian disruption is a chronic stressor that can elevate blood pressure, cortisol, glucose and insulin, increase appetite, depress mood, and impair cognitive function.

Dr. Bernard discussed current NIA efforts including the Resources for Enhancing Alzheimer's Caregivers Health (REACH) project. The project has helped improve the quality of life and lower the prevalence of clinical depression. Even one additional hour of free time for caregivers resulted in positive outcomes. Physical activity interventions are another area of investment. The benefits of exercise for older people are enormous including the prevention of diabetes, maintaining a healthy body weight, improving bone and muscle strength, reducing caregiver stress, improving sense of well-being, and may help maintain cognitive function.

Deborah thanked Dr. Bernard for attending the meeting and offered NCMHA's assistance and expertise in her efforts to promote mental health issues at NIA.

Policy Fellow Update

Gretchen Alkema is the 2008-2009 John Heinz Health and Aging Policy Fellow. She is working in the Office of U.S. Senator Blanche Lincoln (D-AR). She received her Doctorate from Leonard Davis School of Gerontology, University of Southern California. As a Licensed Clinical Social Worker, she has professional expertise in community-based service delivery to older adults and adapting research findings to these settings. Gretchen spoke to the group of Senator Lincoln's long history of support for aging issues. The Senator currently serves on the Senate Finance

Committee and the Senate Select Committee on Aging and her top priorities include preserving Social Security and reducing poverty among older women.

Legislative and Regulatory Issues Update

Jim Finley of National Association of Social Workers updated the Coalition on current issues on the Hill. Currently there is not a Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services, so there is no formal structure in place for us to work with. A process must happen at CMS on the proposed rules on case management and rehabilitation services. They are two of the six rules that are on hold that have a significant impact for our group. Also, there are hospice rules that are on hold in the rule making process. Overall, there is a lot of opportunity to right a lot of wrongs. The SCHIP (State Children's Health Insurance Program) bill was signed which is wonderful. However, health care reform is currently sidetracked because there are too many other issues of major importance (such as the stimulus package, and global warming) and all of our key issues need to go through the same committees on the Hill as the stimulus package, so we should probably not expect anything gargantuan related to health and mental health issues in the near future. Primary care services are in profound need, the Medicare Physician payment fix needs to be completed by the end of the year, and the Medicaid moratorium from last year will also expire on March 31.

Health Information Technology (HIT) is a major component of the current iteration of the Stimulus bill. This has massive implications and some tremendous opposition in some quarters because of the inadequate patient privacy protections. Another weakness in the bill is that non-physician practitioners are excluded from ongoing payments to develop HIT systems as are non-hospital settings like community mental health centers. This is bad for integrated care and is another deterrent for non-physician practitioners to participate in Medicare and Medicaid. There is currently \$18 billion in incentives in the bill for physicians to keep their participation in HIT at 90% but other practitioners are overlooked.

A question was raised about next steps for Medicare mental health parity. It has to go forward and CMS has to issue a proposed rule, private pay is a bigger problem. NCMHA members then noted other policy activities. Other important pieces of legislation to follow are: The Caring for an Aging America Act, would amend the Public Health Service Act to attract and retain trained health care professionals and direct care workers; The Retooling the Health Care Workforce for an Aging America Act that would expand education and training opportunities in geriatrics and long-term care for licensed health professionals, direct care workers, and family caregivers; The Health Professions and Primary Care Reinvestment Act, which would amend Title VII of the Public Health Service Act to improve and expand health professions training and education; the Positive Aging Act which would integrate mental health services for older adults into primary care and other community settings where they reside and receive services; and the Lifespan Respite Act (P.L. 109-442) which has never been funded. Advocacy efforts to fund the enhanced mental health, elder abuse, and caregiving components of the 2006 OAA reauthorization are in motion. Also, work is underway advocating for funding of evidenced based health promotion programs at AOA.

Gerontological Society of America (GSA) Update

James Appleby, Executive Director of GSA introduced himself to the Coalition. James is a pharmacist with a Masters in Public Health. He was at the American Pharmacist Association for 17 years. His main tie to mental health is the pharmacists' role in screening patients for depression and osteoporosis, medication adherence, and the correct use of medications.

He began his position at GSA in October 2008. His focus is on funding for NIA, civic engagement, and workforce issues. It was commented by an NCMHA member that GSA's Advocacy Day on the last day of their November 2008 convention was excellent.

The Eldercare Workforce Alliance

Stephanie Reed, American Association of Geriatric Psychiatry provided a brief update on the work of the Eldercare Workforce Alliance (EWA) and introduced the recently hired EWA Project Director, Alice Hedt. EWA currently is comprised of 25 members representing the professional workforce, direct care workers, consumers and caregivers. Its goal is to implement the recommendations of the Institute of Medicine (IOM) report "Re-tooling for an Aging America: Building the Health Care Workforce." One focus is to promote care models that provide well-coordinated, person-directed and family-focused services across settings. EWA has a Coordinating Committee, a Public Policy Committee, and a Membership Committee. EWA has received three years of funding from the Hartford Foundation and the Atlantic Philanthropies. These funds are supplemented by member contributions. For more information, visit www.eldercareworkforce.org

NCMHA Business

The Aging and Behavioral Health Alliance of East Central Ohio (ABHA-ECO) requested membership in NCMHA and the request was approved. In a letter from its chair, Paula Hartman-Stein, it was noted that they have been in existence for 3 years as a non-profit coalition of professionals (from the public and private sector, including elder law attorneys) who work with older adults and their caregivers in all areas of mental, physical, and behavioral healthcare. The mission of ABHA-ECO is to unify, educate, and collaborate among these professionals, and to strive to involve and include older adults who are consumers of healthcare services. They have sponsored three annual, day long seminars and have worked in conjunction with their Area Agency on Aging to receive a series of mini grants from the state of Ohio. They have a grant to bring the geriatric depression intervention, Healthy Ideas, to their area.

The terms of the NCMHA officers will expire in June 2009. All officers are completing their limit of two, two year terms. As stated in the bylaws, a three person nominating committee needs to be established to prepare the 2009 – 2011 nominations slate. Bob Rawlings volunteered to chair the committee. Anita Rosen of ASA and Ashley Carson of OWL will round off the committee.

Member updates

American Association for Geriatric Psychiatry (AAGP) – Stephanie Reed reported that they have been very involved in efforts to remedy the geriatric workforce issues identified by the IOM study. They are advocating, with other geriatric professions, for a new study by the IOM focused on our nation's geriatric mental health workforce needs. This was added as a provision in The Retooling the Health Care Workforce for an Aging America Act. Their annual meeting will be held March 5 - 8 in Honolulu, HI. For more information, visit, <http://www.aagpmeeting.org/>.

American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy (AAMFT) – Melissa Stamps reported that AAMFT is actively involved in efforts to increase the accessibility of mental health services funded by Medicare. Expanding Medicare provider status to include marriage and family therapists continues as their key priority issue, including efforts focused on the Medicare provider fix. They are also working to identify trends within the population of family therapists.

American Bar Association – Ellen Klem described their project, *Accommodating Cognitive Impairments in Voting: Shaping Clinically and Ethically Sound Institutional and Public Policy*. It includes promoting access to polls for the cognitively impaired and protecting against the fraudulent manipulation of the vote of this population. They are surveying election officials, policies, and mobile voting efforts in order to identify promising practices. They are working with the Vermont to support and evaluate a demonstration project of “mobile polling.” They are also identifying and describing the experiences in the November 2008 election of those election boards that provide direct outreach and support to residents of long-term care facilities. They will publish a report of the findings.

American Psychological Association – Diane Elmore mentioned a number of current legislative issues of relevance to the group. The Positive Aging Act focuses on integrated health care for older adults. Last year, this bill was included in the Senate draft of the legislation to reauthorize SAMHSA and work continues to ensure that this language remains intact as the new Congress reauthorizes SAMHSA. They are also involved with ongoing efforts to fund the Lifespan Respite Care Act which was signed into law in December 2006 and in advocating for increased funding for the OAA provisions for mental health screening and treatment, elder abuse and caregiving services. Deborah DiGilio added that APA is a member of the EWA and that her committee has developed a continuing education program, *What Psychologists Should Know When Working with Older Adults*.

American Society on Aging (ASA) – Anita Rosen reminded the group that the 2009 NCOA/ASA Aging in America Conference is March 15-19 in Las Vegas. NCMHA will present a policy workshop at the Conference. For more information visit: www.asaging.org.

Center for Mental Health Services (CMHS) – Marian Scheinholtz is the project officer for SAMHSA’S Targeted Capacity Expansion (TCE) older adults mental health grants program. Funding for the newest awardees was \$4 million over 3 years, beginning in October 2008. Ten programs were funded this time, which was the third time the grants have been issued (2002, 2005, and 2008). They all focus on the implementation of evidence based practices. There will not be an RFP this year. It was a very competitive selection process this past year, with 10 of 160 applicants selected. The contract for the Technical Assistance Center was awarded to the National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors. For more information about TCE grants and awardees, visit: <http://www.samhsa.gov/Grants/2008/awards/sm08008.aspx>

Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) – Angela Taube reported on their work with PACE and PASSR in conjunction with SAMHSA. She noted that on the CMS website there is information on the Development & Validation of a Revised Nursing Home Assessment Tool: <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/NursingHomeQualityInits/Downloads/MDS30FinalReportAppendix.pdf> Peggy Clark then discussed her efforts heading up the mental health cross cutting issue team at CMS.

Council for Social Work Education – Meredith Eisenhart discussed the National Center for Gerontological Social Work Education. The CSWE Gero-Ed Center prepares social work faculty and students to meet the demographic realities of our aging society. This Web site is the online resource for social work faculty, students, and practitioners who are committed to enhancing their gerontological competence. They also have an Advanced Curriculum Project <http://depts.washington.edu/geroctr/>.

Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance – Mildred Reynolds discussed their 970 chapters and 190 support groups located across in country, in every state. They were recently very involved in advocating for mental health parity and sent over 4,000 letters to Congress. She has recently worked with the Center for Global Aging at Catholic University’s National Catholic School of Social Service. Mildred felt this group would be a good addition to the Coalition.

National Association of State and Mental Health Program Directors and the National Association of PASSR Professionals – Willard Mays reported on the joint meeting of these groups in the fall which drew over 100 participants. Bob Rawlings is the current chair of NAPP.

National Association of Social Workers – Chris Herman discussed their efforts on the Social Work Reinvestment Act, HR 795. For more information about this initiative, visit: <http://www.socialworkreinvestment.org/>. On March 15-16, the NASW Annual Practice Conference will be The Aging Boom: Is Your Clinical Practice Ready? Suicide and gambling are topics that will be highlighted at the conference. It will be held in conjunction with the ASA/NCOA Annual Meeting.

National Association of State Units on Aging – Melanic McNeil spoke of their recent focus on developing Health Care Reform and Stimulus Package recommendations and reaching out to the Transition Team to remind them not to overlook health care issues.

National Citizens' Coalition for Nursing Home Reform (NCCNHR) – Jessica Brill announced that they have a new Executive Director, Sarah Wells. Sarah comes to NCCNHR after nearly a decade at Women in Government. Their National Long Term Care Ombudsman Resource Center provides support, technical assistance, and training to the 53 State Long Term Care Ombudsman Programs and their statewide networks of almost 600 regional (local) programs. Mental Health Issues is one of the areas covered by the Resource Center. http://www.ltombudsman.org/ombpublic/468_2550_19012.cfm.

National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare – Tom Leibfried noted that their president, Barbara Kennelly presented at the Medicare Youth Entitlement Summit stressing the importance of preserving these two critical programs. To read her remarks, visit, http://www.ncpssm.org/news/archive/bbk_youth_entitlement_summit/. Tom noted that Medicare is not the culprit responsible for the rise in health care costs. Congressional Budget Office statistics show that Federal spending on Medicare and Medicaid, which accounts for 4 percent of GDP today, is projected to rise to 9 percent by 2035. Visit: <http://www.cbo.gov/publications/collections/health.cfm>

Older Adults Working Group of Northern Virginia - Anne M. Hermann, Chair, reported that the focus of this regional program is designed to provide step-down into community based care to older adults now in state hospitals and to divert admissions to the hospital through the work of a Regional Older Adult Facilities Mental Health Support Team (RAFT), that provides community based care. They are hoping to hold the line and not lose this program in these trying budget times.

Suicide Prevention Action Network (SPAN) USA - Brian Altman announced that they are partnering with SAMHSA to host a media summit that will have a focus on mental health and suicide in older adults for assisted living communities. Mildred Reynolds will be one of the speakers. Next steps include developing a Suicide Prevention Resource Center and a tool kit for

at risk populations. They had a successful webinar this past December on Senior Suicide Prevention which featured Pennsylvania's Older Adult Suicide Prevention Plan.

Voice of Midlife & Older Women (OWL) - Director, Ashley Carson noted that this year Older Americans Mental Health Week will be May 24 - 30. They are working on their website for the event, www.theMentalhealthwk.org. When it is live, NCMHA is welcome to post information on the website. A Google grant was received for its development. Ashley updated the group on their project training Nursing Assistant training in the identification of mental health disorders in older adults. Psychologists, Peter Lichtenberg and Sara Honn Qualls developed the training sessions. The training will be 6 weeks of 10 minute sessions. OWL is also working with NCCNHR to provide a one hour session on mental health issues for all of their ombudsmen.

Next Meeting Date

The meeting was adjourned at 12:00 p.m. The next NCMHA meeting will be held on May 11th from 9:30 am until 12:30 pm in the American Psychological Association's 6th Floor Board Room.