



**National Coalition on Mental Health and Aging
Draft Meeting Minutes
August 13, 2020**

Welcome, Agenda Review, Approve Minutes

Joel E. Miller, NCMHA Chair and American Mental Health Counselors Association (AMHCA) Representative, called the meeting to order via Zoom necessitated by the Corona virus pandemic. He welcomed the 30 members joining meeting. He reviewed the agenda and asked for action on the minutes. Christy Mallik, representative of the National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors moved acceptance of the May 7, 2020 minutes; Kathleen Cameron, representing the National Council on Aging (NCOA) seconded the motion; the minutes were approved as circulated.

Update on NCMHA Webinar Series, Survey Project and Older Adult Mental Health Day 2021.

Joel Miller, NCMHA Chair updated NCMHA members on the webinar series sponsored by the Coalition in collaboration with NCOA and the Administration for Community Living (ACL) of the Department of Health and Human Services. Eight (8) webinars were conducted between July 2019 and May 2020 including the webinar held on May 20, 2020 focusing on social isolation that was conducted with the Coalition on Social Isolation and Loneliness. Two additional webinars are planned for this fall. On September 16, 2020 2pm EDT a webinar on social determinants of mental health will be conducted with focus on discrimination and systemic racism and related matters. On October 14, 2021 at 2pm EDT a webinar on older adult mental health peer support programs will be conducted featuring the current use of telephone and digital communication including Zoom. Additional webinars will be planned through spring 2021; members are encouraged to send topic suggestions to Kathy Cameron at NCOA kathleen.cameron@ncoa.org. Webinars are recorded and made available online.

Joel Miller reported that about 20 NCHA member organizations had completed the Coalition's online survey and asked other members to complete it soon. The Coalition Executive Committee expects to have the survey completed by the end of August. It will inform the Coalition of current and emerging older adult mental health needs and priorities that could be addressed by Coalition programming. Answers will inform an update of the Coalition's strategic plan.

Kathy Cameron, NCMHA Vice Chair, reported on early plans for the 2021 Older Adult Mental Health Awareness Day. ACL asked the NCOA Chronic Disease Self-Management Education Resource Center, led by Kathy Cameron and funded by ACL, to plan and conduct the 2021

Awareness Day. NCMHA will be represented on the Advisory Committee that is being established to guide this effort. It is expected to be a full day program in early May and will include plenary sessions and break-out groups. Topics for the day will be identified over the next few months. Shannon Skowronski representing ACL, thanked NCOA for taking on this project; Joel Miller thanked ACL for the opportunity.

Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Mental Health; COVID-19 Economic Stimulus Response Packages and Impact on Mental Health Services

Joel Miller reported that at the time of the meeting negotiations for another economic stimulus legislative package had come to a halt. It is unclear whether and how the President's executive orders and memorandums on a stimulus will be carried out. Joel expects the Administration to proceed with the President's actions unless there is court action stopping them.

Joel hoped a package will be negotiated by the House, Senate and White House. He offered to send a memo to the Coalition noting items of importance to Coalition members if such a package is signed into law. He also said there are thirty bills that could impact older adult mental health that the House Energy and Commerce Committee passed by July 15, 2020. Many of these bills may be brought to the full House in September.

Guest Presenter – Black American Older Adult Mental Health and Systemic Racism-Related Stress

Vonetta M. Dotson, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Department of Psychology, Gerontology Institute, Georgia State University

Dr. Dotson presented current scientific understanding of trends of Black older American mental health, service needs, association of physical and brain health, plus what we can do about it. She has made her PowerPoint presentation available. She noted the US has 4 million Black persons age 65+ of whom 8.5% will experience some type of psychological illness within a 12 month period. Many studies report equivalent or lower rates of psychological illness among Blacks than non-Hispanic Whites. Differences among older populations vary by age and disorder. For example, research indicates Black older adults are at greater risk for depression and the severity of depressive symptoms appears to be greater among Black compared to White older adults. Black Americans often receive poorer quality of care, less guideline consistent care and lack of access to care about 1/3rd of the time resulting in later intervention for depression for many older Black Americans.

Barriers to quality mental health care for older Black people include lack of sufficient providers with diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds, lack of cultural competence, lack of insurance coverage, denial and stigma. Distrust of the health care system among older Black people also contributes to some reluctance to seek services.

Risk factors for psychological and emotional problems include the chronic health conditions of diabetes, hypertension, dementia, and stroke; all of which are more common among Black older adults than White counterparts.

Race-related stress in Black older Americans has cumulative impact over a lifetime. Stressors of limited resources, lack of high quality education, lack of employment, of health care and housing opportunities can have a major impact. Limited access to community resources creates barriers

to healthy and productive aging and leads to increased rates of disorders of depression and dementia.

Dr. Dotson offered a schema for the association of physical and brain health. She noted physiological effects of stress and neurobiological effects of discrimination. She highlighted findings that the more stress incurred over time often results in more decline in health, functioning and mood. She reviewed late-life depression subtypes with the aging process, biomarkers, behaviors and typical phenotypes; she relayed health disparities in vascular disease, noting that overall vascular vulnerabilities could substantially heighten risk for depression and cognitive change in African Americans.

She called on providers to promote resilience, listen with empathy, create safe spaces, be mindful of triggers, refer to services and supports, be self-reflective aware, understand the impact of racism and advocate. She ended noting that issues caused by race-related stress affect all of us. Dr. Vonetta Dotson can be reached at vdotson1@gsu.edu.

Grace Whitting, representing the National Alliance for Caregiving, asked Dr. Dotson about the impact of caregiver stress on choices for care noting that in Black families it is often expected that the youngest female child will assume caregiving responsibilities. Dr. Dotson noted that cultural norms for caregiving can certainly add stress but noted norms are changing. She indicated that when individuals do not take on expected roles and do not embrace cultural norms, stress can also increase. Some of these stressors are race-related.

Michele Karel, representing the Veterans Health Administration, asked whether there is research at the individual level on the value of healthy behaviors for Black older adults with vascular depression. Dr. Dotson noted that she has not conducted such research, however there is some work on such physical exercise and overcoming obstacles. More research is needed. Dr. Dotson noted she is developing a One Stop for Brain Health.

Kathy Cameron asked Dr. Dotson about her earlier reference to the inadequate numbers of mental health professionals from communities of color and professionals who are culturally competent to work effectively with Black older adults. Dr. Dotson noted that she is working with the American Psychological Association to address these issues and to make materials available on the APA office on Aging website. She is also working with Historically Black Colleges and Universities as well as high schools and community colleges to encourage student entry into the profession. Kathy suggested and Joel Miller agreed that perhaps NCMHA could work with Dr. Dotson on these issues.

Guest Presenter- Managing Multiple Stressors During Challenging Times

Lisa M. Brown, Ph.D. ABPP, Professor, Director of Trauma Program, Peace and Human Rights Lab, Risk and Resilience Research Lab, Palo Alto University

Dr. Brown spoke of the many people experiencing COVID-19-related grief and how this grief differs from the norm because people cannot say goodbye to loved ones as expected. Many are grieving the loss of their lifestyles and that of their children and grandchildren. She compared characteristics of this pandemic to natural disasters, and human-made intentional and unintentional disasters. She noted the compounding effect of historical harms, collective trauma and individual traumatic stressors.

Dr. Brown discussed complex trauma as stressors that are interpersonal, premeditated, and caused by other humans. She noted that acts of nature that result in bad outcomes are not as harmful to wellbeing as acts that are inflicted by one human on another. Furthermore, when the people or institutions a person depends on for survival violates trust, it erodes a sense of security and is emotionally distressing. This betrayal trauma can cause peoples' brains to operate differently. The fear center may stay activated and stretch coping skills to the limit.

Dr. Brown introduced a COVID-19 Decision Aid titled: How Do I Choose When to Interact with People or Take Part in Activities Outside My Home During the Pandemic? It shows the level of risk encountered with various actions. It is available on the Gerontological Society of America (GSA) website and will soon be interactive.

She went on to discuss vicarious trauma and secondary trauma stress often referred to as indirect trauma. She noted that professionals who work in high-stress and trauma-exposed fields are at greater risk for experiencing vicarious trauma and these individuals need to observe warning signs and mitigate negative effects. She reviewed eight benefits of self-care during the pandemic and encouraged people to make personal and professional self-care a priority. She encouraged avoiding isolation, establishing and maintaining professional connections as well as taking occupational risks seriously. She called for developing realistic and reasonable expectations, paying attention to the need for life balance, pursuing intellectual stimulation and adopting a long-range perspective. She noted the health benefits of a good cry.

Dr. Brown's PowerPoint presentation is available to the Coalition.

Member Updates

AARP – Olivia Dean represented AARP at the meeting. She indicated there was nothing new to report. .

Administration for Community Living (ACL) - Shannon Skowronski noted during the meeting the ACL sponsorship of the 2021 Older Adult Mental Health Awareness Day. She was not able to remain for this this section of the meeting.

American Counseling Association – Dominique Marsalek reported the association is working on racism and an interstate compact. They will have draft legislation by the end of the year.

American Mental Health Counselors Association – Joel Miller reported that the association is taking a new look at their priorities and strategic plan in light of current events. They are focusing on racism, civil rights and Covid-19 pandemic implications for mental health and counselors. They have established a racism task force and are collecting and developing studies, materials and other products for their members. Joel will send some of the materials to Coalition members.

American Psychological Association – Deborah DiGilio represented APA at the meeting but was unable to stay for the update section.

American Society on Aging – Anita Rosen reported that ASA will hold its Aging in American Conference as a virtual meeting in 2021. Presentation proposals will be accepted online into September. ASA has numerous materials on their website including recorded webinars. In response to question from Jim Davis, Oregon Coalition, Anita agreed to look into whether ASA Mental Health Aging Network (MHAN) is planning joint sessions with NCMHA.

Department of Veterans Affairs – Michele Karel represented the Veterans Health Administration at the meeting but was not able to stay for the update section.

Illinois Coalition on Mental Health and Aging – Elaine Jurkowski shared that the Coalition recently completed its strategic plan and is now forming subcommittees to address Coalition priorities.

Iowa Coalition on Mental Health and Aging – Lila Starr indicated that there was nothing to report at this time.

N4A – National Association of Area Agencies on Aging – Amy Gotwald represented N4A at the meeting but was unable to stay for the update section of the agenda.

National Association of Mental Health Program Directors (NASMHPD) – Christy Malik reported that the association held their annual meeting recently and that it included a focus on crisis services plus a focus on older adults with complex care needs especially depression and dementia. Christy also said the organization is working with the American Mental Health Counselors Association (AMHCA) and other groups of counselors on legislation to improve access to mental health services through allowing counselors to be reimbursed by Medicare.

National Association of Social Workers - Chris Herman represented the association in the meeting but was not able to stay for the update.

National Board for Certified Counselors and Affiliates - Jake Jackson reported that NBCC is focusing attention on an Executive Order on the importance of rural health.

National Council on Aging (NCOA) – Kathy Cameron reported that NCOA is working with new grantees that have received ACL funding for health promotion and disease prevention programs. Several of the grantees have a focus on depression. She noted that SAMHSA has announced funding to establish three Centers of Excellence for different population groups: African Americans, LGBTQ, and older Americans. The focus is building up the workforce to effectively work with these groups.

New York Geriatric Mental Health Alliance and Vibrant Emotional Health of New York – Kim Williams reported that the organization is supporting front line state staff in the New York City area. The organization attends to the emotional health of state staff and the people they serve.

Ohio - Benjamin Rose Institute, Cleveland Ohio – Orion Bell reported that the organization was recently awarded an ACL grant. He is interested in the National Coalition and any Coalition activity in Ohio.

Oklahoma Mental Health and Aging Coalition – Karen Orsi reported that the coalition is continuing to conduct education and training through Zoom and will soon offer peer support specially training.

Oregon Older Adults/People with Disabilities Behavioral Health Advisory Council – Jim Davis reported that pandemic is causing reductions in federal and state revenues and that

the state is considering serious funding cuts for mental health and substance abuse services. The Advisory Council is very concerned about potential cuts to the model system addressing the needs of older adults and people with disabilities. Senior and disability rights advocates are working together to encourage expansion of services, Medicaid coverage, community mental health services and policy initiatives. Jim Davis said Oregon could have a \$3 Billion deficit and needs federal assistance for this budget crisis.

Adjourn

Joel Miller thanked the speakers for their important and timely presentations. He thanked members for attending the meeting. The next meeting will be November 5, 2020 at 10am, two days after the election. The meeting was adjourned at 12:30pm.
