



**National Coalition on Mental Health and Aging  
Meeting Minutes  
November 4, 2021**

**Welcome, Agenda Review, Approve Minutes**

Joel E. Miller, NCMHA Chair called the meeting to order at 10:02 am ET, via Zoom.

Joel welcomed the 22 members attending.

Joel reviewed the agenda and requested approval of the August 5, 2021 meeting minutes.

Joel moved to approve the minutes; seconded by Karen Orsi. Motion carried.

**NCMHA Draft Response to the Senate Finance Committee Request for Information**

Joel Miller facilitated discussion about the U.S. Senate Finance Committee's Request for Information to the behavioral health community asking for legislative and policy proposals that will improve access to services for people with mental illness and substance use conditions. The Finance Committee is seeking input on improving reimbursement mechanisms and financing behavioral health enhancements. Their goal is to develop a comprehensive behavioral health legislative package for introduction in Congress early next year.

Key policy areas include: strengthening the workforce, improving access to behavioral healthcare, integrating behavioral healthcare and physical healthcare, ensuring parity, and telehealth.

In keeping with our mission, the Executive Committee developed a draft response to the Senate Finance Committee's request for legislative recommendations aimed at addressing the needs of older adults with behavioral health conditions.

The Executive Committee sent the draft to NCMHA members for their review and comments. The Executive Committee met via Zoom on October 29 to review comments received and make further revisions. Kathleen Cameron sent out the latest draft to members on November 3

Joel Miller reported the Senate Finance Committee has extended the deadline for comments beyond November 1. NASW learned that the deadline was extended to November 15.

Joel Miller invited NCMHA members to discuss the NCMHA draft responses and provide further input. The following is a summary of discussion points:

- Appreciation of the Executive Committee's efforts to draft comprehensive comments
- We need to address NCMHA's process of developing comments on public policy.
- Commenting on pending legislation affecting various professional disciplines and reimbursement proposals is beyond the scope of NCMHA's mission and departs from past practice.
- The NMCHA bylaws of 2018 are silent on this issue.
- NCMHA may need to establish a Task Force to address this issue and recommend further revisions to the bylaws.
- Individual NCMHA member organizations may choose to be neutral on the NCMHA comments or submit their own comments that go beyond the scope of NCMHA's comments.
- We are all working toward the same goals and trying to develop united strategies
- Medicare beneficiaries should be able to access health and behavior assessment and intervention services provided by clinical social workers.
- Medicare beneficiaries in a Skilled Nursing Facility receiving skilled nursing services under Medicare Part A should be able to simultaneously receive the discreet services of an independent clinical social worker to conduct a psychotherapy evaluation in the way a psychologist or psychiatrist currently does.
- If we address access to services and reimbursement policies for various disciplines we should do so equitably.
- For the purpose of preparing comments to the Senate Finance Committee, we need to decide whether we make specific references to reimbursement for various professions.
- Should we talk about workforce challenges more broadly?
- Should we address reimbursement issues at all, with or without references to specific bills?
- Members were asked to respond to a straw poll on the following question: Are you in favor of including reimbursement policy recommendations in the draft letter?
- We can consider another alternative, that is to address the need for increased reimbursement for all professions without citing specific professions.
- Members should have the opportunity to review the most current draft.
- We need to be as inclusive as we can.
- It may be premature to do a poll right now.
- From a consumer perspective, we should advocate for policies that expand the behavioral health workforce to allow older adults to seek behavioral health services from professionals who can effectively meet their individual needs.
- We can't address workforce capacity issues without addressing reimbursement issues.

- We should recognize and respect state licensure requirements.
- Comments on workforce development should support that behavioral health professional be licensed and certified.
- The straw poll was inconclusive. Only 8 people responded to the straw poll out of 21 people who were logged in and there were 4 abstentions.
- We will need to conduct another poll after the revised draft is sent out.
- The latest draft comments will be sent out by Friday, November 5.
- For transparency and clear communication when we send out these revisions, we need to note in the introduction of the draft comments that we are commenting on scope of practice related issues which we have not done historically.
- We need to acknowledge and recognize the fact that we are a diverse coalition with representation from a number of different professionals.
- Representatives of state coalitions may not be comfortable taking prescriptive policy positions without first obtaining agreement from their respective coalitions.
- We could address workforce and reimbursement issues in a more general way, such as expressing support for all bills that fund state licensed and certified workforce development for behavioral health.
- The Task Force on the NCMHA Bylaws might also recommend a set of values or principles to guide the Coalition in preparing comments on public policy in the future.

Joel Miller thanked members for expressing their views and presented the following plan:

1. Members can review the most recent draft over the next five days;
2. Members may submit comments on the most recent draft by Tuesday, November 9;
3. The Executive Committee will review comments received and send out a final draft;
4. Members can respond to a poll on the final draft via Survey Monkey on November 11. Members will have the option to abstain.
5. NCMHA will establish a task force to review and revise the bylaws in response to the issues raised during today's discussion.

### **Plans for the 2022 Annual Older Adult Mental Health Awareness Day**

Kathleen Cameron, Vice Chair of NCMHA and Director the Center for Healthy Aging, reported that the 2022 Older Adult Mental Health Awareness Day event will be May 16, 2022. This week invitations were sent to the Advisory Committee. Kathleen asked NCMHA members to share the date of the OAMHAD event with their colleagues.

### **SAMHSA Guide on Psychosocial Interventions for Older Adults with Serious Mental Illness**

Eric Weakly announced that the [Psychosocial Interventions for Older Adults With Serious Mental Illness](https://store.samhsa.gov/product/psychosocial-interventions-older-adults-serious-mental-illness/PEP21-06-05-001?referer=from_search_result) has been posted on the SAMHSA Publications site at: [https://store.samhsa.gov/product/psychosocial-interventions-older-adults-serious-mental-illness/PEP21-06-05-001?referer=from\\_search\\_result](https://store.samhsa.gov/product/psychosocial-interventions-older-adults-serious-mental-illness/PEP21-06-05-001?referer=from_search_result)

Joel Miller and Eric Weakly recognized and thanked NCMHA members for their contributions to the development of the Guide.

Joel Miller presented a summary of the Guide. See PowerPoint presentation attached.

Members expressed their appreciation to Joel Miller and SAMHSA. Kathleen Cameron noted that the Guide will help inform planning for the 2022 OAMHAD event. Joel noted that NCMHA comments to the Senate Finance Committee should reference the Guide. Joel also encouraged NCMHA members to disseminate the Guide among their colleagues.

### **Congressional Healthcare and Mental Health Policy Update**

Joel Miller spotlighted slides from his Congressional Healthcare and Mental Health Policy Update. The full PowerPoint presentation is attached.

The presentation addressed the Senate Infrastructure Legislative Package and the \$1.75 trillion “Build Back Better” social spending and climate bill.

Brian Altman with SAMHSA noted that the BBB bill also includes a provision for \$40 million for the behavioral health needs of older adults through discretionary (non-formula) grants under the Older Americans Act.

Joel Miller will prepare and publish further Congressional Healthcare and Mental Health Policy updates as Congress takes action on pending legislation.

### **Panel on The Roles of State Coalitions on Mental health and Aging in the Post Pandemic Era**

Presentations were given by the following NCMHA members:

- Elaine Jurkowski, President Illinois Coalition on Mental Health & Aging
- Lorie Thomas for the Nebraska Coalition on Mental Health and Aging
- Karen Orsi, Director, Oklahoma Mental Health and Aging Coalition

See PowerPoint presentations attached.

Panelists responded to questions. The following is a summary of responses:

Lorie Thomas noted that the Nebraska Coalition is looking at the pros and cons of applying to the IRS for 501-c-3 status. She asked if other Coalitions on the panel have this designation. Oklahoma decided not to apply. Illinois is exploring that option. Kathleen Cameron noted that 501-c-3 status and opportunities for foundation funding could be a subject of a future webinar.

All three panelists expressed appreciation to NCMHA for providing resources such as the SAMHSA Guide, legislation updates, and educational webinars.

Elaine Jurkowski noted that she shares these resources with her social work students at Southern Illinois University. She recommended that NCMHA provide information to state coalitions about how to increase their media presence and how use various media platforms.

Mike O'Donnell noted that NCMHA recently received inquiries from a member in Ohio seeking technical assistance to organize a statewide mental health and aging coalition in Ohio.

Karen Orse suggested that NCMHA establish a mentorship program to connect members interested in starting a state coalition with member coalitions willing to share their experience.

Joel Miller stated that this issue can be placed on the agenda for a future meeting.

**Next Meeting** - Thursday, February 3, 2022 at 10:00 a.m. Eastern Time.

**Adjournment** - The meeting was adjourned at 12:45 p.m. Eastern Time