

# VHMAC-ST Meeting Minutes (18 March 2020)

## I. Call to Order

David La Pointe called to order the regular meeting of the Veterans' Healthy Minds Advisory Council - South Texas, at 1105 on 18 March 2020. This was a **Call-in teleconference only** as a result of the Coronavirus issues.

**Roll Call Present or Excused:** Andrea Strong, Dr. Betsy Davis, Carlos Acosta, Christopher Vidaurre, Dr. David La Pointe, Estela Cantu-La Pointe, Gingerlei Seda, Jill Palmer, Karah Smith, Kevin Crozier, Larissa Martinez, Col Lisa Firmin, Michael Carrion, Michael O'Connell, Natasha Walden, Wil Seda. **Not Present:** Becky Smith, Christina Lynch, Jose Michael Gonzales, Kesha Delasbour, Scott Rios.

**II. Approval/Review of Previous Minutes/Current Agenda** – Chairman motioned that previous minutes be approved as reviewed/written. The motion was 2<sup>nd</sup> by Kevin Crozier and minutes were unanimously approved by the Council.

## III. Old Business

**VHMACST – Feedback to VA MH Department:** Dr. Davis stated that Feedback Meetings are on hold until everything has settled down a bit (re: coronavirus). However, she can answer any questions she can about changes to VA care right now. She is encouraging appointments to be over the phone or telehealth as much as possible right now. MyHealthVet and VA Video Connect will be relied on very heavily in the coming weeks/months. She included a handout with several ways to connect to the VA Care remotely. **(See Attached). (OPEN)**

**VA National MH Council (Dr. Davis):** Dr. Davis stated that Sandra Jackson (Poplar Bluff, MO) is the new POC for the National MH Council replacing the retiring Dr. Peggy M. Henderson. She covered information about National Sexual Assault Awareness Month 2020 (April). A slide presentation is was discussed and was provided. **(See Attached). (OPEN)**

**VA Community MH & Wellness Summit (Dr. Davis):** Dr. Davis is in charge and leading the efforts for this event. It is an opportunity to bring together VA providers, community partners, Veterans, and their families to talk about how we can all work together to better serve Veterans and their families in the area. This year, **our focus will be on Veteran employment** – discussing and sharing what Veterans, employers, and service providers need to know to help Veterans be successful in the workplace. This event will **“likely be held in August again this year.”** Ideas, questions, concerns can be directed to Dr. Davis as appropriate. **(OPEN)**

**Veterans Resilience and Recovery Collective (Formally CVEB MH/SP Subcommittee) (Dr. Davis):** Dr. Davis updated us on the Veterans Resilience and Recovery Collective (note name change). At this point, meetings will continue on the second Tuesday of the month at 1500 but **ONLY THROUGH THE TELECONFERENCING LINE: 1-800-767-1750 code 20815#**. The April meeting will include discussions ways to support Veterans MH and suicide prevention in the midst of our current situation. She invites your ideas. **(OPEN)**

**VA – Improving Veteran Experience – Dr. Ortega (Dr. Davis):** As soon as we are able, we will get Dr. Adriana Ortega scheduled to meet with our VHMACST. She is working on creating recommendations for improving Veterans' experience of VA MH services. She is interested in meeting with us to hear about our experiences of care and to get ideas for specific suggestions for changes, especially in areas already identified as area for improvement by national data the VA collects. To assist Dr.'s Davis and Ortega please consider and start thinking about the following questions:

1. How would you like to see your family members involved in your MH care?
2. How would you prefer to be able to communicate with your MH provider?

3. Have you had any experience with providers who were asking questions from the computer in a way that still felt personal? What did they do to help you feel that way?
4. What kinds of educational materials would you like to have (diagnosis, medications, treatment options, handouts vs. asking questions in appointment vs. websites, available in waiting room vs. directly from provider)?
5. What could we do to make the waiting areas feel safer and more comfortable?
6. If there was one thing, we could do to improve our MH services, what would it be?  
**(OPEN)**

#### **VHMACST Sub-Committees**

##### **➤ Women Veterans Sub-Committee (Col Lisa Firmin)**

- Col Firmin was unable to attend the meeting due to UTSA obligations. Dr. Davis and Ginger gave us information on our new subcommittee and their efforts and direction they are pursuing on behalf of Women Veterans. Among the numerous concerns of their concentration they are exploring women veteran care barriers, specifically mental health services at South Texas Veterans Health Care System. A copy of their meeting is provided.  
**(See Attached) (OPEN)**

##### **➤ Outreach Sub-Committee (Wil Seda)**

- Wil Seda and Michael Carrion were both attending other meetings, will update at April Meeting. **(OPEN)**

**MH First Aid Class (Larissa Martinez):** Larissa Martinez, Circle of Arms, CEO/President briefed on MH First Aid Training. Current restrictions on gatherings are presenting challenges to providing this training. Larissa stated that she needs a minimum of 5 people to hold a class and they are securing spaces for training with appropriate “social distancing” (re: coronavirus). If you are wanting to get this training “immediately”, let one of the offices know and we will provide that information to Larissa. As she is a member of our VHMACST, you can contact her directly if you prefer. Her “flyer and Certification information is provided. **(See Attached) (OPEN)**

**Event/Outreach Tracking:** Current Event/Outreach Tracking Sheet was discussed/was provided. **(See Attached) (CLOSED)**

**Contact Card Log:** Current Contact Card Listing was discussed, and most recent case was reviewed. **(See Attachment) (CLOSED)**

**Membership Roster:** Current Member Roster was reviewed. **(See Attachment) (CLOSED)**

**VHMACST Tablecloths:** The need for a second tablecloth was discussed and options for purchasing another tablecloth were examined. **(OPEN)**

**VHMACST Budget:** The need to complete a suggested budget to submit to VA was discussed and it will be prepared and submitted ASAP. **(OPEN)**

**VHMACST Pictures:** The need for pictures of VHMACST members was discussed. A request for council members to submit a picture so we can incorporate them on the website was made. Please submit a picture to one of the officers ASAP and we will post them. A suggestion was made that as soon as we are able, to take a picture of the entire Council together and post that as well. We will schedule that ASAP. **(OPEN)**

**Other:** A question was asked about how you mute/unmute while using the teleconferencing line was asked. To mute or unmute use \*6.

#### **IV. New Business**

**Intensive Outpatient Treatment for Veterans with Posttraumatic Stress – (Hurricane Harvey):** Amanda Flores, Community Outreach Coordinator for UT Health Science Center at San Antonio provided information about a program for individuals involved in “Hurricane Harvey” experiencing symptoms of PTSD. A handout was reviewed and provided. **(See Attachment) (Closed)**

**Sexual Assault Month – April:** The “Take Back Our City” and “Start by Believing Campaign” programs were discussed. These events are currently on hold and will be rescheduled ASAP. The “Start by Believing” campaign involves asking people to fill out a pledge to believe sexual assault survivors and write down a few reasons why. Those signs are then posted in the area and usually left up for a few days as a symbol to survivors of hope and encouragement to reach out. **(OPEN)**

**“What to Expect” Handout – for Veterans discharging from inpatient MH process/procedure. Support and Suicide Emphasis:** Dr. Davis is asking for assistance from the VHMACHST with a tasking to help develop a “Handout” for veterans discharging from in-patient MH on what to expect and how to make the discharge process smoother. If you are interested contact one of the officers and let them know or contact Dr. Davis directly. **(OPEN)**

**2020 Military Health Collective Impact Summit San Antonio – TRICARE/Humana (Maria Gonzales):** The purpose of this summit is to address social determinants of health (SDOH) impacting TRICARE beneficiaries (e.g., loneliness, food insecurity and tobacco/alcohol use.) The goal is to inspire military health influencers to join our Military Health Advisory Board. Members will partner with Humana Military, and one another through a collective impact approach, to develop collaborative projects to improve health outcomes, impact SDOH, and lower the cost of care. **(OPEN)**

**VHMACHST Mission, Functions Statements:** Please review “mission” and “functions” of VHMACHST and submit ideas for changes, additions, deletions, modifications, etc., for consideration. **(See attachment) (OPEN)**

#### **V. Next Meeting: 15 April 2020, 1100, PHONE-IM ONLY MEETING**

##### **VI. Adjournment:**

A motion was made by Michael to adjourn the meeting, it was seconded by Kevin Crozier. The Chair adjourned the meeting at 1154.

##### **VII. Miscellaneous:**

###### **Minutes:**

Minutes submitted by Chair, Dr. David La Pointe

Minutes Approved by Chair/Co Chair Ginger Seda

**Veteran’s Crisis Line. 24/7 access; Contact 1-800-273-8255 option 1.**