

VHMAC-ST Meeting Minutes (16 September 2020)

I. Call to Order

Council Chair David LaPointe called to order the regular meeting of the Veterans' Healthy Minds Advisory Council- South Texas, at 1101 on 16 September 2020, via Zoom video/tele-conference. Council roll was called by Council Secretary, Kesha Delasbour.

Roll Call— Present or Excused: Christina Lynch, Christopher Vidaurre, David La Pointe, Gingerlei Seda, Jill Palmer, Karah Smith, Kesha Delasbour, Kevin Crozier, Larissa Martinez, Lisa Firmin, Michael Carrion, Natasha Walden, Robin Soto, Wil Seda, Betsy Davis.

Not Present: Andrea Strong, Carlos Acosta, Jose Gonzales, Michael O'Connell, Scott Rios, Austin Lawler, Richard Martinez.

II. Approval/Review of Previous Minutes/Current Agenda

Council Chair David LaPointe motioned to accept previous meeting minutes. Council member Kevin Crozier seconded.

III. Old Business

VHMACST— Veteran Resilience and Recovery Operation/ Collaborative. VA Rep Dr. Davis informed Council that the group met last week. Dr. Davis expressed concern over possible discouragement of family members in requesting help, proposed an increase of Mental Health 1st Aid training, and use of Mental Health crisis centers and units was encouraged. Recommendation was made by Dr. Davis for the Council to collaborate with other organizations for funding in support of MH 1st Aid training and access to additional resources, use of the Texas Veteran Network resource Website (<https://www.combinedarms.us/tvn>), and use of provider referral system for specific needs. Dr. Davis also reminded Council of VetTalks to be organized— a flyer for the 10 December event focusing on veteran resiliency for coping in 2020 will be disseminated at a later time— target audience is to act as a bridge between veterans and civilians— Council member Natasha will be a speaker. Council member Larissa suggested Council involvement with local HOAs and Bexar County Court judges to focus on veteran specific assistance. Council member Wil proposed creation of a resource checklist by the Council, and the use of Website hyperlinks. Council member Kevin informed Council of Website resources and calendar. Council Chair notified Council of creation of a Resource Guide containing a compilation of resources— Dr. Davis recommended the guide be user-friendly and organized by need. Council member Lisa expressed agreement with a checklist creation, stated a concern regarding excess of resource compilation, and the need for vetting prior to guide inclusion. Council member Natasha informed Council of her current position as a regional leader for a military and veteran family wellness coalition, stated the organization began a resource guide spreadsheet on 14 September, that she visits veterans to provide direct information on resources available to them, and that further info will be forwarded to Council Chair (to include info WRT an Open House event being hosted by the group). Council members are asked to submit Mental Health crisis resources to VA Rep Dr. Davis and Council Chair. **(OPEN)**

VHMACST— Women Veterans Sub-Committee. Sub-Committee Chair Lisa Firmin updated Council on her current health, reminded Council of her previous request for a replacement as Sub-Committee Chair, and confirmed that one Council member contacted her as a potential replacement. Council was

informed about a Webinar detailing a Hispanic Chamber research release in which it was found that, during the current COVID-19 pandemic, women veterans have requested mental health services at a 23% higher rate than their counterparts. Sub-Committee Chair proposed that a similar survey be conducted by the VA. Sub-Committee Chair is in contact with the Office of Veteran Experience WRT research on building trust with women veterans— issues include: pain problems, positive experiences, five thematic issues that are common (i.e. childcare, employment, entrepreneurship, physical and mental healthcare, and housing), and next steps at the local and national levels. Sub-Committee Chair focus is on current impact on women's issues in San Antonio, a women's health clinic at ALM, and VA accountability. Sub-Committee Chair will forward additional info pertaining to the Sub-Committee to Council Chair. Sub-Committee Chair may be contacted via email at: lisa.firmin@utsa.edu. **(OPEN)**

VHMACST— Outreach Sub-Committee. Sub-Committee Chair Wil Seda informed Council that he has not conducted follow-ups with veterans detailed on the outreach list. Sub-Committee Chair notified Council that “Thank You” cards were printed by the VA, they are available to all Council members for dissemination locally, that they have been in use, and that feedback have been positive. Sub-Committee Chair inquired about current standing of Council Website views. Council Chair stated he calls veterans on the outreach list once a week and that he spoke with one veteran from the list once (since initial contact with the veteran by the Council Secretary). Council Chair updated Council on a Council member's need for transportation, and their grievance of not having a home visit by a provider in recent months. Council Chair also briefed Council on the “Next Door App” being utilized to increase communal awareness of the Council. Council member Gingerlei discussed a program (Vets Helping Vets) being implemented in her neighborhood, and Council member Kevin stated info on the VHV program is on the Council Website and Facebook page. **(OPEN)**

Mental Health First Aid Training. Certified Mental Health First Aid Instructor, and council member, Larissa Martinez (with Circle of Arms organization) is the primary POC. Said member was unavailable to address the Council due to having to leave the Council meeting prior to adjournment. Council was informed that virtual training was in the planning phase, one Council member was registered for the upcoming training date, and a minimum of five registrants are required by 21 September for training to be held on 25 September (8a-5p). Council member Lisa confirmed intent to register, however later rescinded due to a calendar conflict. Council members Gingerlei and Natasha confirmed intent to register. VA Rep Dr. Davis confirmed intent to participate. Council Chair offered to provide sponsorship for all Council members interested and stated confirmation of the training date and time will be provided at a later time. Council members are asked to contact Council member Larissa NLT 21 September to secure training spot. Note: Mental health first aid training includes instruction for adults and youth. Training is recommended for all veterans service organizations and individuals. Cost: \$40 for course material; 8-hr course; Pricing was previously reduced to \$25. For more info, please contact a Council officer or Council member Larissa Martinez. Contact email: info@MentalHealthFirstAid.org; Site: www.MentalHealthFirstAid.org. Partnership with the Community Veterans Engagement Board (CVEB) Veterans Resilience & Recovery Collaborative was previously discussed for possible for sponsorship opportunity. **(OPEN)**

VHMACST— Other. Council member Kevin shared a research study's link on gender differences in the veteran population for suicidal behavior (<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/32682205>).

VHMACST— Other. Council member Michael C. shared that he has witnessed a low interest among women veteran's interest to join the Council. He suggested outreach strategy include official messaging protocol prior to expanded outreach.

IV. New Business

VHMACST—Budget. VA Rep Dr. Davis informed Council that the Council Budget proposal was submitted and a follow-up will be conducted at a later time. **(OPEN)**

VHMACST— Resource Guide. Council Chair previously informed Council that a consolidated/alphabetized list of Council resources, with a brief description of each resource/organization/program, will be created. **(OPEN)**

VHMACST— Upcoming Training. Council Chair reiterated upcoming Mental Health 1st Aid training, Virtual Suicide Prevention training (18 & 25 September), Caregiver training (29 September), and advised Council members to check info disseminated via email. **(OPEN)**

VHMACST— Events. Council Chair notified Council about Rampage Sled (22-24 September) and Golf Classic (9 November). For more information, contact Council Chair. **(OPEN)**

VHMACST— Other Event. Council member Lisa informed Council of Hispanic Heritage Month and a UTSA Hispanic Heritage Month panel event with veterans (13 October; 1200). For more information, visit: <https://www.utsa.edu/hispanicheritage/week5/veteran-panel-discussion.html>. **(OPEN)**

National Veterans Mental Health Council Webinar. Council Chair notified Council that other Councils are meeting during this time, however our Council is only meeting virtually. Issues presented were: Council name recognition in local VA facility and designation of a dedicated space for Council meetings at local VA facility. VA Rep Dr. Davis stated that space is currently limited at the local VA, and closet space for storage (at the local VA facility is unlikely). **(OPEN)**

VHMACST— Other. Council Chair informed Council that Council member Kevin forwarded a notification regarding an extension of ID card expiration dates to June 2021 due to COVID-19 restrictions. More information will be forwarded to Council members at a later time. **(OPEN)**

V. Next Meeting

21 Oct 2020; 1100; Phone-In/ Video Teleconference (due to COVID-19 concerns and restrictions).

VI. Adjournment

No motion was made to adjourn the meeting. Council Chair adjourned the meeting at 1156.

VII. End of Minutes

Minutes submitted by Council Secretary, Kesha Delasbour.
Minutes will be reviewed by Council Chair, David LaPointe.