

VHMAC-ST Meeting Minutes (21 October 2020)

I. Call to Order

Council Co-Chair Gingerlei Seda called to order the regular meeting of the Veterans' Healthy Minds Advisory Council- South Texas, at 1102 on 21 October 2020, via Zoom video/tele-conference.

Council roll was called by Council Secretary, Karah Smith.

Roll Call— Present or Excused: Carlos Acosta, Dr. David La Pointe, Gingerlei Seda, Karah Smith, Kesha Delasbour, Kevin Crozier, Larissa Martinez, Leah Whitmire, Lisa Firmin, Natasha Walden, Robin Soto, Scott Rios, Wil Seda, Dr. Betsy Davis.

Not Present: Andrea Strong, Christopher Vidaurre, Jill Palmer, Jose Gonzales, Michael, Carrion, Michael O'Connell, Austin Lawler, Richard Martinez.

II. Approval/Review of Previous Minutes/Current Agenda

Council Co-Chair Gingerlei Seda motioned to accept previous meeting minutes. Minutes approved at 1103.

Introduced new member Leah Whitmire

III. Old Business

VHMACST— Veteran Resilience and Recovery Operation/ Collaborative. VA Rep Dr. Davis reported the collaboration is working on creating a Vet Talks event scheduled for December 10, 2020. Event is focused on having veterans discuss what has helped them be successful in 2020. There is discussion of making this a quarterly event. Collaboration is also working on creating a survey to get more veterans connected. Dr. Davis discussed that a goal is to have non-veterans have a way to connect with veterans and understand the benefits that veterans bring to the community. Dr. Davis discussed that she is working on improving/increasing Mental Health First Aid trainings. The trainings will focus on how to start conversations regarding mental health. Discussed finding ways to connect and train the community. Dr. Davis discussed local resources such as the Ecumenical Center which offers therapeutic art services. Dr. Davis also discussed the needs for services for victims of violence and possible connection to the Stop Harassment Now campaign with more information to follow (Open).

VHMACST— Women Veterans Sub-Committee. Sub-Committee Chair Col. Lisa Firmin updated council on the process of the OP Ed she is writing that is focused on MST (Military Sexual Trauma) and harassment which will be published on UTSA's website. Lisa discussed that using some personal information caused her to think about the past and asked how the VA is preparing to address the increase in individuals who may start to feel more comfortable discussing/addressing their assault. Dr. Davis discussed there may be a way to invite a VA employee to the next meeting to discuss how the VA is addressing MST. Dr. Davis also discussed that community organizations are prepared/able to address MST concerns such as Circle of Arms, peer support groups, pink berets, and there is more. There are discussions of possibly getting a Women's clinic at the VA Audie Murphy location. The VA is currently working on building a coalition to address getting a women's clinic. Col Firmin discussed the benefits of establishing a national threshold that VA locations would have to abide by. Gave the example of "if a clinic's clientele is made up of X% of women, they should have a women's clinic available to serve that population. Lisa discussed a concern of disparity a care that stems from having decisions be left up to directors. (Open)

VHMACST-Stop Harassment campaign-added to agenda during call-council is invited to talk with them on Nov 5th to discuss how we can collaborate. (Open)

VHMACST— Outreach Sub-Committee. Sub-Committee Chair Wil Seda informed council he is still working on updating his spreadsheet regarding veterans connected to the council. Wil discussed that he continues to meet veterans in the community at locations such as Home Depot and Lowes. He continues to hand out cards which has led to him meeting 3 different veterans. Wil discussed recent contact with veteran Alvin via text and veteran reports doing well. Wil asked council for feedback on beneficial communication with veterans to avoid triggers and learning more on what he could say to veterans he comes into contact with. Council gave feedback and Lisa discussed the benefits of having the conversation come from an asset-based perspective instead of a deficit-based perspective and focusing on the skills that the veteran has. (Open)

Mental Health First Aid Training. Larissa was not in attendance, but Dr. Davis stated that there may be another training being scheduled and encouraged council to reach out to Larissa if interested. October 29th is next scheduled training on the calendar. (Open)

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. There is no update on the budget at this time. (Open)

VHMACST— Resource Guide. Council Co-Chair informed Council that a consolidated/alphabetized list of Council resources is being created (Open)

VHMACST— Upcoming Training- No upcoming trainings are on the calendar, but it was discussed previously that there may be a Mental Health First Aid training taking place October 29th.

VHMACST— Events-There is a Veteran's Day Classic Golf Charity event taking place 9 November 2020

VHMACST— Other. -Miscellaneous- Dr. Davis requested feedback from council on how the VA is transitioning back to face to face services as well as feedback regarding virtual services. Wil discussed the benefits on improving specialty care. Carlos discussed how different locations seem to have different referral processes and procedures. Encouraged VA to consider more holistic approaches if possible, gave example of Acrostic. Lisa discussed more flexibility virtually is beneficial, however, there are possible gaps in information that may cause individuals to miss appointments. No confirmation of in-person or virtual services was sent for appointment. Lisa discussed that the option should be left up to the veteran if a virtual meeting is possible. Co-chair Gingerlei discussed the benefit of virtual appointments as they do not feel so rushed and she feels the provider is more prepared for the appointment. Scott discussed the benefits of Alpha Stem. Lisa reported access to imagery services varies by locations. Carlos discussed being able to call back and reach someone at the VA if the veteran misses a phone call would be beneficial. Reports that if he calls back there is usually no answer, he has to leave a voicemail, and will likely not hear anything back for 24 hours. Discussed the benefit of veteran being able to call back in during the appointment time so that they do not get “dinged”

VHMACST— Other-Discussed Becky Smith's recent family situation of son being diagnosed with stage 4 stomach cancer and that the council may consider trying to find ways to help support family.

V. Next Meeting

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

VI. Adjournment

Carlos Acosta motioned to adjourn the meeting; Wil Seda seconded. Council Co-Chair adjourned the meeting at 1147.

VII. End of Minutes

Minutes submitted by Council Secretary, Karah Smith.

Minutes will be reviewed by Council Chair, Gingerlei Seda.