

VHMAC-ST Meeting Minutes (18 November 2020)

I. Call to Order

Council Chair Dr. Dave La Pointe called to order the regular meeting of the Veterans' Healthy Minds Advisory Council- South Texas, at 1101 on 18 November 2020, via Zoom video/tele-conference.

Council roll was called by Council Chair, Dr. La Pointe.

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

Not Present: Andrea Strong, Christopher Vidaurre, Jill Palmer, Jose Gonzales, Kesha Delasbour, Michael O'Connell, Scott Rios.

II. Approval/Review of Previous Minutes/Current Agenda

Council Chair Dr. La Pointe motioned to accept previous meeting minutes. Minutes approved second by Kevin and approved at 1108.

III. Old Business

VHMACST— Veteran Resilience and Recovery Operation/ Collaborative. VA rep Dr. Davis discussed that this is the group of providers that meet monthly with the goal of coordinating to share resources and make sure there are no gaps in services to veterans. Discussed having a Vet TALKS set up like a TED TALK. Chris left position with Cohen Clinic so that is now on hold. Due to COVID-19, and now that people are tired of virtual events, they are discussing options to have events. Looking to get short video clips of veterans talking about how resilience developed in the military has helped you through this year. Will compile the videos and have ready for January is the goal. Meetings are the second Tuesdays at 1500 for future meetings. Discussed having a hashtag situation to encourage folks post about the resilience video. Wil-discussed having an informal virtual meeting-discussed he has handed out all the cards. Dr. Davis will connect Wil to VA teammates to assist. Dr. Davis is willing to reach out to people who submit videos to get permission for use if needed. Karah brought up legal concerns that may arise if they upload to an email in order to get permission to use by the VA. Kevin stated that it could be as simple as a disclaimer on the bottom of email. Natasha discussed that using Box.com as a resource that may be used for this option. Kevin will research drop box and volunteered to work on the project. (Open).

VHMACST— Women Veterans Sub-Committee. Sub-Committee Chair Col. Lisa Firmin discussed her Op Ed that she had recently sent out, discussed the responses she has been getting, specifically from female veterans that have never brought up the information to the VA or told anyone in their command. She will be writing a book about MST; she is hoping to educate people. She believes telling personal stories connects with others. She is working on posting the information to her own personal social media. She is hoping that congress passes the act for people who have MST to get more services. She will write about her own healing as she has been treated through the VA. She heard from ABC news, Telemundo, and a Latina magazine regarding her Op Ed. She continues to pursue a women's clinic at Audie Murphy. She may go directly to Sandles due to not hearing back about a women's clinic. As we move forward with the coalition, they may have subcommittees to do research in order to convince the VA nationally to have a threshold that mandates a women's clinic as well as standardized care. Lisa discussed that it should not be up to the discretion of the director of the local VA. (Open)

VHMACST— Outreach Sub-Committee. Sub-committee chair Wil reports he has passed out just about every card he had to any veteran he sees or any DV car plate he comes across. Wil suggests having a virtual meeting so that warriors can check in and let us know what their needs are. Dave also gave out all of his cards. Betsy reported that the print shop has made more, and they need to be picked up.

- “Check-In” Program-Wil reached out to Alvin; Wil is looking for notes on the people that have been connected in the past. Wil is looking at building up a log. Dr. Lapointe has a folder of each participant (8) that can be shared with Wil to stay organized.
- “Nextdoor Community” Program **(In-work) Dr. La Pointe is looking at finding ways to expand our reach past SAT. (Open)**

Mental Health First Aid Training. Larissa not on meeting at this time, certificates have not been obtained yet by Dr. Lapointe from the MH first aid training he completed. He is waiting to receive the certificate. (Open)

IV. New Business

VHMACST—Budget. VA Rep Dr. Davis discussed no new information to report, discussed changing this to old business status. (Open)

VHMACST— Resource Guide. Council Chair informed Council that he continues to work on this, it is a large file and full of great information (Open)

VHMACST— Upcoming Training- No upcoming trainings at this time

VHMACST— Events- there are a few that Dave has been sending out- Larissa had sent out 11.21 hiking heroes at 0800 at Eisenhower park-promotes inclusion and physical activity for veterans. She will likely have family hikes in the future as well as individual hikes, they will provide water and snacks for participants. First hike will be 3 miles all together.

VHMACST— Other/Miscellaneous-Dr. La Pointe stated that the fundraiser for Becky has exceeded the goal that was set and thanked anyone who participated.

- ✓ Dave is working with Betsy to connect to program managers in the VA to come talk to council about what they do. She has reached out to Caregiver support to see if they are able to join, have had intimate partner, ACT for chronic pain, and Chief of Staff for mental health.
- ✓ Col. Lisa Firmin discussed issues with the registry. She has tried to get registered, but they tell her the file is too big or they can not verify her service. Betsy will look into someone to talk about enrollment.
- ✓ Larissa asked about dual military couples and how they can get veteran services but also caregiver support when they are both veterans but also both caregivers. Betsy will ask Caregiver Support VA teammate to identify benefits that might exist for dual military couples. Larissa is waiting to be certified as a peer through the VA. Natasha agrees that a peer support group for the spouse of a veteran would be beneficial. Larissa stated circle of arms recently had a spouse peer group session and a lot of discussion was on veterans that have children with special needs.
- ✓ Kevin discussed that he has updated the website recently with new information. Dave says go to website monthly as there is a lot of great resources on the website.
- ✓ Betsy is working with Larissa to change inpatient environment to make it more homelike and less like a hospital.
- ✓ Dave asked council members to send in a photo of themselves if they have not done so already

V. Next Meeting

16 Dec 2020; 1100; Phone-In/ Video Teleconference (due to COVID-19 concerns and restrictions). Dr. Tracy will speak at this meeting who is the MST coordinator, may have a yearly recap of what council has accomplished. Requested current MH treatment options at the VA. Larissa, asked about burn pit support programs. Peer support presentation is still on the table. Discussion on what the VA is doing to address isolation of vets due to COVID-19.

VI. Adjournment

Dr. La Pointe motioned to adjourn, second by Col. Lisa Firmin, Adjourned at 1156

VII. End of Minutes

Minutes submitted by Council Secretary, Karah Smith.

Minutes will be reviewed by Council Chair, David La Pointe.