

VHMAC-ST Meeting Minutes (19 May 2021)

I. Call to Order

Council Chair Dr. Davis La Pointe called to order the regular meeting of the Veterans' Healthy Minds Advisory Council-South Texas, at 11:03 on 19 May 2021, via Zoom video/tele-conference.

Council roll was called by Council Co-Chair Gingerlei Seda.

Roll Call – Present or Excused: David La Pointe, Carlos Acosta, Edsel Thomas, Gingerlei Seda, Karah Smith, Kevin Crozier, Larissa Martinez, Leah Whitmire, Lisa Firmin, Michael Carrion, Natasha Walden, Robin Soto, Wil Seda

Dr. Betsy, VA Employee

Becki Williams, VA Care Provider

Guest Speaker: Community Care (Patient Admin Services-PAS) Process of recertify and addressing gaps with treatment and/or medication (Mr. Zack Elliot, Miss Sarah Rocha, and Mr. Don Hansen)

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

II. Approval/Review of Previous Minutes/Current Agenda

Council Chair Dr. La Pointe motioned to accept previous (April) meeting minutes. Motion seconded by Kevin and approved at 11:04.

Started council with Old Business.

III. Old Business

VHMACST – Women Veteran Sub-Committee (Col Lisa Firmin) Lisa – series of Women in Military Events complete. Whispers of Women Clinic to stand up at hospital, need verification. Dr. Betsy suggests contacting new Women PM, Miss Hector is transitioning. MST space - VA hospital not effective with tracking MST. Larissa – can be a trigger being asked over and over. Contacted by Latina Style Magazine, featuring panel on MST, Lisa will moderate. Contacted to provide Poem “Into the Light”, to provide Women’s Military Memorial and Uniting Us. Both MST and PTSD poems will be displayed at memorial. Moving forward smoothly with her book on MST. Kevin will post on site. UTSA working on Women’s Resource Page and will provide link when it is posted, expect in a few weeks.

VHMACST – Outreach Sub-Committee (Wil not on call) Michael provided status update. Wounded Warrior Program been going through turnover, compensating for staff losses and has not been able to work with Wil with Outreach obligations. Looking at after July to engage with program. (Dave) our site has been getting a lot of hits, around 8K on homepage and around 65K on calendar. Likes from Michigan, California, and Florida – Lisa spoke at a California statewide LULAC Summit and she mentioned council group. Dave is averaging 135 likes weekly.

There are 13 people he checks on weekly.

Next Door Community App (Dr. La Pointe) – council information sent out to hit 13 different neighborhoods in the community. If you have HOA, please post on neighborhood app.

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VHMACST - Budget (Dr. La Pointe) – have not heard anything new but VA has been purchasing cards and providing booklets.

VHMACST Resource Guide (Dr. La Pointe) – we have a lot of information just need to put it together.

VHMACST – Veteran Resilience and Recovery (Dr. Davis) - different approaches, non-traditional approaches to mental health leaning towards kindness and spending time in nature.

VHMACST – Loving My Veteran Program (Leah Whitmire) – no new information to report.

IV. New Business

Community Care (Mr. Elliot) – PAS office of Community Care, provided overview of service line of all the different specialties as well as process when Veterans opt to use community care or if referred out to the community for care. Covered eligibility, scheduling preferences, and finding specialized provider in the community. Mental Health is the exception of scheduling directly with Veteran. Based on care needed, Authorization validity period is anywhere from 90 to 365 days. Provider is responsible for requesting extended care 1 month prior to date expiring.

Q1 (Larissa) a way to remind veteran/community provider of when authorization is nearing expire date to prevent gap in care and is there a way to possibly add this to

My HealtheVet for veterans to track? Issues: having to go through the process again, can't see the same provider to maintain continuity of care. BLUF: PAS does not send out reminders, Mr. Elliot will present to leadership.

Q2 (Dave) how can medical professionals become VA providers? Contact TriWest, they manage the credential process for all community providers, takes anywhere from 30 days to 1 year. CHOICE program providers do not transfer over, will have to go through process as well.

Q3 (Betsy) if Veterans are juggling multiple community care issues for separate treatment, is there a tracking record? (Mr. Elliot) TriWest has a portal that tracks all authorizations and status of referrals and will provide portal.

Q4 (Sarah Rocha) 1st attendance, just wanted more information about this group and how it can benefit nurses covering the mental health community. How often do we meet, what is the goal of this group and how long how long ago was the group established?

(Assistant Nurse Manager – Don Hansen) wanting to let us know that there is a letter that goes out on snail mail to veteran or provider with validity dates.

VHMACST – Upcoming Training: Larissa and Karah are now certified as Applied Suicide Intervention Skills (ASIST) Training – suicide intervention, will be working with Wounded Warriors. In training for Victims Assisted Advocate complete in June. Selected by Judge Huff to be part of Bexar County for Criminal Justice and Behavioral Health Task Force, focus on veteran's mental health.

Circle of Arms – partnered with San Antonio Club House to provide Mental Health Peer Specialist Training certification. Training is 40hrs, cost is normally \$700-\$800 but have 2 spots available – free. Entails lived experience, being a peer and talking to someone who is going through it now, also hired at the VA. In depth training and must be ready to share your story.

National Vets Council (Dr. La Pointe) – focus on Apps that VA has created, slides have been sent out. Read through it, mental health assistance apps are linked.

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V. Next Meeting

(Dr. Davis) next meeting, guidance from VA leadership we are clear to meet out in polytrauma courtyard and once new clinic opens, we'll have space to meet physically. (Dave) if we are not comfortable, we will still have zoom or something available for you to join and see each other. Possibly move meeting time up to 9 am going into summer months, 11 am will be hot.

New Business-new business, but discussed after guest speaker

New Woman's Coordinator (Lisa)

New VA Positions that are becoming available (Betsy)

Someone to talk about new clinic (Kevin)

Specialty Courts or Mental Health Courts in Bexar County (Larissa)

Upcoming Events:

May 22 – 5-mile hike from 9:00 - 11:00

VII. Adjournment

Meeting ended at 12:34 - Lisa motion to adjourn, Kevin second.

VIII. End of Minutes

Minutes submitted by Co-Chair, Gingerlei Seda.

Minutes reviewed by Council Chair, Dr. David La Pointe.