

VHMAC-ST Meeting Minutes (18 August 2021)

I. Call to Order

Council Chair Dr. David La Pointe called to order the regular meeting of the Veterans' Healthy Minds Advisory Council-South Texas, at 11:03 on 18 August 2021, via Zoom video/tele-conference.

Council roll was called by Secretary Karah Smith.

Roll Call – Present or Excused: Carlos Acosta, David La Pointe, Edsel Thomas, Gingerlei Seda, Karah Smith, Kevin Crozier, Lisa Firmin, Michael Carrion, Natasha Walden

Dr. Betsy, VA Employee

Becki Williams, VA Care Provider

Not Present: Christopher Vidaurre, Jose Gonzales, Larissa Martinez, Leah Whitmire, Robin Soto

II. Approval/Review of Previous Minutes/Current Agenda

Council Chair Dr. La Pointe motioned to accept previous (July) meeting minutes. Motion seconded by Kevin and approved. Nobody opposed.

*Due to a number of technical issues this meeting, the events recorded below may have taken place in a different order than listed below, but the information is accurate. *

III. Old Business

VHMACST – Veteran Resilience and Recovery (Dr. Davis) – no update

VHMACST – VA Community MH & Wellness Summit (Dr. Davis)- Dr. Davis discussed the upcoming VA MH summit that will focus on women veterans. The summit is called EmpowHER and will be taking place September 24th. A flyer for the event was added to the chat during the meeting.

VHMACST – National Veterans MH Council (Dr. Davis) no updates

VHMACST- VA Mental Health Council (Dr. Davis)-no updates

VHMACST – Women Veteran Sub-Committee (Col Lisa Firmin) UTSA vet military affairs office- they are having a resource fair, asked for a 1-page flyer that also has a QR code on flyer and it will become posters that is used at multiple events. QR code takes it to the website.

Lisa will be going to DC at end of August to discuss at Artist Talks-28th of August-Variety of artists, paintings, poems, readings, info sent in chat.

VHMACST – Outreach Sub-Committee (Dave) Neither Wil nor Mike are on the call, no updates

Next Door Community App (Dr. La Pointe) – no updates

VHMACST - Budget (Dr. La Pointe) – no update

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VHMACST Resource Guide (Dr. La Pointe) – will hold off on this until we are meeting again in person. We will look at it during the next in-person meeting. He is trying to collate it and put it together for a debrief.

IV. New Business

SPEAKER: Ms. Judith M. Salmon MHA, BSN, RN, NE-BC Women Veterans Program Manager-

Master in healthcare administration, Army vet. Started in this position in April, excited to join the team to meet the needs for women veterans and to provide health care for women along with comprehensive healthcare, in all areas such as small town and large cities. There are laws that state that these services are available no matter where the female veteran lives. The community providers may be the ones to provide the services. The program could possibly comp primary care, preventative screenings, mental health, gyn/fertility/maternity care (they provide OB services even though they do not provide maternity care in VA) over 20,000 women veterans receive care in the 35 counties in south Texas and about 50% are under 50. They have a lot of interaction to prevent homelessness, address MST, and Mental health is a big part of their interactions. They want female veterans to be able to get to the right place for services. They coordinate the care for them as advocates. We want to make sure we listen to the women veterans and help them receive the primary care that they are looking for. The locations are ensuring privacy for dignity, locked doors, privacy screens for all genders.

Q&A-Col. Firmin-discussed the facilities for women vets, asked about a women's center in San Antonio-They are looking at doing a women's clinic (a new VA is in the planning, looks to be about 10 years out) there will likely be a wing/area/floor that will be looked at to be a women's clinic-services will be embedded in that area that are unique to women but primary care is still going to be the main focus. There will be things that are adjacent to the women's area (surgery, neurology) They are still in the meetings to discuss designs. There is no floor plan yet. But they are calling it a model 3, currently have a model 1- Currently women's care is embedded in primary care throughout the settings, instead of having a female specific location. Col. Firmin discussed that she is happy they are looking at focusing on making sure there is diversity even in the photos that are depicted in waiting rooms. Balcones heights has some GYN clinic that has a separate waiting area for women. Progress is being made to help focus on female veterans. Hope is that women's health primary care is consolidated a little more.

Dave asked how we are getting info out to female vets about the gyn clinic-the clinic is by referral only-once they get a referral for specialty care they are informed where the clinic will be.

Dr. Davis-Anna is putting together a scope of what she is able to offer and will be putting that information out to PCP, but does not currently have a location because she is a program but not in a clinic. She is available to OB patients and available to women who meet the specific criteria. We don't want to take away from any of the normal mental health things, she is focusing on specific mental health things that effect women-she will be seeing females in primary care settings.

Lisa-discussed concerns about feeling like she does not have enough time with doc, had been informed that she can request an hour- long appointment. Lisa had requested it, but it was denied, they stated that if the provider wanted a follow up, they would let her know, Lisa asked if they were denying her request to see her doctor regarding her medical condition and then they scheduled the 1-hour appointment-Lisa stated that she should not have to ask twice for a longer appointment. She was encouraged to continue to advocate for herself along with other female veterans.

May add Anna to the list of future speakers.

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Miscellaneous-

Dr. Davis discussed that veterans are undergoing extra stressed right now due to world events. They continue to put out information of where veterans can connect with others. They continue to hear that there are complex emotions regarding the current world events. Encouraged to reach out to support network, Dr. Davis can get you connected to services if you are interested. Dr. La Pointe encouraged everyone to check email for the emails that have resources attached to them. Lisa-give VA kudos about the information that the VA has put out and the outreach that the VA is doing.

Lisa states that a lot of vets find it too difficult to get connected to the VA and that is something that should be addressed, perhaps marketing can be better/updated. Dr. Davis said it is difficult that there is not just 1 number or MH program that they can call in order to get connected and she is aware that adds frustration.

Dr. Davis is working with public affairs to add information onto webpage, there is a VA blog that is putting stuff out. Carlos asked if there is an online walk-through that teaches veterans how to access certain programs/people in the VA. If that does not exist is that something that can be done? It does not have to be a video, it could be a live session. It could be sent through Eventbrite- can answer questions and provide information on how to access different services. Dr. Davis said it sounds similar to new patient orientation that is taking place virtually now which she will send us so that we can see what folks who are new to VA are getting. Carlos would be happy to be a part of that project since he is trying to help veterans get connected right now.

Lisa stated that moral injury should be something that we should be addressing right now.

Dr. Davis asked if it would it be good for the VA to have a space for veterans to come and connect with others. Dave thinks it will be a good idea-Lisa thinks it would be a good triage type of work. It would be great if we could have that open to anyone (not just those already connected to VA for services).

Carlos-what, as a council, could we do to help support that? We are happy to send out links in social media. We may need to coordinate throughout community partners but Dr. Davis will keep us posted.

Elections Information: Nominees for Chair-Natasha Walden, Gingerlei Seda Co-chair-Natasha Walden, David La Pointe Secretary-Karah Smith, Kevin Crozier

Voting information-those on the voting list given brief time to provide some information.

Natasha-here to support in whatever way I possibly can, if I am picked I am going to do the best that I can do.

Karah-May have limitations due to current job position, but I have been doing it in the past and have produced

Kevin-I'm up for the task, if karah can't do it I am happy to step in. "thank you Kevin, for all the hard work on the website. The info is great compared to others that I have seen so far".

Dr. La Pointe- made a 2-year limit, but I would do it forever if I could, it has been a thrill for me. Happy to be co-chair if you would want me to do that again. Back to guest speaker.

✓ Results Chair -Gingerlei, Co-chair-Dave, Secretary-Karah.

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- ✓ **Upcoming Events:** Kevin continues to update the website with events. If you have events send it to Kevin so he can continue to update info

Cohen partner with pink berets cooking with vets-

Vets with pets- added to chat

August 30th is national grief awareness day-chaplain Halloway will do a training on grief.

Cohen clinic community connections meetings-a place where organizations come and see what each are doing and how they can partner with one another.

Unpacking emotional rucksack-same event over 2 days/sign up for one only-25th marriage management seminar.

- 2021 Health and Wellness Summit, 24 September, 0830 – 1230, Register Online – [BIT.LY/2021STXMHSUMMIT](https://bit.ly/2021STXMHSUMMIT)
- Walk For Recovery, 25 September, 0800, Texas A&M University, Register online – The Steven A. Cohen Military Family Clinic at Endeavors, San Antonio
- Major General Alfred K. Flowers Scholarship Golf Tournament, October 4th, 0800, Palmer Course at La Cantera, 17865 Babcock Road, SATX 78255, The Steven A. Cohen Military Family Clinic at Endeavors, San Antonio

VHMACST – Upcoming Training:

Miscellaneous

V. Next Meeting 15 September 2021, 1100

VII. Adjournment

Motion to close by Col. Firmin, meeting closed at 11:57.

VIII. End of Minutes

Minutes submitted by Secretary Karah Smith

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