

VHMAC-ST Meeting Minutes (16 February 2022)

I. Call to Order

Council Chair Dave called to order the regular meeting of the Veterans' Healthy Minds Advisory Council- South Texas, at 1102 on 16 February 2022, via Zoom video/tele-conference.

Roll Call— Present or Excused: Amelia Peacock, Angie Bukowski, Becki Williams, Dr. Betsy Davis, Carlos Acosta, Dr. David La Pointe, Jeff Anderson, Karah Smith, Kevin Crozier, Larissa Martinez, Col Lisa Firmin, Michael Carrion, Monica Garcia, Natasha Walden, Troy McGrath, Kevin Crozier, Lisa Firmin, Jack and Michael Carrion, Carlos Acosta, Becky Williams, Natasha, Amelia Peacock (Dave gave the group some background on new member Amelia Peacock),

Not Present: Edsel Thomas, Leah Whitmire, Jose Michael Gonzales, Robin Soto.

II. Approval/Review of Previous Minutes/Current Agenda

Council Chair, Dave, motioned to accept previous meeting months minutes. Motion seconded by Kevin and council approved.

III. Elections

Not as many people volunteered for positions but there are enough for the election to be held. Everyone should have the ballot in their email courtesy of Kevin, and you can respond via email or text to him. He will also tally the votes as he is not running for a position. For the position of Chair – Dr. David La Pointe. For the position of Co-Chair – Amelia Peacock. For the position of Secretary – Angie Bukowski, Carlos Acosta and Troy McGrath were nominated. Dave gave each candidate an opportunity to speak. Dave asked if anyone has not gotten the link, then put their info into the chat feature and Kevin would contact you directly. The results are: Chair – Dr. David La Pointe, Co-Chair – Amelia Peacock and Secretary – Angie Bukowski.

IV. Old Business

VHMACST— Veteran Resilience and Recovery Operation/ Collaborative. VA rep Dr. Betsy Davis reported that one of the main things they discussed was planning for mental health awareness for May. The group wants to start planning now and Dr. Davis asked the council for ideas about things we would want to see (events, resources, whether virtual or in person or a combination, etc.). Dave hopes it is outdoors and in person so we can meet and take pictures. Lisa reported if there was a virtual event then you reach more people, but a combination would work. If it is virtual, then perhaps the group can bring together the community partners and do a round robin with each partner having a set amount of time to discuss what they do and show all the partners that we work with. Dave reported that even if we do in person events, we will also have a zoom link as well to reach more people. Dr. Davis noted that the Texas legislature just passed “buddy check” day. It was just approved that the 11th of every month Veterans will check on each other to reach out and build natural supports. Dr. Davis suggested maybe doing an event around May 11th would be an option. Buddy check day is to encourage veterans to contact other veterans, including those they served with, who may need assistance. (Per chat: Buddy Check Senate Bill 460 Status Completed Legislative Action Spectrum: Bipartisan Bill Status: Passed on May 30, 2021 - 100% progression Action: 2021-05-30 - Effective on 9/1/21Text: Latest bill text Relating to designating the 11th day of each month as Buddy Check Day). If we have any other ideas, please email Dr. Davis. It was asked when the Buddy Day went into effect, and it is believed it was announced this month. Also, April is Sexual Assault Awareness month and was an important thing that was discussed on the national call. Dr. Oster (MST coordinator) is going to be out on leave but will have a replacement during this time. Dr. Davis asked if we want to find out what the Veteran Resilience and Recovery Operation/Collaborative are doing and partnering on what they are doing. What was also talked about on the national call was a resource page that discussed the process that a

Veteran needs to go through to connect to mental health services (info was sent out via email by Dave). We have brochures but Dr. Davis would like to see us do something like that. Included in this email sent by Dave was a PowerPoint slide on military sexual assault for April. A different council came up with the information that was sent out and it was agreed that we should set up something. Lisa Firmin and Dave are interested in helping out pending time available over the next couple of months. (Side note to our council attendance: it was stated that moving meetings around seem to get more people in person, and there is a possibility of meeting in the new facility on 151). **(Open)**

VHMACST – VA Mental Health Executive Council – meets quarterly and had a delay this week so they will be meeting on the 28th. Typically, the chair of the council attends. **(Open)**

VHMACST – In Patient project. Betsy put together a presentation and sent it to VA leadership. They are pending final approval but reportedly leadership is excited for it. March 26th is the tentative day for the event, and they are going to be planting the flower beds and painting a mural. Check your calendars to see if you would be able to volunteer. There are some requirements to volunteer: you do have to be fully vaccinated and wear masks. We will be social distancing. Kevin declined. Lisa showed the presentation to the group. It includes the directives from the VA for what should be included, pictures of what the courtyard currently looks like, and the proposed projects to revitalize the area. Lisa also asked if there were any suggestions for the mural. They were looking for donations for food (lunch) for that date. Home Depot is donating supplies. **(Open)**

VHMACST – Annual Report. Dave thanked Dr. Betsy Davis for putting together the annual report. It's an important thing that we are obligated to do and after providing all the information, Dr. Davis put it together in a presentation. It included a picture of our table showing information we have to offer and having people available to direct people with information is so important. The feedback is that we have really improved and continue to improve on all the information we receive. If you have not attended an outreach event, then you are missing out. Lisa asked if we could format the annual report and be systematic on the data because we are not capturing everything we do. We can create our own format and maybe need to think about how we measure our own success as a council. This is something we might need to consider as we develop. Dr. La Pointe stated every time he sends out things or if someone attends an event or shares information on our council, please let the chairs know so we can accurately capture that we were at the event. We are tracking this and will make it a part of the monthly minutes. We have failed to get everything and to go back at the end of the year and try to capture it is too hard. It was pointed out we might not be capturing everything such as when Lisa did a warm hand off while helping a veteran. Dr. La Pointe related a story of a Veteran at urology clinic who needed transportation, and the staff was not helpful. Dave. interceded, gave him a card, and offered him support and help with transportation.

VHMACST— Women Veterans Sub-Committee. Lisa Firmin presented.

March 2nd: TVC Women's Veterans Program and Community Partners presents Strategies for a Purposeful You While Building Confidence and Making Connections. The Pink Berets and her office, Women Veteran of SA, Woven and other partners are involved in it. She will send the flyer on it

TVC – Women Veterans Program is hosting a podcast on military sexual trauma; it will be recorded late March and will be shown in April for Military Sexual Assault month. More to follow on that.

March 5th - Kerrville VA – Salute to Women Veterans, an event that will have health information booths, entertainment, and refreshments. Is it something we want to get involved with? It's from 12-3. She will send the information to Dave.

Part of her roll on the advisory committee for minority veterans for the VA (federal committee), Lisa has asked questions on how VA gathers MST data. They are supposed to ask at annual appointments, but it does not seem to always be done (per our meeting where feedback is that no one had never been asked). This is VA policy, and Lisa wants to know how it is being done, how it is tracked, and is interested in the language being used as the

question can be a trigger. She will let us know what she gets back and stated that this needs to be more uniform across the county.

Lisa asked to list the council as a resource in her book. She is going to put national, state, and regional resources and wanted to include us.

April 29 – UTSA is planning a book event where some of the people whose stories are shared in the book will be present and can talk about their own experience at their own tables set up to talk more one on one and educate people on MST. UTSA is planning it. Lisa thinks it would be great to have the council there with a table. Dr. Davis might be good to be there along with the UTSA counselors and some psychologists as it can be a triggering event and counseling, or resources might be needed. She will send more information as she learns it.

Lisa did an interview with Spectrum news on MST and anticipates more press as it gets closer to publish date. Kevin asked Lisa that anytime she gets information on MST to send it to him so it can be included on websites and social media **(Open)**

VHMACST— Outreach Sub-Committee. Michael Carrion is going to be the new chair as Wil is not active at this time. Congrats Michael on learning this during the meeting, but you had to leave so if you read this, congrats.

- “Check-In” Program active but at this point we have no Vets or Family members as they are all satisfied and felt they no longer needed it. **(Open)**
- Some events have been on hold because of limited participation such as the resource guide.

San Antonio Spur’s Mental Health Awareness Night - Dave formerly thanked Becky and Carlos for volunteering at the Spurs Event and all their work. There was a lot of good contact with people who attended the game but also with other vendors. They had great feedback from the Spurs and the Spurs organization asked our group to be personally involved in next year’s event planning. This year’s event was also the same night as a Fiesta Event and very few fans were aware that the game was also for Mental Health Awareness Night when they got to the Facility. The Spurs had a great set-up and staff were helpful. They would like our help to improve the event. **(Closed)**

V. New Business

VHMACST— Outreach events

Thanks to Kevin, we are aware that there is an outreach event at UTSA on the 2nd of March from 11 AM – 1 PM. They have a large number of Veteran students (over five thousand military affiliated students). A lot of students also come up. If you are interested, please let them know so more information can be shared as it comes available.

The following events sent out in email:

- Clarity Child Guidance Center – More for providers, Clarity is child mental health provider.
- Natasha put in chat that they are partnering with the Pink Berets, in an 8-week educational series on MST at the Stephen A Cohen facility starting Thursday at 6 PM – 8 PM for eight consecutive weeks every Thursday. Also have a virtual All About Love event on the 17th from 12:30 - 2 PM. The flyer did go through, but she will put it in the chat as well. Natasha will put the flyers in the chat. They can schedule a meeting at the new Cohen facility, possibly for March 16th (Dave will verify date and sent her a note).
- Thursday the 24th 1-3 virtual training: A Call To Action, Operation SAVE training, you can register online.
- July 21-22, “Join Trace Bryant” – this is something from Clarity Child Guidance Center, we will have something on the calendar if you want to join that as registration is opening soon.

- February 25 – art class color mixing and painting in person, this is a virtual program from Well Springs
- Keep Abreast of Support group – virtual
- Thursday February 10th was the spinal cord injury peer group
- March 19, 9 AM is a beauty and wellness event for women, will include professional hair, makeup, skincare, wellness, and mental health. Natasha is co-hosting it.
- Thursday April 18th – there is a networking mixer
- There is a free tax service for military and dependents, the flyer did go out for this
- There is a new call center number to schedule all VA appointments, 210-949-9702.

VHMACST— Other/Miscellaneous

Kevin reported that the Veterans Advisory Committee for San Antonio, the Hidden Heroes/Elizabeth Dole Foundation, there is a Facebook page that the program deals with caregivers, gives information for care takers and about care takers, if we have information, including upcoming events, please send it to Kevin. He will make sure that it aligns with Elizabeth Dole Foundation and post it on the page. They are looking to have an event in May for care takers that is being set up. Dave is going to get Kevin connected with people who have monthly meetings with care takers. **(Open)**

There has been a recall on some of the CPAP/bi-pap machine. The good news is that Kevin’s machine is not on the recall. Dave shared he cannot stand his CPAP mask but has an appointment coming up with a program that will do an implant in the chest that is supposed to take care of all the stuff. Dave’s appointment (2.24.22 at 3) will be to get information, but it looks promising. It is call Inspired Sleep System. Kevin requested information that Dave gets. (per the chat: FYI Philips CPAP and Bi-Level PAP Recall <https://www.patientsafety.va.gov/safety-notice/philips-cpap-recall.asp?fbclid=IwAR3mb3QpeU51JoHa9kmX0htZDsUoe0KDDcL0hEJLL2jeJkI-HZIdITw8tQE>)

VI. Next Meeting

16 Mar 2022; 1100; Phone-In/ Video Teleconference (due to COVID-19 concerns and restrictions).

VI. Adjournment

Dave motioned to adjourn, second by Kevin, Adjourned at 12:01

VII. End of Minutes

Minutes submitted by Council Secretary, Angie Bukowski.

Minutes reviewed/approved by Council Chair, Dr. David A. La Pointe