

Veterans' Healthy Minds Advisory Council – South Texas
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VHMAC-ST Meeting Minutes (18 May 2022)

I. Call to Order

Council Chair Dr. David A. La Pointe called to order the regular meeting of the Veterans' Healthy Minds Advisory Council- South Texas, at 1104 on 18 May 2022, at the Northwest San Antonio VA Clinic, 9939 State Hwy. 151, SATX 78251, live, and via Zoom video/tele-conference.

Dr. La Pointe called council roll.

Roll Call— Present or Excused: Amanda Jenkins, Amelia Peacock, Angie Bukowski, Becki Williams, Dr. Betsy Davis, Carlos Acosta, Dr. David La Pointe, Edsel Thomas, Fred Thomas, Jeff Anderson, John Nelson, Karah Smith, Kevin Crozier, Larissa Martinez, Leah Whitmire, Col. Lisa Firmin, Michael Carrion, Monica Garcia, Natasha Walden.

Not Present: Jose Michael Gonzales, LaKeisha Howard, Leah Smith, Trot McGrath.

II. Membership Updates: New Members: Fred Thomas and John Nelson.

We have 24 members, 21 voting members, 3 non-voting members (from VA staff), 14 veterans, community partners, 6 remaining original members of the council (Dr. Davis, Dr. La Pointe, Karah Smith, Kevin Crozier, Carlos Acosta, Col. Lisa Firmin), 14 inactive members (those who want to remain connected to the council but cannot attend meetings).

Dave will be sending out the address listing this month so please make sure to check your information and ensure it is accurate.

Also, if you go to the site, it has everyone who is a member, their position, and picture if they have provided one. If you haven't provided one or want to update a picture, send a current headshot please so we can get it up on the website. (OPEN)

III. Approval/Review of Previous Minutes/Current Agenda

Dr. La Pointe asked for a motion to accept previous meeting minutes as posted. Amelia motioned. Motion seconded by Kevin and approved at 11:10.

GUEST SPEAKER – Dr. Emma Mata-Galan was offered the opportunity to speak now, instead of waiting for New Business. She opted to wait.

IV. Old Business

VHMACST— Veteran Resilience and Recovery Operation/ Collaborative. Dr. Davis – this is a group of local veteran service providers specific to mental health, they are meeting once a month and discussing how to work together better, this is a sub-committee of a larger group called the Community Veterans Engagement Board

which is supposed to be the Veterans leader community and collaborate with the VA hospital administration and how the VA and the community can work better together, not just for mental health but as a whole. This sub-committee is for mental health. So, the CVEB is going through a process starting next month for strategic planning and figuring how they can be most effective in terms of being a connection between the VA and the Veteran (family and supports) and the community. (OPEN)

VHMACST – Annual Report. Dr. Davis has not sent the annual report to Sandy Jackson yet, she will do that. (OPEN)

VHMACST – VA Mental Health National Call – No new updates. The national council call this month was particularly good and was about Arizona (3 councils) and how they all work together, and Dr. Davis wants to know if our council would be interested in collaborating with the other councils in Texas. She will reach out to her counter parts and see which ones are active. (OPEN)

VHMACST – VA Mental Health Executive Council –. Nothing to report. The chair for this council is our guest speaker this month. (OPEN)

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

Lisa is still working on a something for Latina Style magazine for MST and having a panel in May and Tracy might be a part of it. (Open)

VHMACST— Outreach Sub-Committee – Dave does not have updates for Michael.

- “Check-In” Program – we have 0 participants right now, which is good. (Open)

V. New Business

GUEST SPEAKER: Dr. Emma Mata-Galan

Chief of Psychology/Acting Associate Chief of Staff (ACOS) for Mental Health

Dr. Galan – Stated she was happy to be here and excited to see what we are all about, would like to see how we can grow and interact. She wants to ensure how the MH staff is using our time and getting the VHMACST input and prospective could infuse new energy in the council. She highlighted the huge increase in MH services required and rendered in the last couple of years here. She asked for input from the council about who we are and what we do.

Dr. La Pointe gave a brief overview of our functions, events, outreach, and interests of the VHMACST.

Dr. Galan responded to the “information overload” providers are saturated with on a day-to-day basis and asked if there might be a way to streamline and integrate all that information to be more useful.

Ed Thomas stated he was at a hospital visit and was approached by a veteran who had “no clue” how to get information and care and was asked if we could brief at one of their organizations upcoming meetings about VHMACST and VAMH care programs.

Amelia Peacock stated that the council deals primarily MH issues while the council might be assisting the veteran with financial, housing, benefits that the VA providers aren’t even aware of and that’s an area where the collaboration can be beneficial.

Dr. Galan responded, “I love it, I love it, I love it!” If we could somehow generate and information resource where a provider could go in and access the information immediately that would be wonderful.

Larissa Martinez talked about the multitude of organizations out there and the fact that even other groups we see routinely at events aren’t aware of what we do, and we don’t always know what the provide. Agreeing that there is a real need to organize our information and resources to be utilized more effectively. She suggested possibly coming up with a “VA phone extension” that might aid us.

Amelia Peacock mentioned the fact that in her deals with United Way in Houston, Texas, they had a phone number system and that if you identified yourself as a veteran, they were immediately able to connect you people with VA resources.

Angie Bukowski stated that this sounded similar to a program that the Texas Veteran Network (TVN) utilizes. They (AACOG) access veterans need and often use TVN to assist.

Col. Firmin Stated that there is a system that does what is being discussed and “we need to stay in our lane, mental health.” Go back to what our mission is. We need to be consider doing an MOU or MOA with Dr, Galan, and her department on possibly doing “warm hand=offs to the VAMH staff.

Ed Thomas spoke about a resource book (personal) that he uses when talking with veterans and VA caregiver staff who are unaware of the resources the VHMCAST are using.

Larissa Martinez noted that while there are systems out there that offer all this information, there is a “total disconnect” on the organization sharing that information amongst themselves.

Natasha Walden stated that that leveraging the council to “go out and get this information” because of the ever- changing personnel, numbers, locations, etc., and bring it back would be more efficient.

Karah Smith added that she loved the direction the conversation is going and thinking, “how can we be streamlined and organized.” She suggested that we consider breaking down our efforts/information into “priority areas/systems.” She recommended that we identify/decide on a few “priority areas” in order create better referrals/hand-offs for our veterans and family members.

Dr. Davis engaged stating that the council members didn’t have to do all the work, that we could get the veterans themselves to provide input.

Dr. Galan said that she liked the idea Co. Firmin made about a formal MOU so that everyone is aware of what the VA Staff and the VHMCAST can and cannot do amongst themselves.

Col Firmin stated that we (VHMCAST) should provide a copy of our bylaws, our Power Point presentation, our brochure, and any relevant information before they even show-up to speak with us.

Becki Williams (Caregiver) provided feedback about her experiences at recent outreach events and how she could literally see what it did to help the veterans and family members we are trying to help, that the information is wanted and is needed.

Dr. La Pointe interjected that information about outreach, communications with us and the VA staff, consolidation of all these resources we use and that other community partners are using is discussed almost monthly at these meetings. We want and need direct support and effort from all council members to meet our mission. Showing up/participating in a monthly meeting, while appreciated, is not helping us meet our goals.

VHMCAST— Outreach events

Nothing that hasn’t already been reported. (OPEN)

VHMCAST— Resource Guide – Waiting on a meeting to edit/organize. (OPEN)

VHMCAST— Other/Miscellaneous

Col. Firmin thank Becki, Dr. Davis and the VHMCAST and gave a brief overview of the UTSA function.

(I apologize, at this point in the Zoom video download an error occurred and we lost the remainder of the session. I was not able to recover any more information. - Dave)

Dr. La Pointe reviewed some of the handouts being sent that included children and pottery programs. Also, time management and something about helping veterans with their taxes, understanding TBI, strong families/strong forces that collaborate with parents being separated from their children, housing stability program that Leticia was talking about that helps Veterans find a place to live. If we run across information, we can put it on the calendar. (OPEN)

The Spurs organization reached out to Dave and are serious about wanting us to be involved in making their mental health night better for Veterans and their families. We will pick a few members to meet with them. (OPEN)

June 12th is Women's Veteran's Day in Texas. Judy Salmon is with the women's program at the VA so Dr. Davis will get Amelia in contact with her. Lisa does not have anything set up that day but a documentary for MST and Latinas will be released that day. She will check to see if TVC will be doing something. Also, Deb Parson's with Women's Veterans of San Antonio has something on June 11th and might have a book about their history. (OPEN)

VI. Next Meeting

15 Jun 2022, 1100; THIS WILL BE A VOTING MEMBER ONLY MEETING (NO VA STAFF). THIS WILL BE AN ONLINE/CALL-IN /ZOOM MEETING ONLY EVENT. Agenda and zoom-link will be provided later.

VI. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 1216

VII. End of Minutes

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

Veterans Healthy Minds Advisory Council

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	May-22									
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Calendar	70,752									
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INACTIVE MEMBERS, WISHING TO REMAIN		CONNECTED TO		THE COUNCIL		AND THEY ARE NON-VOTING MEMBERS **			