

Veterans' Healthy Minds Advisory Council – South Texas  
299 Tufted Crest, San Antonio, TX 78253  
Working with; Audie Murphy VA Hospital, San Antonio TX  
“Helping Veterans, Help Themselves”  
888-896-9078  
[VHMACST.com](http://VHMACST.com)  
[VHMACST@gmail.com](mailto:VHMACST@gmail.com)  
[@VetMinds](https://www.instagram.com/VetMinds)  
[Veteranshealthymindsadvisorycouncilsouthtexas.com](http://Veteranshealthymindsadvisorycouncilsouthtexas.com)

## VHMACST Meeting Minutes 16 November 2023

### Call To Order

Council Chair, Dr. David A. La Pointe called to order the regular monthly meeting of the Veterans Healthy Minds Advisory Council South Texas (VHMACST) on 16 November 2023 at 1315, via Zoom and in person at AACOG, 2700 NE Loop 410, SATX, 78217, Mission Room, 5<sup>th</sup> floor, of the Titan Building. He had everyone attending in-person introduce themselves and recognized Amy Smith our Guest Speaker for today and Michelle Conway who will be speaking and was filling in for Dr. Davis on some programs while Dr. Davis was away. He also asked those connecting on Zoom to take a moment to introduce themselves to the Council. The Chair also introduced Jason Leef, our newest member and Jason and Jason provided us information about himself and his family.

**PLEASE NOTE: There were issues with connections to the internet. There was some loss of voice and video interaction.**

**VHMACST Secretary: We really need to fill this position! Need volunteer ASAP. (OPEN)**

Dr. La Pointe called council roll.

**Rollcall:** Present or Excused: Angie Bukowski, Carlos Acosta, Dr. David La Pointe, Fred Thomas, Jason Leef, Juliana Stith, Kevin Crozier, Laura Knoll, Larissa Martinez, Laura Knoll, Mary Hilton, (Dr. Shirley Johnson has relocated and has resigned from the council)

Not Present: Ed Thomas, John Nelson, Karah Smith, Michael Collins, Wendy Stephens

### II. Approval/Review of Previous Minutes/Current Agenda

Dr. Dave La Pointe motioned to accept previous meeting month's minutes (October 2023) as published to council for review. Angie Bukowski seconded the motion. Minutes were approved and adopted by the council members with unanimous vote.

✓ **GUEST SPEAKER (S): Opted to wait until “New Business” to speak.**

### III. Old Business

Michael Collins and Wendy Stephens were not able to attend the meeting. As a result, Dr. Davis's programs were not updated.

**Veterans' Resilience and Recovery Collaborative:** Michelle Conway did report/cover this program. She spoke/reviewed the suicide prevention program, continuation of care, the intervention program, and the VA connecting with the local community care providers to facilitate the exchange of communications. (OPEN)

**Mental Health Community of Practice:** No Report. (OPEN)

**VET-to-Vet Program:** Dr. La Pointe reviewed that we were trying to secure a VA location for veterans to be able to meet just to talk amongst themselves while they we are waiting for their formal metal health appointments with VA staff. We are currently in discussions about how we might initiate this program utilizing non-VA locations. If we do use a VA facility, we would have to have a VA representative in attendance and that would defeat the purpose of these outings. We will connect with council members to gage their interest in this program and determine options for locations to meet. (OPEN)

**VA National Council:** No Report. (OPEN)

**Veteran Health Education and Information Committee (Dave La Pointe):** Dr. La Pointe gave an overview of the program and again asked that a “female” think about getting involved with this committee, that he had reviewed a few items that concerned topics specifically directed to woman issues/concerns and thought they would be much more capable of providing input on the subjects than he was. If you are interested, please contact him directly. **See Item below.** (OPEN)

**Treasurer:** The Chair introduced Angie Bukowski as our new **Treasurer**. Angie stepped forward and volunteered to fill that “officer” position on the council. **We still need someone to fill the Secretary role as well.** Angie reviewed the account balances and detailed where funds were disbursed. There was a discussion about the possibility of members possibly making individual donations after the first of the year to the council and/or ways we might be able to raise funds on our own in addition to sending out letters requesting donations. Members were asked to think about new options to generate funds for our accounts.

**Unaccompanied Burial Memorial Service (ED Thomas):** (Bexar County), 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of each month, Fort Sam Houston National Cemetery, 1520 Harry Wurzbach Rd., SATX 78209 (follow the signs when you enter the main gate). VHMALST provides floral arrangements and roses for the persons being interned. PLEASE wear your VHMALST badge when attending an event. **See item below.** (OPEN)

**Website/Communications (Kevin Crozier):** The Chair started the Website/Communications conversation praising Kevin for all the fantastic work he’s done on the website and the VHMALST Facebook page and asked all members to take a look at all of our Communications. Kevin did submit the updated Website listing, reflecting the site currently has 670,356 visits! A copy of the report will be included in these minutes. (OPEN)

**VHMALST Non-Profit Organization (Fred Thomas):**  
**See item below.** (OPEN)

**Caregiver Information:** Dr. La Pointe began this briefing, stating that we don’t currently have a Caregiver on the council since Becki Williams left. But he said he was going to offer an invitation to both of his Caregivers to consider joining. The Chair then related that after last month’s discussion concerning CDS, the company that manages the actual distribution of the Veterans allotted funds for caregiving, he had contacted the manager of the CDS and told him about the issues and complaints experienced by our Veterans in this program. He stated that he was “unaware” of the issues and would assist us in resolving them as soon as possible. He gave us all his direct contact information and asked us to connect with him directly if/when any more problems arise. (OPEN)

#### IV. New Business

**Guest Speaker: Amy Smith Rn CCRN**  
**SCI/D Neuro-Rehab – Spinal Injury Outreach Manager**  
**South Texas Veterans Healthcare System**  
[Amy.smith26@va.gov](mailto:Amy.smith26@va.gov)  
**361-227-9656 (Cell)**  
**210-617-5300 ext. 18737**

**(Please note, a portion of Ms. Smith’s PowerPoint presentation was corrupted and/or voice controls were not set properly at the outset of her briefing).** Ms. Smith gave a brief introduction about herself and her work, she has extensive experience for many years taking care of veteran issues and concerns. She completed an in depth briefing on the programs she is responsible for. She briefed on her treatment center located inside the VA hospital. She “gave us a tour” of their 26-bed in-patient unit. She listed more than 20 segments of different specialties being utilized for veteran’s care in her area of responsibility and that was not an all-inclusive number. She noted that they were one of the first VA clinics to offer virtual reality and extended reality incorporated therapy. She talked about the exoskeleton they employ in the care and recovery of veterans who require these advanced systems and reviewed the extensive high-tech equipment they have access to. This SCI clinic also treats active-duty patients as well.  
**(Again, we lost some information here due to internet connection issues).**

**There was a brief period (about 5 minutes) at this point where voices from the onsite group were not being heard by our online or phone in members. When the voice option was unmuted, the chair gave a brief synopsis of the missed discussions:**

**Unaccompanied Burial Memorial Service (ED Thomas):** (Bexar County), 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of each month, Fort Sam Houston National Cemetery, 1520 Harry Wurzbach Rd., SATX 78209 (follow the signs when you enter the main gate). VHMACHST provides floral arrangements and roses for the persons being interned. PLEASE wear your VHMACHST badge when attending any VHMACHST event.

**VHMACHST Non-Profit Organization (Fred Thomas):** Fred stated that there was nothing new to report. All is well.

**Veteran Health Education and Information Committee (Dave La Pointe):** Dr. La Pointe reported the latest items reviewed and again asked for any woman that may be interested in participating to let him know. **(OPEN)**

**“Check-In Program”:** Dr. La Pointe gave a short brief on this program and how we had a similar program we had started on our own when the VHMACHST began. It included Wil Seda, Carlos Acosta, and Dave La Pointe and at one time we had 8 people being “checked in on” during that period. Participants over time, got out of the program and recently it surfaced as an item we should consider re-instituting.

As a result, in an earlier topic from our old business, there has been discussion of the VHMACHST renewing our “Check-in Program.” Essentially council members make calls/visits to other members, veterans, family members or anyone that may benefit from simply checking in on one another to see how we are doing. Previously, Wil Seda and Carlos Acosta had chaired this effort. What we need:

1. Volunteers to make the calls and possibly visits.
2. Names/contact information on participants who would receive calls/contact
3. Frequency of contacts and types of contacts would be determined by each individual wanting to be a part of the program

4. There would be not “formal” reporting for the program (names/numbers, personal information would never be used)
5. There may be some reporting on number of contacts during a particular month, but no personal information would be shared (unless an individual decided to provide that on their own initiative)

We can add, delete, modify, whatever is needed/recommended by council members to get this program up and running again. If you are interested in participating (in any way), please let Dr. La Pointe know ASAP. **(OPEN)**

**ALL – Please be prepared to discuss this at the next meeting.**

VA Appointment Letters – Dr. La Pointe stated he had received a complaint about the VA appointment letters being sent out arriving late. He stated this past month he himself had received seven letters, all arriving after the appointment dates. He stated that that he was attempting to get an appointment with the VA hospital director to speak with him about our council and thought that could be an item to bring up.

**Note: If/when we have an opportunity to speak with the hospital director, what items would you like us to bring up?**

Reviewed travel pay, dental service acute care, and aquodic program.

#### **OTHER:**

- ✚ 36 People this year, (Veterans, Family Members and Civilian connections) have gained employment from information shared online/email from the VHMALST
- ✚ Current VA Suicide Rate: 17.5 Veterans per day
- ✚ Promises – Immediate openings for “Detox” programs at ALL Texas locations; 3550 Normand Drive, College Station, TX 77845, 949-426-0101

#### **VHMALST Outreach:**

- ✚ **Unaccompanied Burial Memorial Service, 2-21-2024, 0900**
- ✚ **Unaccompanied Burial Memorial Service, 3-20-2024, 0900**
- ✚ **Unaccompanied Burial Memorial Service, 4-17-2024, 0900**

#### **VHMALST Events:**

- ✚ **VHMALST Monthly Meeting, 2-15-2024, 1300**
- ✚ **VHMALST Monthly Meeting, 3-21-2024, 1300**
- ✚ **VHMALST Monthly Meeting, 4-18-2024, 1300**

#### **VHMALST Training:**

- ✚ Nothing scheduled at this time

### **VI. Next Meeting 15 February 2023 - 1300**

### **VII. Adjournment**

Meeting ended at 1421

### **VIII: End of Minutes**

Minutes Submitted/Approved by Dr. David A. Pointe