

Health and Wellness Committee
Montgomery County Commission on Aging
November 7, 2023

Meeting Notes

Attending (via Zoom)

Chairs: Marcia Pruzan, Marcia Weber

Committee members: Wayne Berman, Virginia Cain, Betsy Carrier, Joyce Dubrow, David Engel, Joyce Dubrow, Kendall Matthews Laurie Pross, Barbara Selter

New members: Renae Eichler, Kathleen McGuinness, Linda Bergofsky

COA Alumna: Rev Vikram

Staff: Tina Purser Langley, Peter Flandrau

Guest: Judy Levy, Co-chair Roundtable on Mental Health, American Muslim Senior Society (AMSS)

1. **Introductions** for current and new COA members were made
2. **Minutes** from October meeting were approved.
3. **Presentation:** Judy Levy presented background information and a summary of the AMSS Roundtable on Mental Health among seniors. In recent years this organization has held a number of events related to mental health has focused on mental health, which has emerged as an issue of primary and urgent concern. Four areas were addressed at the Roundtable:
 - a. Impact on Education
 - b. Access to care
 - c. Funding and Public Policy
 - d. Best practices

AMSS has developed a program that trains and sends individuals into the community to provide information about County programs and services and to conduct research.

Significant issues that have arisen among this population include:

1. Language barriers
2. Isolation among seniors
3. Food insecurity
4. Documentation concerns
5. Cultural differences and in some cases, lack of language to describe mental health issues
6. Stigma
7. Trust

Concerns moving forward:

1. Funding for priorities and access to services and care
2. Developing a broad coalition to advocate for services and funding
3. The complexity of the mental health system and need for developing a road map to help people navigate the system
4. Lack of providers to serve this community
5. A need for “one stop shopping” to make information and access easier for all.

Follow up Discussion:

- Judy stated there will be another roundtable on December 10: she will provide information to Tina for those who wish to attend.
- Possible steps to consider:
 - Investigate other commissions that might be working on this topic or that might want to work on this topic with the COA, such as veterans affairs.
 - Translate the COA’s new Transitions document for this community and their families
 - Create a fact sheet on relevant county resources
 - Recommend Mental Health as a topic for the Spring COA Public Forum.
 - Consider a caregiver support group for older caregivers or those who care for them within this population
- Finally, the central issue for this group is finding a focus within the topic with which the COA can have a positive effect. Committee members formed a subgroup that will meet before the next committee meeting to try to narrow and focus on a direction for the committee to pursue.

The group will report back at the next meeting, scheduled for December 5, 2023.

Meeting was adjourned at 11:05