

Health and Welfare Committee Meeting Notes

February 6, 2024, at 9:30 a.m.

Virtually Via Zoom

Attending COA Board Members and Alumni: Laurie Pross, Barbara Selter, David Engel, Virginia Cain, Joyce Dubow, Kendell Mathews, Betsy Carrier, Wayne Berman

Attending COA Alumni: Marcia Pruzan, Marsha Weber, Revathi Vikram

Attending County Staff: Tina Purser Langley, Kimberly Johnson, Avital Graves

Others: Laurie Byer, Sarah Frazell, Yasaman Alavi

Welcome	Action items Responsible Party
Approval of Minutes <ul style="list-style-type: none">Minutes were approved	Laurie Pross moved that the minutes be approved; Wayne Berman seconded the motion
Responsibility for Note Taking <ul style="list-style-type: none">No one volunteered to be the note taker for entire yearDifferent individuals will be asked to take notes for each meeting	Virginia Cain, H&W Meeting attendees Barbara Selter and Virginia Cain will contact individuals each month to ask them to take notes for a given meeting
Mental Health Presentations <p>Emergency Medical and Integrated Healthcare Services</p> <p>Ms. Graves described some of the situations encountered by the MIH program when responding to calls to assist older individuals. They find people who have retired but not planned to age-in-place. They may be experiencing isolation, loneliness, depression, and low acuity. However, MIH cannot force anyone to move to a more supportive environment. They encounter people with dementia and mental health issues such as bipolar disorder or substance abuse-mainly alcoholism, some drug use. Often the individuals are unwilling to recognize that they have a problem and/or are unmedicated. They cannot compel anyone to take medications. Families and caregivers sometimes feel overwhelmed and call to have someone admitted for a short term stay at a nursing home. However, they are unaware of the specific requirements to qualify for a paid stay. Options are costly and few. For unhoused older adults, the options for placement in a mental health service facility can be difficult because of physical limitations such as the need to be able to climb stairs.</p>	Avital Graves, MIH Program Manager

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • David Engel inquired about the bill to create a crisis intervention team. Avital responded that the Fire Department was not involved in the bill but is involved in many other efforts including the Seven Locks Campus and other diversion efforts. For lower-level events such as depression, two counselors respond but if there is any sense of violence occurring or an event in a public place, police are included in the response. • David asked how emergency calls are routed. Avital said that calls to numbers such as 911, 311 and 988 are interconnected and calls can be routed to the appropriate place. • Wayne Berman asked about calls from nursing homes or assisted living concerning people who wander. Those call would usually go to 911 and have police and fire involvement. • Marsha Weber inquired about the services required. The majority of calls are for 50- to 65-year-olds There are increasing calls for older adults, some for neglect, some for overwhelmed families. • Rev Vikram inquired about diverse populations. No information about race or ethnicity is collected. Very little information is collected on the social determinants of health. • Joyce Dubow inquired about income levels and expressed concern about the ability of some to pay for services. Maryland Medicaid is a big insurer for the services provided. 	
<p>The Santé Group</p> <p>Montgomery County has contracted with The Santé Group to provide mental health services to seniors in Montgomery County. Ms. Alavi described a program to provide individual short term in-home counseling up to 25 visits. Eligibility for the service is being homebound. A separate clinic program is available for those who can come to a clinic.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Laurie Pross expressed concern that the in-home counseling might be terminated in the middle of treatment if the homebound eligibility criterion changed during treatment • Virginia Cain inquired about whether the there was a wait list and, if so, what was needed to reduce or eliminate it. Ms. Alavi said that the waiting time to enter the home counseling program was about two months. The wait could be alleviated with additional staff. The lack of sufficient staffing is due both to the need for additional funding and 	<p>Yasamin Alavi, Manager of Senior Services</p>

<p>the difficulties in hiring staff. Low salaries and, especially since the pandemic, entering people’s home are deterrents. They are looking for two additional therapists but currently only have funding for one.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Barbara Selter asked about working with affordable housing buildings. Ms. Alavi said that they were in touch with the HOC counselors on a regular basis and that the counselors know how to reach out to Santé as needed. In the past, they did more psych-ed talks in the HOC buildings. They can do up to three pre-admit sessions before someone enters the program. • Questions were asked about the demographics of the clients and the ability to address the need of the non-English speakers. There are currently 55 clients in the program of whom about 9 speak Spanish, a few Farsi, and one Russian. They obtain translators as needed. • Continued discussion brought up that in addition to depression which in the past was the major need for seeking services, now there are more complicated and co-occurring conditions needing services such as bipolar disorder, unresolved trauma, PTSD and family relational issues. Clients may be in their own homes or intergenerational homes. The Santé Group accepts both Medicare and Medicaid. 	
<p>PEARLS (Program to Encourage Active, Rewarding Lives)</p> <p>Ms. Purser Langley described the PEARLS program, a treatment program designed to reduce symptoms of depression and improve quality of life among older adults. There currently is a small program in place in Montgomery County located within the CCACC Health Center. It is a 19-week evidence-based program. While the program has been shown to produce good results, there seems to be a significant drop-out rate after about 5 weeks.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The question arose as to why not just adjust the program to be shorter. However, since it is an evidence-based program with results when the protocol is adhered to, it is not really feasible to just stop at 5 weeks and expect the same results. The County is looking at the program to determine how it can meet the needs of the community. 	<p>Tina Purser Langley, Senior Health and Wellness Coordinator, Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services, Area Agency on Aging</p>

Next steps: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Committee will continue discussions to focus in on an activity that is appropriate for the Commission and would be beneficial for helping to serve the mental health needs of older adults in Montgomery County.	
Adjourn: 11:00 AM	