

## Maryland Commission on Caregiving

October 05, 2023

10:30 AM -12:00 PM

### Virtual Meeting Minutes

Commission Member Present: Ann Squire, Chalarra Sessoms, Jennifer Eastman, Jennifer Eastman, Kathy Wehr, Larry Bram, Terri Johnson, Theresa Robertson, Yetunde Olobatuyi, Esther Ward

Guests: Gertie Wilson, Morgan Mills representing Kate Farinholt and Dorinda Adams

Welcome & Introduction: Theresa Robertson, Commission Chair

Review and approval of October's meeting

Motion to approve October's meeting Minutes: Yes

**Annual Report:** Yetunde reported that the annual report is currently being reviewed by the SSA leadership, and after, the secretary will review it, and the Governor's office. The deadline for its submission was October 1st which we met the deadline. The final report will be shared with the members/partners as soon as we receive the green light to do so. Yetunde thanked the few members who contributed to this report, mainly Jennifer and Patricia.

**Member's Application/Expired Terms/Renewals:** Yetunde reported that she contacted the appointment office at the Governor's office and hasn't received a response yet. However, during my previous communication, they instructed us to continue serving with an expired term and promised to get in touch when they're ready to review applications. For the record, the following members are currently serving under an expired term since June 2023: Jennifer, Theresa, Larry, Ann, Esther, and Patricia. Yetunde to communicate with everyone immediately after receiving a response from the appointment's office.

**National Family Caregivers Month:** (Jennifer) A committee was formed to work on this project to celebrate our NFCM in November. Jennifer reported meeting with DHS leadership and presented them with a copy of the drafted letter to the legislators and was told that the letter should not have anything about DHS and DHS staff's information included. DHS leadership informed Jennifer that members/partners can tweak the letter that Jennifer will provide a template for.

Jennifer thanked Morgan Mills (Kate Farinholt representative) for assisting us in creating a comprehensive document that includes a list of legislators' email addresses and their respective districts. This document allows for easy searching and provides a direct link to the General Assembly website, enabling members/partners to find their representatives based on their

address. Jennifer encouraged all members/partners to contact their legislators in honor of National Family Caregivers Month and to disseminate a montage link that Theresa created along with a copy of the drafted letter to the legislators. Jennifer encouraged members/partners as a citizen of Maryland to reach out to as many legislators and lawmakers as possible. She also encouraged members/partners to push the survey link out to their legislators and lawmakers when it is ready. She stated that it is much easier when it comes from the members/partners and not from the DHS staff.

Jennifer also promised to draft a brief script that the Governor can say about NFCM and will send that to the DHS staff to have them work with their leadership and have Gov. Moore to say something about NFCM. Jennifer shared a copy of the drafted letter and walked everyone through it. She also advised everyone not to send it out yet and should wait for the final letter which will be ready in some days.

**National Family Caregivers Month Montage Videos/Websites:** Theresa talked about the montage videos and the private website that she created to celebrate our caregiver's month in November. Theresa provided a demonstration and overview of how to create a montage video on our phones by simply clicking record from the montage site, record, and submit. She also showed the website although it is not ready for the public yet as it is still a work in progress. She reported the website will be locked after this demo. The goal is to have about 5-6 pages with information such as home page, upcoming events, support groups, documentations, and other resources.

Kathy reported that she will send more information to be included on this site to Theresa, specifically what other counties/agencies are doing to celebrate NFCM. Theresa reported that the submission deadline will be extended for another week or so and encouraged everyone to send their videos in so that she will have the time to go in and work on all the submitted videos. Theresa reported that we can always use this same website on a yearly basis to celebrate NFCM and/or anytime during the year as needed. Theresa also reported that the caregiver's survey information will be shared on this site as well when it is ready. If anyone has any other inputs or suggestions towards this website or if any questions regarding the private website page and montage site to contact our MCC chair Theresa directly via email/telephone. Members shared their appreciation, and thanked Theresa for working on this website as it contains different caregiver's resources. Jennifer suggested enlarging MDOD, which Theresa agreed to do. The hashtag for this year 2023 NFCM is #caringformdcaregivers

**Update on the Caregiver's Survey:** Jennifer reported that the survey is almost complete and has been working with the University of Maryland, School of Social Work for changes and recommendations. The final draft was shown to the caregiver's survey workgroup yesterday and received good feedback such as putting the survey in plain language, Jennifer reported that Mary Anne did use an AI tool to make some recommendations on using plain language for the survey and sent that to Jennifer. Unfortunately, Mary Anne is out today. Jennifer will share members/partners with the sample questionnaire later and provide the School of Social Work with workgroup feedback. The survey's anticipated release date is now towards the end of

October. Jennifer encourages everyone to help disseminate the survey and its link through other channels. Jennifer stated once the survey is ready, she will develop the language that can go along to send to everyone. She also encourages partners like AARP, Alzheimer etc. to send the survey link separately once it is ready and share it in their newsletters.

Kathy expressed her gratitude to Jennifer for her efforts and for involving the SSW in the project. She stated that looking back from how the survey started to this moment, that the work is commendable. Theresa said she cannot wait to get the survey result back and asked who we will be sharing the survey results with. Jennifer stated that she also would like to target senator Lewis Young because she has been on the commission as a delegate and now as a senator and often attends our MCC meetings at times. Jennifer is suggesting that during the legislative session, we should have a briefing of the survey results and include it in correspondence to share with legislators during the next legislative session.

**Member's/Partner's Spotlight:** Yetunde emphasized the significance of showcasing members/partners and encouraged all members to share suggestions for guest speakers with the commission chair or DHS staff. This will allow members to gain insights into each other's work and enhance collaboration. Thank you to Theresa for arranging with Larry Bram to be our member's spotlight and for Larry for accepting to do this.

**October's Member's Spotlight:** Larry Bram shared his story almost 30 years ago when his daughter was five days old. They were told by a neurologist that his daughter was born with an incomplete brain. When she was 6 months old, another diagnosis was called "polymicrogyria" (PMG) which means brain wrinkle and that people with that diagnosis do not have a good outcome. They were also told that his daughter will not develop language skills. At 10 months old, she began talking and they were told to start college funds. Today, his daughter has cerebral palsy and uses a power wheelchair and has a college degree in speech and language sciences. She lives on her own with a roommate and with a professional support system in place.

This led Larry to the world of disability and had been with Easter Seals for 12 years as a Senior Vice President of Innovation. He works in all parts of the organization to develop new programs and help put together community needs. Easter Seal which has been around since 1945 mission is to enrich the lives and expand opportunities for children and adults in our communities including people with disabilities and military backgrounds. Their vision is to create a hopeful inclusive community where all people achieve potential and live meaningful lives. They have offices and locations all over MD, DC and VA and serve as little as 6 weeks old to 102 years old. They do early interventions and childhood education as well as medical, adult day services, behavioral interventions for veterans, employments, homeless, respite programs for Navy families with disability where they fund about 40 hours per month of respite services. Larry promised to send the Easter seal fact sheet as well to everyone as Kathy would like to share that with her agency. For more information about Easter Seals, please check out their website <https://www.easterseals.com>

Jennifer asked Larry about behavioral health funds for military families. Larry said it was a “Sheila Hixson Fund which did not get out last year but is hoping it will get out this year considering the large amount of money that could benefit families.

Theresa thanked Larry once again for agreeing despite the short notice. Everyone thanked Larry for his hard work and great presentation. Theresa also encouraged members/partners to consider volunteering to be a member's spotlight monthly. Larry also thanked everyone for being a caregiver.

**Holiday In-Person Get-together:** Theresa, touch base on the holiday get-together to allow us to better know each other. She asked if everyone would like to have a holiday luncheon this year and for people to put their responses in the chat. Theresa asked if people liked the last place we went, and the majority said yes. Theresa proposed Friday December 8, 2023, and asked for people to let her know if that date is good for everyone.

**Partner’s Spotlight for November:** Yetunde shared that she received an email from Gilchrist about a new caregiver’s program within their agency and asked if everyone is fine with it, she can invite Gilchrist to come in November and talk to us more about this. Everyone agreed to this and Yetunde promised to follow up with them.

**The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, November 2, 2023, from 10:30am-12 pm.**