

Maryland Commission on Caregiving

April 3, 2025

10:30 AM -12:00 PM

Meeting Minutes

I. Meeting Minutes

- A.** Commission Member Present: Shalini Arora, Larry Bram, Mary Anne Kane Breshi, Dawnita Brown, Jennifer Eastman, Theresa Robertson, Trina Townsend, Molly Wisniewski
- B.** Guests: Dorinda Adams, Doug Banks, Estelle Brooks, Teresa Jetter-Cutting, Nicole Digillio, Pearl Harmon, Mackenzie Hill, Terri Johnson, Melissa Karcher, Ruth Kershner, Kathy Lewis, Leslie Smith-Ray, Kathleen Koenig-Stoffel, Brandy Trader, Hilary Wiseman, Brenda Williams
- C.** Approval of March's Meeting Minutes
 - 1. Motion to approve March's meeting Minutes: Yes

II. Member Updates

- A.** The Commission was notified that Shalini Arora, Executive Director of the Commission has accepted a new position at Baltimore County Department of Human Services.
 - 1. The Commission shared well-wishes and thanked Shalini for her dedication to the Commission over the years.
 - 2. An invitation to attend the Commission will be extended once Shalini settles into her new position.
- B.** Additionally, Yetunde Olobatuyi has rejoined the Maryland Department of Human Services resuming her previous role. While onboarding during the meeting, Yetunde will join the Commission meetings moving forward.
 - 1. The Commission was excited to hear of Yetunde's return and wished her best of luck in transitioning back into her role.

III. Subcommittee Updates

- A.** Thank you to all volunteers who signed up to be a part of the subcommittee's.
- B.** The Survey Subcommittee's will convene this month.
- C.** Leslie will reach out to Legislative Committee members soon as the end of the current Legislative Session ends April, 7th.
- D.** The Subcommittees and Subcommittee Members:
 - 1. Adult Caregiver Survey Review Committee - Wednesday, April 9th at 2pm
 - a) Teresa Jeter-Cutting, Chair
 - b) Jennifer Eastman
 - c) Pearl Harmon
 - d) Patricia Morris
 - e) Molly Wisniewski

- f) Yetunde Olobatuyi
 - 2. Youth Caregiver Survey Expansion Committee - Monday, April 7th at 12pm
 - a) Molly Wlsniewski, Chair
 - b) Larry Bram
 - c) Mary Anne Breschi
 - d) Teresa Jeter-Cutting
 - e) Chalarra Sessoms
 - f) Trina Townsend
 - g) Kathy Wehr
 - 3. Legislative Advocacy and Policy Committee
 - a) Leslie Smith-Ray, Chair
 - b) Dorinda Adams
 - c) Theresa Robertson
 - d) Megan Peters
 - e) Greg Seseek
- IV. **Presentation: Hilary Wiseman, Program of General Caregiver Support Services Coordinator with VA Maryland Healthcare System to present on VA Caregiver Support Services**
The Presentation slides and supporting materials will be sent out to the Commission following the meeting.
 - A. Enrollment & Eligibility:
 - 1. Not all veterans are eligible for VA health care.
 - 2. Key questions to determine eligibility: *Are you enrolled in VA health care? Have you seen a primary care provider in the past year?*
 - 3. Veterans can apply online or through a local VA office:
<https://www.va.gov/maryland-health-care/register-for-care/>
 - B. Those over income limits may still qualify with the help of a VA social worker
 - 1. Service Connection:
 - a) Eligibility for some services depends on VA disability compensation (service-connected injuries/illnesses sustained during or as a result of active military service). Service connection is rated on a scale of 0-100%, Veterans receive tax free monthly compensation in accordance with their rating. ONLY the Veterans Benefits Administration can determine a Veteran's Service Connection Rating
<https://www.va.gov/disability/eligibility/>
 - b) Accredited representatives (Veterans Service Organizations, attorneys, and claims agents) are available to assist with applications and claims. Services provided by VSOs are grant funded and free of charge, Veterans and their families should be aware that attorneys and accredited claims agents may charge a fee. <https://www.va.gov/get-help-from-accredited-representative/find-rep/>
 - C. VA Health Care Coverage:
https://www.va.gov/HEALTHBENEFITS/resources/publications/10-185_HCBO_2025.pdf

1. VA offers comprehensive care including primary and specialty care.
2. Long-term care including both LTC and SAR is typically limited to Veterans who are 70-100% SC and dental services are typically only available to Veterans who are 100% SC

D. Non-Skilled Home & Community-Based Services: To access the below Veterans must have a VA Primary Care Doctor that they have seen within the last year with the exception of Veterans receiving hospice services. Referrals start with the Veteran's Primary Care Provider/Primary Care Social Worker

1. Adult Day Health – VA will typically assist with payment for 2 days per week at contacted facilities
2. Home Health Aide -ADL CARE ONLY- Veteran must require hands on assistance with at least 3 ADLs – typically 10hrs per week(can be indefinite if skilled care is not required)
3. Skilled Services: Includes occupational therapy (OT) and physical therapy (PT)
4. Home Respite Care:
 - a. Up to 30 days
 - b. No overnights or federal holidays
 - c. Day defined as 8 hours
5. Nursing Home Respite Care-Veteran must be 70-100% Service Connected to be referred
 - a. Up to 30 days
6. Veteran Directed Care Program (overview referenced in 2025 Health Benefits Handbook)

E. Caregiver Support: NATIONAL VA CAREGIVER SUPPORT LINE (provides information and linkage to local programs): 1-855-260-3274

1. Eligibility: Veterans receiving care must be enrolled in VA health care.
2. Support Services Include:
 - a. Suicide prevention resources (e.g., safe firearm storage)
 - b. CPR training
 - c. Annie (text-based health tool) – includes coaching and subscriptions
 - d. REACH – (much like the 36-hour day caregiver education program)- Curriculum available for Dementia, PTSD, ALS, MS, Parkinson's and more!
 - e. Caregiver Health and Wellbeing Coaching
 - f. Caregiver Skills Classes- Caregivers FIRST, Building Better Caregivers, Core Curriculum for Family Caregivers
 - g. Resources, referrals, and respite options
 - h. Caregiver Support Line: 1-855-260-3274
3. Two Key Programs:
 - a. *Program of General Caregiver Support Services*: Least restrictive, accessible to most enrolled veterans.

**Provide interested Veterans/Caregivers with provided PGCSS Packet or direct them to:*

https://www.caregiver.va.gov/Care_Caregivers.asp for additional information

b. *Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers: Offers more intensive support.*

1. *Veteran must be 70-100% Service Connected*
2. *Veteran and caregiver must meet clinical criteria*
3. *Approved caregivers receive a tax free monthly stipend, access to legal and financial services, additional respite care and specialty Mental Health Services*
4. *Strict Application and Assessment Process*

**Provide interested Veterans/Caregivers with provided PCAFC Packet or direct them to:*

https://www.caregiver.va.gov/support/support_benefits.asp

4. Financial Assistance:

a. Aid and Attendance: For eligibility information and access to the application <https://www.va.gov/pension/aid-attendance-housebound/>

1. Financial benefit for veterans requiring help with daily living
2. Does *not* need to be used for third-party care
3. Benefit is tax-free and not counted toward taxable income
4. To be eligible Veterans must qualify for VA PENSION
5. May be available to spouses and surviving spouses – recommend speaking with VSO for assistance

b. Non-Service Connected Pension: For eligibility information and access to the application <https://www.benefits.va.gov/pension/>

1. Additional financial support based on need
2. May be available to surviving spouses – recommend speaking with a VSO for assistance

3. Additional financial assistance resources:

1. Veteran Need: <https://veterans.maryland.gov/veterans-trust-fund/>
2. Caregiver Need: <https://hiddenheroes.org/get-immediate-help/hopefund/>
3. Eviction Prevention: <https://www.va.gov/homeless/ssvf/index.html>

V. **Legislative Updates**

- A. There were no new updates from MDOA on legislative topics.
- B. It was noted that the Session would end on April 7th.

VI. **ACL Grant Updates**

- A. **Caregiver Recognition Effort**

1. MDOA is developing a proposal to recognize caregivers through a statewide award.
2. The initiative seeks support from key legislators to introduce a bill that would establish five caregiver recognition awards across Maryland.
3. The award would highlight and honor outstanding caregivers for their contributions.
4. Discussion included how the Legislative Subcommittee could support and advance this effort.
5. The team explored which types of caregivers should be recognized, emphasizing the importance of a lifespan perspective (recognizing caregivers across age groups and care contexts).
6. The award would be sponsored, and potential partnerships and champions in Annapolis were discussed.

B. EBP Workshops

1. Evidence-Based Practice Workshops are being developed by the Living Well Center for Excellence.
2. These workshops will support the grant's goals by offering structured caregiver education and training opportunities.
3. Topics for these workshops will be identified through the work of the Adult Caregiver Survey Review Subcommittee.
4. It was noted that similar efforts for the Caregivers of Youth should be pursued if there are resources available.

C. Ambassador Training Program

1. The Ambassador Training Program is being developed to support caregiver engagement and outreach.
2. Discussion included how to align this effort with existing caregiver programs and recognition efforts.
3. Considerations for the program will be brought to the Commission for review and feedback in late Spring.

VII. Upcoming Presentations

- A. May 1st: Mark Tesoro, Cognitive and Behavioral Health Specialist at the Maryland Department of Aging, and Dr. Quincy Samus, Director of the Memory and Aging Services Innovation Center at Johns Hopkins, will present the Johns Hopkins Memory Care Family Checklist Tool.

VIII. Questions/Concerns/Suggestions/Announcements

A. Easter Seals - Larry Bram

1. The Steven A. Cohen Military Family Clinic (Cohen Clinic) at Easterseals provides mental health counseling, medical care, addiction treatment, and behavioral health care to post-9/11 military veterans and active-duty service members and their families and caregivers.

- a) Easter Seals aims to schedule appointments within 2 days, aligning their model with the VA's timeline.
 - b) Veterans define who constitutes their "family," allowing for broader caregiver engagement and inclusion.
 - 2. A future presentation from Easter Seals may be scheduled for the Commission.
- B. Maryland AARP - Dorinda Adams**
 - 1. Working in partnership with National AARP on a pilot project in 9 states, exploring how AARP can provide infrastructure for supporting family caregivers.
 - a) Initially focused on caregivers over age 50, but moving toward a more inclusive model for all caregivers.
 - 2. Dorinda introduced Kathy Lewis, Associate State Director, Volunteer Engagement & Outreach to the Commission who will be working on this initiative and attending the Commission meetings moving forward to learn more about Maryland's support in addressing Caregivers needs.
- C. Commission on Aging Spring Fling - Ruth Kershner**
 - 1. Scheduled for May 21st - Flyer will be sent out with meeting minutes
 - 2. Potential opportunity to showcase caregiver initiatives or feature a presentation

IX. Next Meeting

- A. Thursday, May 1st at 10:30am-12:00pm

X. **Meeting Adjourned**