



Eliminating Structural Racism in Behavioral Health

August 2, 2021

Time (1:00 – 2:30)

Location: Zoom Meeting

Meeting Summary

Goal of Project: On June 24, 2020, the ADAMHS Board of Directors passed RESOLUTION NO. 20-06-01 declaring Racism as a Public Health Crisis. The ADAMHS Board is working with partners to plan immediate, short-term, and long-term goals for eliminating structural racism in the behavioral health community by upholding the recommendations in the resolution. The ADAMHS Board and its partners will create a strategic plan for addressing racism and implementing solutions to eliminate structural racism in behavioral health care. The group currently has five subcommittees: Workforce; Health Equity; Policy and Advocacy; Data and Research; and Community Collaboration/Education and Stigma.

Goal of Today's Meeting

- Conversation with Myesha Crowe, LSW, MSW, Executive Director of Peacemakers Alliance, about her experience and what it means to “Dream out loud”.
- Review subcommittee progress.

Agenda Items

Welcome/Introduction – Beth Zietlow-DeJesus – ADAMHS Board Director of External Affairs

- Thanked all for coming.
- Introduced Rev. Benjamin Gohlstin, ADAMHS Board Chair.
 - o Rev. Gohlstin thanked all for being present today and for their continued, much needed work in the community.
- Beth spoke on behalf of Scott Osieck, ADAMHS Board CEO.
 - o Announced that the ADAMHS Board released an updated request for proposals (RFP) for the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Consultant. The Board received 4 proposals for the original RFP but the reviewing group wanted to expand the questions asked of the consultants, so they updated and re-released the RFP.
 - o Proposal responses will be accepted until August 20, 2021. The ADAMHS Board held a bidders conference at 12:30 p.m. on August 5, 2021.
 - o The ADAMHS Board hopes to recommend a Consultant to the Board of Directors in September and enter a contract in October of 2021.

- Introduced Myesha Crowe, LSW, MSW.
 - o Myesha has extensive experience in the mental health field and serves as the Executive Director of the Cleveland Peacemakers Alliance, as well as the owner of her independent practice, Counseling for The Culture.
 - o The Peacemakers Alliance, a subsidiary by the Boys & Girls Clubs of Cleveland, works to reduce youth and gang violence in the city. The organization also aims to help youth in the juvenile court system find positive paths.
 - o Myesha earned her bachelor's and master's degrees in social work from Cleveland State University.
 - o She has been the director of the Broadway Club for the city's Boys & Girls Clubs and was a psychotherapist for homeless young adults as well as a psychological social worker with St. Vincent Charity Medical Center.
 - o Today, Myesha will be sharing her personal and professional experience with us.

Speaker – Myesha Crowe

- Myesha began with sharing that she is a mother of two, ages 8 and 4 years old. Being a working mother has given her a perspective to see the space in which she leaves her family. She understands how vital it is to create a safe environment so that she can take that space to work.
- Myesha compared treating violence to the treatment of COVID-19. Instead of treating the pandemic by the individual, we aim to treat the environment and population as a whole. She asks, how can we take this approach with our youth? Regarding mental health, especially for black and brown people, the general mindset is that resiliency is the only way to survive. But Myesha argues that it's wrong, it's an outdated mindset. She urges her community to stop and choose resources to build a web of support.
- She continuously asks her peers what it is we need to fix in our environment that leads to poor mental health and violence. What are the possibilities of what our environment could be? Myesha urged us all to dream out loud.

Questions for Myesha

- Carole Ballard asked: We talk about dreaming out loud in our own private conversations, but how do we help others learn about how we dream and what we're looking for, to have Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion?
 - o Myesha answered: If you focus on humanity, it's easier to dream because then we are not so individualized. And consider how much is outdated. It's easier to do as we have always done, but it doesn't have to be like that anymore. The Global pandemic has taught us that collectively we can do more. Just because something isn't affecting you, doesn't mean you're not impacted, because your community is impacted. Greater Cleveland has the opportunity to step up, and what does that look like? We can be a part of the collective impact. We can think, how do I build a community from a place of dreams? We need to invite others into those conversations. We need to create environments that allow us to dream. If people can come into these communities willing to understand, then they'll have a better commitment to solving the issues because they're not too far removed. Hopefully the people who want to be invited, come with the mindset of wanting to dream out loud.
 - o Dawn Pullin commented: We need to be not only culturally competent, but culturally proficient. Competency means we are aware of the issues, while proficiency means we understand that there need to be changes and we must work together to do so. Listen not only to what people need, but what they desire and that's where the dreams come from. Allowing people to dream means inviting them to the conversation, giving space for them to express their dreams, and listening. The other part to that is when they see those dreams come to fruition; dreaming is expressing what you desire and seeing it also come to fruition.

- Carole added: The next part of Myesha's conversation is that too often programs are being planned without the people affected being involved in the conversation.
- Victoria Grant commented: I agree with Dawn and Myesha, sometimes experts decide what is needed and do not always ask those who the service impacts. Her agency, Journey Center for Safety and Healing, is reevaluating their service delivery model because of this. They are partnering with Case Western Reserve University (CWRU) through their PERI Program. Her agency is going to hold focus groups made up of people involved in their services to determine best practices.
 - Wendy Hunter from CWRU added PERI program information in chat: "The Partnership for Evaluation, Research, and Implementation (PERI) is a high-quality, low-cost program evaluation resource center for local nonprofits and governmental organization in the health and human services sector."
- Carole thanked all for their input and warned that before data is collected, it's best to first determine what to do with it.
- Roman Waked asked: What does it look like to give those people (whom our service impacts) space at the table? How can we be sure we're involving the right people?
 - Carole commented: Excellent question. When we choose, it's not representation, it's selection. We must have an intentional process to involve people from a broad base because disparities are very prevalent.
 - Myesha answered: A more collaborative approach is needed. Cleveland has a lot of resources; a lot of organizations that do similar things. We need to shift from a competitive environment to one that is more collaborative. Consider partnering instead of rebuilding.
- Rev. Gohlstin asked: How can we be collaborative when the system causes us to be competitive? For example, the request for proposals. One suggestion is to approach the system itself that provides the funding and try to remove the competitive spirit.
 - Carole commented: Grants are setup to be competitive. You must look at the source of it, but also look at the relationships already setup (Ex. Restrictions that mandate police involvement).
 - Dawn commented: Her agency, the Northeast Ohio Black Health Coalition, tries to consider what they don't do so well and find other agencies to fill in. Her opinion is that part of the hesitation for an organization is that they don't want to give up power of handling the money and deciding how it's dispersed. You must get past that hesitation. Put a contract together. Collaborate to make every party feel confident and happy, and then trust each other. Collaborate even when it's uncomfortable. There are practical things we can do to work together.
- Beth asked: If you could dream out loud right now, which one environmental risk factor would you choose to change?
 - Myesha answered: A lot could be solved with proper education and focusing on humanity. If we focused on our commonalities, we could build intentional relationships. If we could reduce the education gap, we could remove ignorance. My dream would be to intentionally reduce the education gap as it relates to all the variables that impact the communities most in need.
- Roman Waked asked: What types of coalitions can we build, or that already exist in Cleveland to foster those collaborations?
 - Rev. Gohlstin answered: That is the purpose of this initiative. The goal of this committee is to pull our providers together to eliminate discrimination and bigotry as it relates to the Behavioral Health industry.
 - Carole added: It takes a village and there may be other grassroots organizations that we still need help from.

- Dawn added: The ADAMHS Board is the leader and that is why we are all here. The Board knows the strengths of each agency and has the collaborative power to pull us together.
- Carole commented: Myesha, you have us talking about community. It seems if we go back to community, we may discover opportunities there we are missing. We are asking law enforcement to do this same thing with community policing.
- Larry Heller asked: Several years ago there were coalitions, created around police reform, that were cofounded by large organizations and included a number of community activist and members with lived experience, can we reconvene those to address our current social issues?
 - Myesha answered: The biggest part of coalitions and bringing people together is that everyone is passionate, but that doesn't mean that everyone is right for the job. It is important to get people that are passionate and consistent, and willing and ready to do the community work even if it's uncomfortable. Everyone brings different resources; some bring money, time, talent etc. It's not all about the coalitions and conversations, it's also about doing the work to create the impact that we need. Meetings only get us so far. How do we connect to the people whose pain connects to the problem? How far removed are we from the grant to the solution and how do we close that gap? Outside of being colleagues we also need to do the groundwork.
 - Larry responded: One great way to meet that is to do listening tours.
- Carole commented: It sounds like we're making some movement within this space. But we also need to be prepared to have uncomfortable conversations. To understand someone else's pain, we need to get used to having those conversation, because that is the education.

Thank you to Myesha for this conversation and for sharing your dreams. Good luck to Myesha with the Peacemakers Alliance.

Subcommittee Report Outs

- **Policy & Advocacy** – Carole Ballard (co-chair) presented
 - Karen Kearney has moved on from MHAC and we have a new representative, Joan Englund. Megan Burke attended the committee meeting today on behalf of Joan. Megan is the State Program and Policy Director at the MHAC and be reached at mburke@mhaadvocacy.org.
 - Group met with Senator Antonio regarding the licensure legislation. This legislation would require all social workers to complete cultural competency training to renew licensures. They are looking for feedback on current legislation draft and the subcommittee is meeting on Friday to review. Senator Antonio said this type of legislation takes 12-18 months to be approved.

Meets the third Friday of every month at 1:00 p.m.

- **Community Collaboration/Education and Stigma** – Subcommittee did not meet this month, there is no update

Meets the third Wednesday of every month at 1:00 p.m.

- **Data and Research** – Thomas Williams (co-chair) presented

- This subcommittee did not meet this month. Thomas encourages people to join the next meeting on August 13th at 11 a.m.

Meets the second Friday of every month at 11:00 a.m.

- **Health Equity in Behavioral Health** – Madison Greenspan spoke in place of Erin DiVincenzo (Co-Chair)
 - o Subcommittee members discussed action to regroup to review current goals and capabilities.

Meets the last Friday of every month at 10:00 a.m.
- **Workforce** – Subcommittee did not group this month, there is no update.

Meets the third Friday of every month at 11:00 a.m.

Closing Remarks

- Madison shared a reminder: All subcommittee meetings are listed on our website (<http://www.adamhsc.org/workgroup>). You can click the “Add to my Calendar” button to add the dates, times, and locations to your google/outlook calendars.
- Carole shared an update on the recent Ohio Association of County Behavioral Health Authorities (OACBHA) group meeting. OACBHA is working to create a position in relation to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI). Carole shared her excitement to hear energy and interest of DEI at the state level since these are long-term conversations.
- Thomas said: When looking at the RFPs it does not say that you are competing for a certain amount of dollars, it only says you have to meet certain requirements. There is nothing that says you can’t work with other organizations. The ADAMHS Board does not aim to limit creativity. The RFP is simply a request for a proposal that the members will evaluate and decide on.
- Rev. Gohlstin added that he is disappointed with attendance numbers. All the agencies should be invited to attend committee meetings and they should be attending them. The ADAMHS Board is asking their providers to adjust their model so that the service is more effective, and the recidivism rate is reduced in communities, especially those of color.
- Carole agreed that this committee has more work to do. She also thanked all those that have been involved from the beginning. She emphasized the need for those uncomfortable conversations.
- Larry asked how to get providers to participate.
- Roman Waked asked of the 70 providers, how many of those are active within the subcommittees.
- Rev. Gohlstin responded that there is work needed at the Board level to address provider attendance.
- Beth added that they are coordinating a meeting to figure out how to proceed.
- Vincent Holland gave his appreciation that providers are guiding people where they need to go rather than where providers may want them to go.
- Representative from 99Treasures added that we need more support for the victims of violence and they are looking forward to working with other groups to address this issue.
- Tami Fischer commented, in regard to the RFP, that there are several significant qualifications for diversity makeup and inquiries on policies for inclusion.
- Carole reminded group that the ADAMHS Board now has a Chief of Compliance, and he will ensure these qualifications (RFPs) are being met at the policy level.
 - o She concluded the meeting and extended gratitude for all joining today.

Next meeting is the second Monday in September due to the Labor Day Holiday. The meeting date is September 13, 2021 at 1:00 p.m.