



## CAN Board of Directors Meeting 04/14/23 Minutes

**Location:** Virtual Zoom Meeting

**Present:** Leroy Alloway, CapMetro, Chris Cervini, Austin Community College; CapMetro; Donovan DePriest, CAN Community Council; David Evans, Integral Care; Vanessa Fuentes, Council Member, City of Austin; Simone Talma Flowers, Interfaith Action of Central Texas; Suchitra Gururaj, UT Austin; Liz Johnson, St. Edward's University; Patricia Longoria, United Healthcare; Jeremy Martin, Austin Chamber of Commerce; Pilar Sanchez, Travis County HHS; Annette Tielle, Del Valle ISD; Celia Hughes, One Voice Central Texas.

**Other guests:** Batool Abbasi, CAN Community Council; Hal Katz, Integral Care; Ara Merjianian; Edna Parra, CapMetro

**CAN staff in attendance:** Raul Alvarez, Carlos A Soto, Jelina Tunstill

**Call to order and Introduction:** Austin City Council member Vanessa Fuentes called the meeting to order at 1:11 pm. New members introduced themselves.

**Minutes:** The 02/10/2023 CAN Board minutes were approved, after a motion submitted by Liz Johnson, which was seconded by Suchi Gururaj. The minutes were approved unanimously.

**Executive Director's Report:** The CAN Butler Awards were celebrated last month at Brooke Elementary. Raul announced the award winners and shared a few thoughts about the event. Raul reminded members of the 2023 work plan priorities. Mental health emerged as one of the priorities in response to increases in the mental health indicator on the Dashboard, which most recent data estimates at 32%. Work focused on mental health includes the Mental Health First Aid training initiative, the Language Access & Mental Health project, and the work being undertaken by the CAN Community Council around mental health. Raul mentioned that in March, CAN had officially released a series of 6 Community Resource Guides outlining useful information and resources about the following: know your rights, managing your money, navigating the education system, staying safe in Austin, and health.

**Community Council Draft Mental Health Report Presentation:** The report is titled "Everybody Has a Role". Recent increases in the rate of adults reporting poor mental health have brought attention to the growing mental health crisis and increased the need to understand and act on mental health issues locally and nationwide. It is especially important because the poor mental health rate in Travis County is higher than in the MSA or Texas as a whole. There are also demographic changes, with Black Travis County adults reporting the highest rate of poor mental health in 2021 (36%). In previous years (2017, 2019, and 2020) Hispanics reported the highest rate of poor mental health. Women have reported higher rates of poor mental health than men in 4 out of the previous 5 years. From 2019 to 2021, the rate of poor mental health has increased faster for unemployed adults in Travis County than for employed adults. The group with the greatest increase in the rate of adults reporting poor mental health is the group with ages between 18 and 29 years, going from 33% in 2020 to 56% in 2021. Travis County adults who are High School graduates but have not attended college also saw a sharp increase in their reported poor mental health rate. Almost half the LGB population reported poor mental health, compared to 29% of the straight population. An estimated 52% of Travis County adults living with a disability also reported poor mental health, compared to 27% of non-disabled people.

The Community Council report focuses a lot of attention on "peer support" because this approach can help build connections with individuals and help them navigate the road of recovery. Although this is an effective model, certain barriers complicate the process of becoming a peer support specialist. There are not enough programs available, especially in languages other than English. Peer Support is also a proven, effective service with measurable returns on investment. The report also provides recommendations, including: ensure mental health insurance benefits for employees are adequate; provide funding or provide supports for peer specialist; expand

peer support programs in Spanish (and other languages); utilize existing trusted systems like community health workers; initiate a collaboration to train and/or recruit more mental health professionals to Travis County; launch a campaign to train service providers and community members to respond to mental health episodes; use data sources... to direct mental health services to high need populations; and establish a clearinghouse of information about local mental health needs.

**Discussion & Possible Action, Mental Health First Aid Initiative Strategy:** CAN Board members and their respective organizations are asked to assess their internal training potential and make a pledge to train 1000 staff of CAN member organizations between now and 2024. The group discussed whether 1,000 staff being trained within a year was feasible. We can facilitate a process of securing pledges from each member organization regarding the number of staff they could commit to train. If it looks like costs is a barrier, there may be a need to identify funding so that trainings can be provided at no cost at significantly lower cost. It was generally agreed that this training challenge was worth pursuing. It was noted education partners may qualify for subsidies that would eliminate training costs for those partners. There is also a bill that recently passed the house (HB 2059) that expands who could qualify for state subsidies for this training. This conversation can be continued next month.

**Adjournment:** Vanessa Fuentes adjourned the meeting at 2:03 pm.