



NHAHA Quarterly Meeting

December 9, 2021; 9:30am – 11:30am

Meeting Summary

Supporting Mental Health and Wellbeing in Older Adults

Presenters: Bernie Seifert, NAMI NH, Dartmouth-Hitchcock Aging Resource Center; Anne Marie Olsen-Hayward, Referral, Education, Assistance and Prevention (REAP) Program (slides 7 – 49).

Bernie provided context for the presentation by outlining environmental factors (i.e., pandemic, media, political context, etc.) that play a role in older adults' levels of isolation, anxiety, and depression. Ageism has been rampant during the pandemic as Covid-19 has disproportionately affected older adults, therefore, addressing the stigma of aging by changing how we view the narrative is important work. [NAMI NH](#) helps support individual's mental health by providing educational sessions and support groups across the lifespan, but also has special programming geared for older adults. NAMI NH engages in advocacy and has a speaker's bureau of individuals who have lived experience with mental illness that tell their story to address stigma and educate the public, legislators, and others. Bernie also discussed the [Dartmouth Centers for Health and Aging](#), which offer classes, workshops, consultations, and support groups for older adults. The Center moved to a completely virtual format in March of 2020 and since has seen an increase in participation and increased geographic reach. The Center plans to continue virtual programming as well as identify populations that are not being served through virtual spaces and re-establishing in-person programming.

Anne Marie discussed how Covid has exacerbated levels of loneliness for older adults. Loneliness leads to poor physical and mental health outcomes and is the equivalent of smoking 15 cigarettes a day. [Referral, Education, Assistance, Program \(REAP\)](#) serves a lot of older adults that identify as lonely. REAP is available to all older adults and their caregivers and provide counseling and educational services for older adults to better understand and deal with life changes. Anne Marie discussed the needs to reduce social isolation and loneliness such as accessible mental health services, access to technology, and providing caregiver support.

NHAHA Transportation Strategic Priority Area Workgroup Update

Presenter: Jeff Donald, Alliance for Community Transportation (slide 35).

First, Jeff discussed that the strategic workgroup has been focused on developing a statewide needs assessment for transportation options. New Hampshire does not spend a lot of money on transit and the group is hoping to put together a study that looks at how a lack of transit options affect older adults. Currently the group is identifying data sources, collaborators, and components of the assessment. Second, the group has been supporting volunteer driver programs (VDPs). VDPs allow individuals to provide rides in their own vehicles in areas that may not have many transit options available. The group started a quarterly peer to peer network which allows VDP coordinators to discuss best practices, new ideas, recruitment strategies, etc.

Recruitment has been a major issue for most of the VDPs. Therefore, a VDP Outreach Team was created to address this issue. The team secured some funding from DHHS through the Center on Aging and Community Living to implement a marketing campaign that would drive volunteers to VDPs. The funding will create a map of NH that lists the VDPs and will conduct a media campaign (i.e., videos, NHPR slots).

NHAHA Advocacy Strategic Priority Update

Presenters: Martha McLeod, New Futures (slide 36)

Martha discussed that NHAHA Advocacy has been working on remote access to the legislature. When the emergency order during the pandemic expired so did remote access. While House and Senate meetings will provide live stream, individuals will not be able to participate remotely. NHAHA Advocacy are sending around a petition that individuals can sign to demand remote access. Martha also announced that NHAHA Advocacy has introduced text as a new method of communication. If you would like to get information via text send an email to Martha McLeod (mmcleod@new-futures.org) to sign up. Martha also discussed that the advocacy team is working with providers to get the word out about vaccine safety and efficiency and drawing attention to at home testing/vaccination availability. Also, NHAHA Advocacy is monitoring American Rescue Plan Act money to ensure that funding is directed towards home-based services such as increased transportation, addressing direct care workforce shortage, investing in broadband, and providing alternatives for long-term care options. Lastly, Martha announced that the Choices for Independence (CFI) program has finished their listening sessions and hoping to see changes based on public comments. Further, there was supposed to be a legislative audit that focused on services of CFI, but the audit was pushed out due to the current lawsuit. NHAHA Advocacy team will be following this issue closely as CFI services are mandated, and an audit needs to be conducted.

Link to meeting recording:

https://media.unh.edu/media/NH+Alliance+for+Healthy+Aging+December+9%2C+2021+Quarterly+Meeting/1_majoccu0

NH Alliance for Healthy Aging 2022 Meeting Schedule:

Wednesday, March 9th, 2022

Thursday, June 9th, 2022

Wednesday, September 14th, 2022

Thursday, December 8th, 2022