

Mayor's Council on African American Elders

C/O – Aging and Disability Services, Seattle-King County
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September 16, 2022

Members Present – Dr. Benjamin Abe, Charlotte Antoine, Dr. Brenda Jackson, Claudette Thomas, Pamela Williams, Paula Williams. **Members Absent** – Sheila Mary, Paul Mitchell
Guests – George Dicks, Rita Howard, Kate Kiser, Lori Mina, Mary Pat O’Leary, Minyan Liu, Elizabeth Roldan, Sina Jackson, Akeyla Jimerson, Gillian Duncan, Hilary Cross, Sucdi Mohamed. **Guest Speaker** – George Dicks
HSD/ADS Staff – Mary Mitchell, ADS Interim Director, Dinah Stephens, Irene Stewart, Karen Winston

I. Older Black Adults and Mental Health

George Dicks, Geriatrics Mental Health Specialist Supervisor at Harborview Geriatric Psychiatry Department, discussed mental health and older Black adults. George was a former MCAAE chair during the Nickels administration and also served as a member of the ADS Advisory Council.

The Harborview Mental Health system includes three in-patient units and over 800 clients in outpatient services. There are a number of other mental health providers throughout Seattle and King County, all of whom provide geriatric services, including some that are culturally and linguistically specific, for example Asian Counseling and Referral Service, and SeaMar, etc. Mental health is a huge subject matter ranging from chronic diseases (e.g., bipolar, schizophrenia, and other personality disorders, etc.) to the behavioral changes associated with chronic disabilities (e.g., cognitive decline, Parkinson’s disease, stroke survivors, HIV, etc.).

George discussed the attitudes and stressors that influence the status of well-being among Black older adults and added that these attitudes are also reflected in all BIPOC communities, including rural communities. Some stressors affecting older Black adults include:

- Racism and coping with the recognition of racist groups and attitudes. This type of stress is experienced over a lifetime for older Black adults. Although Blacks are resilient, racism is a constant stressor.
- COVID – Fear and isolation; Dealing with change and re-integration back into the world after being isolated due to the pandemic.
- Managing chronic illnesses.
- Mistrust of the healthcare system due to past bad experiences.
- Dehydration
- Mismanagement of medications; mixing medications and cannabis.

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- Substance abuse and misuse of alcohol.
- Decline in mobility.
- Falls
- Changes in physical health and social roles as we age, and stigma towards older adults.
- Grief and loss → Both personal and collective (e.g., George Floyd, Brianna Taylor, etc.)
- Relationship changes with family and friends.
- Loneliness and anxiety.
- Feeling vulnerable to scams, abuse, and other violations.
- Afraid to ask for help
- Gentrification

George also discussed interventions for maintaining mental health.

- Connecting with faith community and prayer. Meaningfulness can stomp despair.
- Having a sense of purpose.
- Good quality sleep. A good night's sleep is critical for good mental health.
- We need to have strong relationships and to maintain those connections.
- Promoting health literacy.
- Maintain a sense of humor.
- Engage in life review and reminiscing opportunities. It's important to remember the things we've overcome—resilience!
- Monitor alcohol use, because as we age our bodies respond differently. Remember – alcohol and medications don't mix. And drinking alone is not good, especially for women.
- Engage in regular exercise and/or physical activity. Move, dance, and shake your booty!
- Maintain nutrition with lots of fruits and vegetables, reduce carbs.
- Set goals and have something to look forward to.
- The Program to Encourage Active, Rewarding Lives (PEARLS) educates older adults about what depression is (and is not) and helps them develop the skills they need for self-sufficiency and more active lives. The program takes place in six to eight sessions over the course of four to five months **in an older adult's home or a community-based setting**. For more information, visit the ADS website at <https://bit.ly/3VDELEh>.

II. ADS Updates

Mary Mitchell provided the following updates.

- Mary recently went through a competitive hiring process and is now the permanent ADS Director. Thank you to all who served on hiring panels and/or informed hiring process!
- ADS received confirmation from DSHS that they will include ongoing support for the AAA Case Management in their maintenance level budget, so there's a high likelihood that this ask will be included in the final budget. This will mean that advocates will not have to go back every year to the Legislature to ask for adjustments.
- Other advocacy priorities for 2023 legislative session are the ongoing increased funding for hospital care transitions and the Dementia Resource Catalyst program.

- Advisory Council won't meet in October, but members are encouraged to attend the October advocacy conferences. Please let Sariga know if you're interested.
- The mayor's budget will be released later this month. The City Council will deliberate and pass the final city budget in November around Thanksgiving.
- ADS is hiring for multiple positions, including Case Management Director. In efforts to bring caseload ratios to 75:1, ADS will be hiring additional counselors and support staff.

III. Seattle Age Friendly Updates

Age Friendly Seattle manager, Dinah Stephens, provided the following updates.

- Thank you to the AC storytellers who participated in the two Congressional roundtable events! The videos are posted on the Age-Friendly YouTube channel.
- Age-Friendly will be hosting a forum on older adults and housing on November 2.
- Age-Friendly will be supporting the relaunch of the Seattle Parks & Recreation Department's Sound Steps program that was popular before COVID. The kickoff event is scheduled for October 28.
- Age-Friendly Coffee Hour had its first hybrid event a few weeks ago and will do another one on arts on September 15. The meeting will be at the downtown Seattle Public Library
- Age-Friendly Gold Cards are now available online! We saw a 300% increase in registrations after we moved applications online.

IV. Next Meeting – The next meeting is scheduled for Friday, October 21. The agenda will include a presentation about the new Heart'n Soul Hospice.

The meeting adjourned at 3:35 p.m.