

# Session 1

11:00 - 12:10 PM

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## **A** Older Adults Suicide Trends and Contributing Factors and Prevention Efforts

*Timothy Santoni, MA & Stefani O'Dea, MA*

The workshop will review Maryland suicide deaths, suicide related emergency room visits, Public Behavioral Health Service utilization trends, and obstacles older adults face in obtaining behavioral health services. This workshop will also describe Maryland Behavioral Health Administration's strategies to improve access to services and supports for aging Marylanders with behavioral health conditions

## **B** How Faith Communities Can Welcome and Support Those Who Have Attempted Suicide

*Shannon Heath Parkin, M.S. - Silver Spring United Methodist Church and NAMI  
Montgomery County, MD*

*Rev. C. Michele Johns, MA, MSW, LGSW - Reverend, Silver Spring United Methodist Church*

Shannon Parkin experienced 30 years of depression prior to jumping in front of a Metro train in 2015 after which portions of both of her feet had to be amputated. Shannon's home place of worship, Silver Spring United Methodist Church (SSUMC), supported Shannon throughout her recovery as she spent six months in the hospital and five years in assisted living facilities. Rev. Michele Johns and Shannon will describe how the pastors and members of SSUMC helped Shannon throughout her recovery as her depression has been in full remission since 2018 and she has lived in her own independent apartment since October of 2020. Shannon and Rev. Michele will describe how faith communities might enable those with mental health challenges, including those who have attempted suicide to find new meaning and joy in their lives. While Shannon and Rev. Michele come from a Christian background, this workshop is not Christo-centric and both presenters embrace and honor the many ways we connect to the sacred, including those with no particular religious or faith connection.

## **C** Breaking Barriers Understanding Racial Equity Work within Suicide Prevention

*Pata Suyemoto, PhD - Massachusetts Coalition for Suicide Prevention Alliance for Equity Co-chair, Massachusetts Coalition for Suicide Prevention*

*Jennifer Kelliher - Managing Director, Massachusetts Coalition for Suicide Prevention*

In this workshop we will address confronting resistance, allyship, and leveraging privilege as foundational topics. The workshop will also address privilege and consider ways to leverage privilege to achieve equity within our organizations and communities. This workshop will engage participants in difficult conversations about social justice and racial equity. Additionally, this workshop will emphasize the importance of doing this work on individual/interpersonal, cultural, organizational, and systemic levels. This workshop will enable participants to return to their agencies and organizations with greater awareness of how to be an ally, how to leverage privilege, and how to counter resistance.

# Session 2

2:30- 3:20 PM

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## **A** Shattering the Marginalization of the Impacted Family & Friends Movement & Why That Matters for Mental Health & Suicidology

*Tracey Mederios - Founder - A Voice at the Table*

*Annmarie Matulis - Facilitator - A Voice at the Table*

So how can we shatter the barriers of fear, fill the resource gaps and promote mental wellness and healthy soulcare for those traumatized and emotionally impacted by a loved one's suicidal crisis? The purpose of this workshop is to guide attendees through the documented process that has helped begin to tear down the isolating resistance within suicidology & mental health related to families emotionally impacted & traumatized by a loved one's suicidal experiences. We will demonstrate that using specific approaches to help the impacted family members step away from fear-driven behavior and find their own emotional balance as they improve their quality-of-life, that they are in the best position to then guide their loved ones who have been or still are in suicidal crisis to also improve their coping skills and resilience. The quality of all lives improves. Improved family connection is a powerful protective factor. The workshop will address and recognize that while some progress has been made, the field of suicidology has a long way to go in welcoming impacted family to all tables within suicidology and thereby benefitting from the wealth of lived experience they can offer to the field.

## **B** In the eye of the storm? What can mental health service utilization patterns tell us about the possible long-term impacts of COVID-19

*Alison Athey, PhD - Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health*

This research presentation will use data from Marylanders who participated in the Understanding America Study. It will describe participants' mental health service utilization during the COVID-19 pandemic. Demographic and clinical correlates of mental health utilization and barriers to care will be presented. Longitudinal trends associated with access and barriers to care will be presented. This research will shed light on how access to mental health treatment during the COVID-19 pandemic may modulate the long-term impact of the health emergency on certain groups and how systematic racism may result in disproportionate morbidity and mortality in marginalized groups.

## **C** Understanding and Treating Chronic Suicidal Ideation

*Stacey Freedenthal, PhD, LCSW - Associate Professor, University of Denver Graduate School of Social Work; Psychotherapist and Consultant, Private Practice*

Suicide prevention texts and training materials typically address suicidal ideation as an acute crisis. For some people, however, suicidal thoughts persist or recur for many months or years, even when there is no crisis. This presentation will define chronic suicidal ideation, describe common characteristics of people whose suicidal thoughts become chronic, examine the functions and risks of long-lasting suicidal thoughts, and discuss treatment approaches.

# Session 3

3:55 - 5:05 PM

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## **A Reducing Stigma: Suicide Risk Assessment and Safety Planning in Schools**

*Natalya Bogopolskaya, PsyD - School Psychologist, Los Angeles Unified School District*  
*Kendrea Hart, PhD - Mzima Consulting LLC*

This session will focus on reviewing risk factors across demographics and questions to ask when conducting a suicide risk assessment as a clinician or a screening as non-clinician (such as a guardian or teacher) prior to referral. Participants will also learn how to identify possible universal and individualized protective factors to help create a safety plan while also considering the student's age, cognitive functioning, and family's cultural norms. Focus will also be given to collaboration between schools and families as well as outside-of-school medical staff.

## **B How Predominantly White and White-controlled Local and National Suicide Prevention Organizations Must Go Beyond Surface-Level Racial Equity**

*Kimya Nuru Dennis, PhD - Activist, Sociologist, Criminologist, Educator, Researcher – 365 Diversity*

It is common for predominantly white and white controlled suicide prevention organizations to claim race objectivity and race neutrality in how suicide is defined and how suicidal thoughts and suicidal actions can be reduced. One racial example of the need to challenge and reshape this foundation is that suicide and suicidal self-harm have long been considered “mostly white people” such that white people are the primary experts for the experiences of everyone (See: <https://theconversation.com/suicide-isnt-just-a-white-people-thing-77367>). This is common in the general population and in suicide prevention organizations, mental health organizations and facilities, and general health organizations and facilities.

## **C Addressing Maryland's High Rate of Undetermined (Intent Injury) Deaths: Problems and Opportunities**

*Ian RH Rockett, MA, PhD, MPH - Professor Emeritus of Epidemiology and Adjunct Professor of Epidemiology, West Virginia University and the University of Rochester Medical Center*

This presentation begins by considering suicide undercounting as an impediment to effective prevention and treatment within the context of Maryland's high rate of undetermined (injury intent) death. Suicides by opioids and/or other drug self-intoxication cases are the most problematic for the medical examiner (s) to ascertain/detect, since they involve a 'less active' injury mechanism that demands substantial corroborative evidence. Self-injury mortality (SIM) is a nascent concept, which circumvents reliance on registered or known suicides as the sole representative of fatal self-injury by accommodating both misclassified drug suicides and 'nonsuicidal' drug deaths that reflect patterned self-harm behaviors. The presentation concludes by addressing Maryland's high undetermined death rate, especially among drug cases, as an opportunity to evaluate SIM in order to advance mental health in particular, and public health more generally.