



South Carolina Institute of
Medicine & Public Health

TASKFORCE MEETING NOTES:

Social Isolation in Older Adults

These meeting notes are from the Social Isolation in Older Adults Taskforce Meeting.

January 18, 2023

10:00 A.M. TO 12:00 P.M

[ZOOM Recording](#) Passcode: dXH0cg#7

Meeting Attendees

Sara Barber, MA

Elizabeth Biggers Bernat, MHA

Andrew Boozer

Kara Bopp, PhD

Robert Breen, MD

Jennifer Brewton, LMSW

Megan Byers, LMSW

Tracey Coleman, AGPCNP-BC, CHFNP

Christopher Cooper, MD, MPH

Cynthia Corbett, PhD, RN, FAAN

Amy Davis, MSN, RN

Emanuel Flemming Sr., BAPSY, CF

Charmaine Fuller Cooper, MPH

Rowan Goodrich, MS, RD, LD

Marisette Hasan, RN, BSN

Hillary Johnson

Nancy Kennedy, MMC

Joe Kunkel

Jean Neils-Strunjas

Lee Patterson, LMSW

Christine Phillips, PhD, MSS

Lori Phillips, MPH

Lisa Ragland, MSW, CPM

Jessica Seel, MPH

Andrea Smith, MEd

Eleanor Stein, MSW

Alex Tovar

Lakesia Tucker, MSW Ed.D.

Julie Vidotto, Ed.D.

Janise Wright

MaryGail Douglas

Davia Smith

Kathy Mayfield-Smith

A'netra Hardy

Dori Tempio



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Notes

Agenda item: Mental Health and Social Isolation

Presenter: Jessica Barnes, MS; Tatiana M. Davidson, PhD & Mara Steedley Allport, BA

Discussion:

Presentation 1: Jessica Barnes, Program Manager, DMH

- South Carolina Online Mental Health Screening Tool
 - hope.connectsyou.org
 - Data is real time data
- Covered mental health risk factors associated with social isolation beyond COVID-19
- Introduced re-socializing and its potential positive impacts on reversing feelings of depression and anxiety in older adults
- Raw data from DHEC shows that in some older adult age groups, suicide rates and mental health trauma are both rising

Presentation 2: Tatiana Davidson, Program Director and Mara Steedley Allport, Trainer, Elder Abuse and Prevention Program at the Medical University of South Carolina

- Discussed the mental health trauma present after elder abuse
- Identified the importance of screening and referring victims to services appropriately
- SC SafeSeniors is responsible for specific training surrounding screening and referring elders in South Carolina
 - Contact elderabusehelp@musc.edu for information
- SC SafeSeniors utilized innovative programs to promote socialization and connection
 - Discussion groups
 - Elder Abuse Prevention Talks
 - "Power of Flowers" class
 - "Crafting a Community" class
 - Programs and classes help SC SafeSeniors collect data to tailor programs to the needs of their clients

Agenda item: Alzheimer's/Dementia and Social Isolation

Presenter(s): Kaileigh Byrne, PhD, Assistant Professor, Clemson University

Discussion:

- Discussed the connection between loneliness, social isolation and cognitive decline and dementia
- Defined social isolation as a modifiable risk factor



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- Identified minority groups and older adults as populations with higher risk of cognitive decline, dementia, social isolation and loneliness
 - Social and structural barriers contribute to this statistic
 - Less resources
 - Lower access to good healthcare / screenings

Agenda item: Substance Use Disorder (SUD) and Social Isolation

Presenter(s): Michael "Mike" McClain, MA, LAC, LPC, CAC II, Director Local Provider Relations, The Phoenix Center

- Introduction to the Phoenix Center
 - Serves as the Greenville county agency for DAODAS
- Identified alcohol as the number one drug used by older adults who seek treatment at the Phoenix Center
- Explained benefits of vicarious learning and social support, highlighting the positives of group treatments and settings
- Explained that risks for social isolation are also risks for SUD
 - Loss of family/friends, loss of purpose
- Noted that SUD can be dismissed as a sign of aging, which inhibits patients from receiving help in instances where they cannot help themselves

Agenda item: Small Group Discussion

- Broke out into 3 breakout rooms
- Discussion questions regarding meeting topics:
 - What is your biggest takeaway from the content presented?
 - How can a broad systems-level approach reduce the impacts of the topics covered today?
 - What are the barriers that may hinder any progress?
- Discussion questions regarding current recommendations:
 - What is your initial reaction to these themes?
 - What is missing?
 - What additional information do you need to feel prepared to develop recommendations?

Conclusions:

- Social isolation can put older adults at risk of multiple conditions, including poorer mental health, Alzheimer's, Dementia and risky behavioral health
- Research shows that appropriate screening allows for quicker and more effective interventions amongst the older population



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- Socialization is the priority to preventing social isolation in the older adult population
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Additional Resources:

- Taskforce Meeting 3 Evaluation Survey
 - <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/SITF18Jan>
- Social Isolation Taskforce Recommendation Form
 - <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/F6TTKVS>