

# Older Adult Behavioral Health Collaborative

## July 2022



Cassie Cramer, LICSW  
cassiecramer@mamh.org

# Agenda



- Background
- Elder Mental Health Outreach Teams (EMHOT)
- Certified Older Adult Peer Specialists
- Older Adult Behavioral Health Network

# Background



- Research suggests that most older adults experience positive mental health and increased resilience, wisdom
- Despite being at greatest risk of serious illness, older adults reported lower rates of pandemic-related anxiety than other age groups.
- However, while 1 in 4 older adults experience mental health conditions, less than 33% receive treatment, the lowest rate of any age group.



# Barriers to Treatment



- Lack of transportation
- Cost of co-pays
- Co-occurring cognitive conditions
- Physical impairment, difficulty leaving home
- Isolation
- Ageism among providers
- Higher rates of stigma around mental health among older adults

# Untreated behavioral health conditions among older adults are associated with:



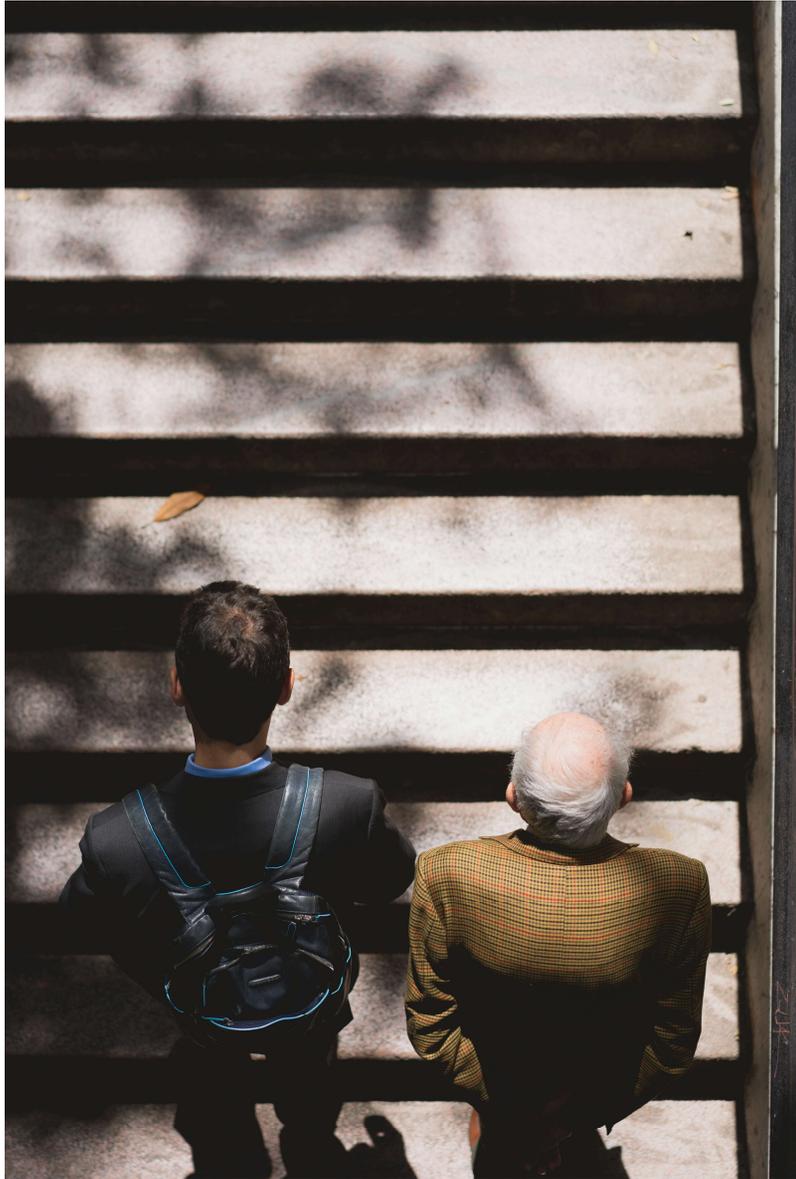
- Higher rates of ER use, hospitalization and nursing home admission
- Development of preventable health complications/higher rates of disability
- Isolation
- Caregiver stress
- Risk of suicide

A blurred photograph of a hospital hallway. In the foreground, a person is seated in a wheelchair, facing away from the camera. The hallway is brightly lit, with doors on the right and a large potted plant on the left. In the distance, other people are visible, some also in wheelchairs, moving through the corridor.

# COVID and LTC

- According to data collected from the COVID tracking project, as of March, 2021, **nearly one in 10 nursing home residents in the US died of COVID.**
- While residents of nursing homes and other LTC settings account for 1% of the population, by March 2021 they accounted for 34% of COVID deaths.
- State and national data show higher percentages of fatalities in nursing homes where the majority of residents were non-white.

# Defining Ageism



- Both younger and older adults were impacted by pandemic-related ageism
- Negative attitude towards aging is associated with depression, anxiety, poorer health outcomes

# Elder Mental Health Outreach Teams



- 9 regional Elder Mental Health Outreach Teams, two new EMHOTS in Lowell and Dudley were launched in December of 2021.
- EMHOTS cover 101 communities in Massachusetts, and are based in Amesbury, Bellingham, Boston, Dudley, Greenfield, Lowell, New Bedford, Pittsfield and Somerville/Cambridge.
- Core services include:
  - Short term counseling
  - Referral
  - Benefit applications
  - Resource Management (food, furniture, etc.)
  - Family/Provider Collaboration
  - Discharge planning
  - De-cluttering

# Certified Older Adult Peer Specialists



- 70 COAPS trained in May/June
- Currently COAPS work at Kiva, Northeast Recovery Learning Community
- Billable through Medicaid (FEW)
- Potential for increased opportunities through Behavioral Health Roadmap

# Older Adult Behavioral Health Network



Older Adult Behavioral Health Network (OABHN) was founded on the work of the MA Aging and Mental Health Coalition, a group of advocates dedicated to developing a statewide network of older adult behavioral health support. OABHN formed in July with a generous grant from the Tufts Foundation.

OABHN hosts the monthly Older Adult Behavioral Health Collaborative meeting, which includes members from DPH, EOEA, DMH as well as community agencies stakeholders and advocates including: Mass Homecare, BU CADER, MCOA, Simmons SSW, BMC Elders Living at Home, NE Independent Living Center and more

- **Second Friday of the month, 930-11**
- **Upcoming: Certified Older Adult Peer Specialists, Elder Mental Health Outreach Teams, AARP- Social Isolation**

# OABHN Workgroups



- Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
- Training
- Policy/Advocacy
- Communications

# Diversity Equity and Inclusion



- Promote and support a culturally responsive older adult behavioral health workforce;
- Ensure diversity of perspectives and voices in priorities and activities of OABHN; and
- Better understand and communicate the impact of race, ethnicity and culture on older adult behavioral health.

# Training



Provide cross-training and networking for providers in the behavioral health and older adult service systems.

Previous: Housing Stabilization/Reasonable Accommodation, Increasing Behavioral Health and Aging Service Partnerships, Reframing Aging

Upcoming: Introduction to Mindful Aging, Supporting Diverse Aging Populations, Aging, Disability and Intersectionality

Your ideas!

# The Time is Now- Post-Pandemic Aging and Disability Advocacy



Dignity Alliance Massachusetts- <https://dignityalliancema.org/>

Nursing Home advocacy

<https://thegreenhouseproject.org/>

<https://www.pioneernetwork.net/>

Community First

<https://acl.gov/programs>

<https://www.usaging.org/>

<https://ncil.org/>

Supporting diverse Aging populations

<https://www.diverseelders.org>

<https://www.sageusa.org/>