



Mental Health Association in Michigan

LETTER FROM LANSING

A monthly public policy newsletter from the
Mental Health Association in Michigan (MHAM)

Welcome to the June 2020 edition of MHAM's monthly newsletter that provides you with public policy updates and other information that impacts the behavioral health care of you and those you love. This edition of Letter from Lansing is being provided in honor of all of those with brain disorders who continue to move forward with their lives despite their struggles.

"Turn your wounds into wisdom." Oprah Winfrey

A Note from the President & CEO

July is a few days away and the anniversary of the birth of our nation falls on the fourth of the month. As Americans, we take pride in our democratic government and that the "voice of the People" is honored. This is one of the foundational values upon which this country has been built. At the same time, however, this value has not always been fully realized and the events of the past five weeks have brought forth concerns about the lack of equity in our country as we confront racism at the national, state and local level. The Mental Health Association in Michigan considers racism to be detrimental to the individual and collective mental health and well-being of all persons of color. The time is now for those systems that are inhabited by racism and discrimination to be reformed and MHAM is committed to working toward that end.

Paul Gionfriddo, President and CEO of [Mental Health America](#), spoke about the cross section of racism and mental health in this way in an excerpt from a statement he posted on the Mental Health America web site:

Ending Racism is a Mental Health Imperative

Black lives matter.

We should not have to say that. But we must, because our nation has finally come to realize that racism has cost us too many lives for too long a time.

Why would Mental Health America (MHA) need to state something that should be obvious? Because racism is a mental health issue. It undergirds the trauma so many people have experienced from sources too numerous to mention. And trauma paints a direct line to mental illnesses, all of which we need to take seriously.

What we have witnessed with greater frequency these past couple of weeks is something that has undermined our society for decades. Our police have too often not protected us from trauma - but imposed it on us.

We must change the way we think about public safety. Part of this is changing the role of the police.

I have argued that our police should not be the ones responding to mental health emergencies. Handcuffs should not be the tools used to escort children from their schools. Squad cars should not be the vehicles that deliver people with medical crises to emergency care.

You might say, therefore, that I support defunding the police. But that wouldn't be quite right.

Yesterday, Rep. James Clyburn, an icon of the civil rights movement, said of efforts to defund the police, "if you have got to explain the soundbite, you're losing the whole issue." He went on to say that if you support reforming or reimagining the police, you should say so directly. We need to listen to him today in ways we have failed to do for the half century he has been involved in the civil rights movement.

So, I would say in response to him that I support reimagining the role of the police.

I want to end their involvement in the mental health space. Period. Now and forever. For too long we have been asking police officers to be social workers and mental health technicians, roles they did not seek and for which they are not adequately trained.

And I want to change the institutions they control, too.

To read this full article, please [CLICK HERE](#).

Having access to mental health care is critical right now. It is important that you continue to pay attention to your mental health during the coronavirus crisis. It is normal to feel afraid and anxious, especially when faced with a situation that has many "unknowns". If you find yourself feeling overwhelmed by symptoms of anxiety, depression, or hopelessness, please reach out for help. **If you** are experiencing emotional distress in the context of the COVID-19 crisis, **get help from:**

Michigan Stay Well Counseling via the COVID-19 Hotline

Call 1-888-535-6136

Press "8" to talk to a Michigan Stay Well counselor.

Counselors available 24/7 - confidential and free

OR

National Disaster Distress Helpline

Call: 1-800-985-5950

Text the keyword TALKWITHUS to 66746

Available 24/7



Your Voice is Needed!

You can and should make your views on protecting mental health budget items known to your State Representative and State Senator in Lansing. Constituent views – and your personal and family stories – are extremely valuable and influential for the Representatives and Senators. Please call or write (letter or e-mail). For more information on how to locate the contact

information for your State Senator or State Representative in Lansing, here is a link to the legislature web sites:

To find your Senator: <https://senate.michigan.gov/>

To find your Representative: <https://www.house.mi.gov/>

It is also important to contact the chairpersons of the Appropriations Subcommittees that make recommendations to the legislature about how to allocation dollars for programs and services.

Senate Committee on Community Health/Human Services Appropriations Subcommittee Chair is Senator Peter MacGregor, R. He can be reached via phone call at: 517-373-0797 or toll free at: (855) 347-8028. Or via email at: SenPMacGregor@senate.michigan.gov
Please include name, address, and phone number.

House Subcommittee on Health and Human Services Appropriations Chair is Representative Mary Whiteford, R. She can be reached via phone call at: 517-373-0836 or via email at MaryWhiteford@house.mi.gov

Announcements

HERE'S WHAT'S HAPPENING!

Congratulations to the Incoming MHAM Board of Directors

On June 11, 2020, at the Annual Membership Meeting of the Association, the following slate of board members was duly elected along with the new officers whose term begins on July 1, 2020:

Arlene Gorelick, Chairperson
Ben Robinson, Vice Chairperson
Oliver Cameron, MD, Treasurer Pro Tem
Dawn Goldstein, RN, PhD
David Gruber, Attorney, Secretary Pro Tem
Nick Ciaramitaro, Attorney
Mark Creekmore, PhD, MSW
Joe Haveman
Linda Hryhorczuk, MD
David Kallman, Attorney
Margaret Keeler, MS, NP
Malkia Newman
Elizabeth Pratt

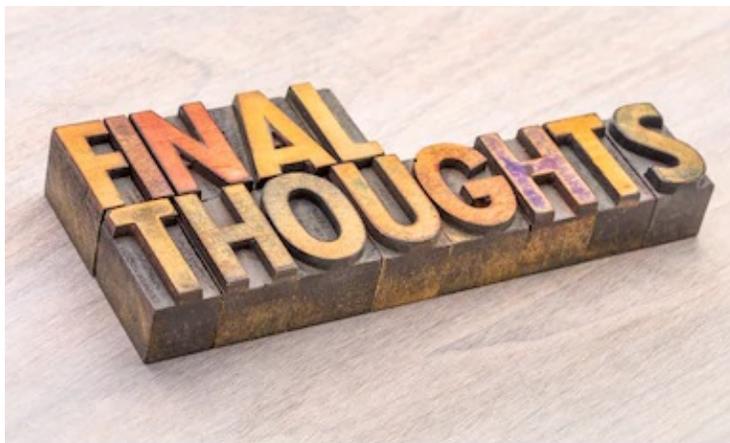
Sticking it to Mental Illness

For every sticker [Mitten On My Mind](https://mittenonmymind.com/collections/stickers) sells, MHAM gets \$1. Join us as we continue to raise mental health awareness and continue to advocate for those with a mental illness and their loved ones! <https://mittenonmymind.com/collections/stickers>

[CLICK HERE](#) for a video highlight.

FINAL THOUGHTS

It has been an interesting 2020 and we can be certain that the remaining six months, full of uncertainty, will be just as intriguing. We do not know what the future may bring to us and to our world, but we can take the lessons learned from multiple collective and individual traumas that have occurred due to the economic,



emotional, spiritual, and physical toll that the pandemic has wrought upon us and we can do, as suggested by Oprah Winfrey, "Turn your (our) wounds into wisdom." As we look forward to what can be as opposed to "what is", there is opportunity for us to reform the systems that have prevented our society from moving to one that is fair and just for all persons.

Reform and rethinking and reconsidering are the operative words moving forward but there must also be action. As I write these words, I am thinking about the current behavioral health system in Michigan and the reforms that are needed that have been highlighted and discussed for years. Despite multiple reports and commissions about mental health that have been written about Michigan's mental health system for the past over twenty years, little has been done to improve outcomes for our individuals who have psychiatric conditions. As was pointed out by Paul Gionfriddo in his statement about racism and mental health, many of our brothers and sisters who struggle under the burden of brain disorders are inappropriately locked away in prisons and jails.

On January 1 of this year, I became the leader of this organization that has a rich history. The Association has been in existence since November of 1936 when it came together to address the needs of individuals with mental illness in the state of Michigan. It was founded as part of a larger national organization, the Mental Health Association, that was inspired by the story of Clifford W. Beers, a man who spent time in a state psychiatric facility at the turn of the 20th century, and wrote a book about his experiences. That book is called, "A Mind That Found Itself." For more information, please click on this link: <https://www.mhanational.org/our-history> Mr. Beers was a Wall Street broker who suffered with bipolar disorder and was hospitalized multiple times. His book spawned a movement to improve treatment for individuals with psychiatric disorders.

Historically speaking, the "asylums" as they were called in the late 1800's to early 1900's were built around what was known as the Kirkbride Plan that was developed by a doctor named Thomas Story Kirkbride. Dr. Kirkbride founded the Association of Medical Superintendents of American Institutions for the Insane, a precursor to the American Psychiatric Association. Dr. Kirkbride advocated for "moral" treatment of individuals with psychiatric conditions that meant treating these folks in a way that was supportive. However, there was much abuse and neglect in those "asylums" and over the years they became more and more overcrowded. In 1948, a film known as "the Snake Pit" was released by Hollywood and it received raving reviews. It was based on a novel of the same name by Mary Jane Ward, who later revealed that she had been the person at an Indiana State Psychiatric Hospital for treatment. It received ten Academy Award nominations including one for Best Picture for its depiction of the way that individuals in state psychiatric hospitals were treated. The film is credited with moving the United States in the direction of institutional reform. Although we do not have institutions, our constituents often face the inability to access quality care. The homeless population is about 75% of individuals with a mental illness and a substance use disorder and many individuals with addictions and brain disorders end up in prisons or in jails. We all know that none of these current scenarios are healthy and do not lend themselves to aiding a person on the road to recovery. Our work as an Association is as critical as it was in 1936

when it began.

And now, almost 84 years later, the work that the Association is engaged in has certainly morphed and changed over the years, but there is much to be done as it pertains to the ways in which individuals with psychiatric conditions are either provided or denied treatment for their conditions. Interesting to me is that the quote, "the more things change, the more they stay the same" appears to be the bearer of much truth. Although we have come a long way in our understanding of brain disorders and although we have some treatments that work for some individuals, there remains a stark lack of equity for our people in many ways. I appreciate that there has been a movement to deinstitutionalize our people, but I am not sure that we can be proud of the lack of appropriate services that leads many to jail, prisons, homelessness or to death.

Changes are afoot, too, as the Mental Health Association in Michigan looks to the future. MHAM is also in the process of refocusing its work in a variety of areas, including public policy. Being primarily an organization that advocates for individuals with psychiatric conditions in Michigan, MHAM's mission will not change.

On June 26, 2020, Dr. Mark Reinstein, long-time President and CEO of MHAM, resigned as the Association's Public Policy Consultant. Dr. Reinstein will be missed, but his work and his passion for advocating on behalf of those who often have no voice will live on within MHAM as it moves forward. In the meantime, Stephanie Johnson of KJL, will be taking up some of the public policy issues that have been important to the Association and to Dr. Reinstein.

As always, if you have questions or feedback, please reach out to me at mhuffmham@gmail.com

Take care of yourselves! Stay tuned...

Marianne Huff, LMSW
President & CEO

Letter from Lansing is published monthly by MHAM. The primary mode of distributing the newsletter is electronic mail, but we will postal-mail copies to persons lacking internet access. If you've come across this issue through a friend or colleague and wish to subscribe (there is no charge), kindly let us know. If at any point you wish to unsubscribe, simply contact mhamiweb@gmail.com.

The logo for "Mental Health Matters" features the words "MENTAL HEALTH" on the top line and "MATTERS" on the bottom line in a bold, white, sans-serif font. The text is set against a dark, textured background that resembles a close-up of a brick wall or a similar masonry surface.

Mental Health Association in Michigan
Marianne Huff, President & CEO | Oliver Cameron, M.D., Ph.D., Board Chair

NEW ADDRESS

1100 West Saginaw, Suite 1-B | Lansing, MI 48915
P: 517.898.3907 | F: 517.913.5941

Join Us On Our Socials!

