

Partners in Mental Health Initiative: Stakeholder Report 2024



Overview

The PArtners in Mental Health Steering Committee met on July 14-16, 2024 in Johns Creek, Georgia. The Steering Committee is composed of PA organization leaders and grassroots mental health champions, both Board Certified PAs and interprofessional partners. With returning and new participants, the meeting's purpose was to support the initiative's shared goal to effect systemic change that improves the nation's health by advancing the roles of PAs and strengthening partnerships to address issues impacting mental health and substance use disorders (SUD). The meeting served as a forum for highlighting activities; sharing opportunities for collaboration; and envisioning strategies and partnerships to reinforce all PA efforts to address mental health for patients and providers. The meeting intentionally adopted a mindset for exploring opportunities to elevate this work and increase the visibility of PA contributions to mental and behavioral health.

Activities, Likely Plans, and Lived Experiences

Collective impact is a social change strategy that suggests organizational partners and grassroots champions conduct mutually reinforcing activities through top-down and bottom-up action to support a common purpose. Participants shared accomplishments, plans, and lived experiences. The following are highlights from the perspectives shared:

- **AAPA/PA Foundation:** AAPA has pursued partnerships and research to advance mental health as a [national health priority](#). An agreement with HMP Global may facilitate a PA Psychiatry Boot Camp in partnership with APAP. The Partnership for Youth Mental Health has secured funding for implementation in Pennsylvania; additional funding may expand the program. A partnership with the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention is seeking funding for a suicide prevention fellowship program that leverages the Talk Saves Lives curriculum. In addition, funding for the Institute for Health Policy at Michigan State University will study recent mental and behavioral health service trends in primary care across provider types. Finally, AAPA shared a report that underscored the lack of parity in mental and behavioral health reimbursement.
- **APAP:** APAP noted new leadership and a desire to serve as a resource for what PAs can do in mental health. Plans for the PA Institute, a Psych Congress pre-conference workshop, were shared; and this effort may become the PA Psychiatry Boot Camp in collaboration with AAPA and HMP Global. Finally, the needs for preceptors and clinical sites were noted as were opportunities to build preceptor confidence and highlight the diversity of experiences during psychiatry rotations.
- **ARC-PA:** The *Standards* (5th ed, released in 2020) address required instruction in psychiatric and behavioral conditions, substance use disorders, counseling skills, and provider personal wellness as well as required supervised clinical practice experiences that enable students to meet learning outcomes for behavioral and mental health care. Discussion is underway as to how to assist PA programs at mid-cycle. In addition, feedback will be collected to inform the *Standards* 6th edition, which is anticipated in 2030. Finally, efforts to accredit postgraduate programs were noted, although there are not yet any mental health/behavioral health programs.
- **NCCPA:** Leveraging its data, NCCPA increases awareness of and amplifies the role of all Board Certified PAs to address mental health through its statistical reports; its posters and manuscripts; and its communications vehicles, including its newsletter, podcasts, etc. In addition, slight increases in psychiatry and behavioral science content will be included in PANCE in 2025. Finally, as requested, NCCPA continues to offer a Certificate of Added Qualifications (CAQ) in psychiatry, which has proportionally the greatest penetration on any CAQ.
- **nccPA Health Foundation:** The Health Foundation convenes and supports the Steering Committee via a collective impact model. In addition, the Health Foundation curates a [resource center](#); presents a CME slide deck; administers an [outreach grant](#); and raises awareness through PA spotlights, features and social media. Finally, the Health Foundation fosters outreach to the interprofessional mental health workforce through its participation at US Psych Congress and exploration of additional opportunities to elevate the PA role.
- **PAEA:** Partnership and advocacy drive efforts. Thirteen programs received five-year awards to support primary care/behavioral health rotations through the Primary Care Training and Enhancement – PA Rural Training in Behavioral Health program; and additional awards are possible in 2025. In addition, efforts are ongoing to support legislation that would provide a nonrefundable tax credit to preceptors in rural health profession shortage areas. PAEA addresses substance use

disorders (SUD) by collaborating with the American Academy of Addiction Psychiatry and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration and by serving on the Providers Clinical Support System Steering Committee. In addition, ongoing work strives to increase funding for SUD loan repayment programs. Finally, advocacy efforts seek to include PA graduates in the Mental Health Professionals Workforce Shortage Loan Repayment Act.

- **Champions:** *Board Certified PA Todd Allen* shared lived experiences from his work at a state mental hospital as well as his practice in outpatient and addiction medicine settings. He amplified his passion for and the importance of precepting PA students and shared strategies for how he demonstrates the breadth and depth of psychiatry. *Board Certified PA Jay Somers* practices full-time and owns his practice. He completed his term as AAPA's liaison to the American Psychiatric Association and noted ongoing challenges in the role and reception to his efforts; however, he also acknowledged new APA leadership. He noted his service on the Serious Mental Illness (SMI) Advisory Board had also concluded as funding had expired. He shared his ongoing interests in professional fulfillment and burnout; lifestyle medicine and quality of life; nutritional psychiatry; and artificial intelligence (AI) in medicine and psychiatry. *PA-Psychiatrist Team Peter Carmany and Terri Langford, MD*, highlighted their hospital-affiliated, integrated care model, noting recent challenges and resistance to their efforts. They noted an expansion of telehealth services, which may limit the new providers in their rural community. They amplified the role of institutional and individual stigma as well as the perception that patients are chronically mentally ill as sustained challenges. Finally, they noted continuing efforts to demystify practice in psychiatry by precepting students and amplified the relevance of counseling and therapy experiences to support PA practice in psychiatry.

The Steering Committee recognized partners' and champions' perspectives as essential to providing context that fosters the continued growth and evolution of this movement.

Psychiatric Times

Concordant with the intention to elevate this work and increase the visibility of PA contributions, the Steering Committee received a presentation from *Psychiatric Times*, an MJH Life Sciences publication. The presentation displayed how *Psychiatric Times* strives to educate and empower clinicians through their publication, website and social media presence, and events. They acknowledged a desire to seek synergies that would foster greater inclusion of PAs and outlined partnership opportunities.

Subsequently, the Steering Committee engaged in brainstorming exercises to explore how to maximize a potential relationship with *Psychiatric Times*. In the spirit of collective impact, the Steering Committee identified activities that may be explored should a partnership come to fruition. Identified activities include but are not limited to generating content on mental health topics, the intersection of mental health and other clinical topics, and the education and preparation of PAs for practice; to delivering key messages such as the business case for PAs and how PAs can drive revenue in psychiatric practices; to sharing data about the utilization, contribution, and impact of PAs; and to encouraging the inclusion of PAs on the *Psychiatric Times* editorial board.

The Steering Committee recognized a *Psychiatric Times* partnership as a potential force multiplier for the movement's efforts but acknowledged the need for due diligence to inform next steps. As the meeting convener, the nccPA Health Foundation agreed to conduct that effort and engage its Board of Directors in further consideration of a partnership. If a partnership is launched, the Health Foundation confirmed its commitment to engage the Steering Committee in continued brainstorming related to content development and other opportunities. Further, such opportunities will be vetted and prioritized to maximize resource capacity in support of the initiative's shared goals.

Supporting the Movement

The Steering Committee concluded by recognizing the evolution of this iterative movement. Participants suggested opportunities to document this work and noted renewed purpose to pursue opportunities that enhance educational approaches, strengthen the practice environment, and raise awareness of mental health. Moreover, participants noted a broadening of the movement's lens and opportunities to amplify PA voices among the interprofessional mental health workforce; to improve relationships with physicians and other clinicians; to enhance recognition and perceptions of PA contributions; and to explore partnerships with those who share these goals. Participants noted the value of the collective experience and amplified the criticality of this meeting to provide dedicated time and space that fosters the free flow of ideas, envisions the future, and encourages shared efforts. Participants acknowledged the nccPA Health Foundation's role in supporting this group as well as the sustained engagement of organizational partners and grassroots champions, which is integral to the movement's impact. To stay apprised of these efforts, share your contact information with the nccPA Health Foundation at ContactUs@nccPAHealthFoundation.net.

Participants

The nccPA Health Foundation thanks individuals for their participation at this meeting:

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Zeno W. St. Cyr, II, MPH, Steering Committee Chair

Retired, US Department of Health & Human Services
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Although unable to attend, the nccPA Health Foundation
acknowledges the contributions of steering committee
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*Zeno W. St. Cyr, II, serves concurrently on the nccPA Health
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