

Caucuses in MHS



Markman, Jesse D.
To: PUG MH ALL

Reply Reply All Forward ...

Wed 7/8/2020 12:19 AM

Hi all,

As we continue to work to consider how our environment needs to address racism and better promote diversity, equity, and inclusion, a best practice to consider is that of caucuses designed to provide a space for sharing for individuals with similar racial backgrounds. I will admit that when I had originally considered the idea, I felt uncomfortable suggesting, as a white person, what I perceived, at the time, to be segregation. Thinking more about this, however, I see more of what others have recommended, which is that this forum can provide an environment for sharing and discussion, which is not afforded by mixed groups. It can be challenging for people of color to feel a burden to educate others on how to be better, when at the same time being told or expected to be entirely open and unfiltered when they may or may not feel comfortable doing that. There is also something to be gained for allowing for a discussion of members of a dominant culture to consider how to better use their power and privilege to change the environment.

Caucuses of this type can serve a very important purpose, but it is important to remember them as an effort to create a type of environment as part of a larger effort to better understand and improve where we work and live. No one activity or effort would be sufficient or meet the needs of everyone. Different people need and will feel supported by different things given recent events. Specific caucuses of this type do not replace mixed groups or negate other efforts. They can be part of the picture for those whom would find them of use. As a diversity consultant I was talking to recently put it, "caucuses are a best practice, but not necessarily the best thing for each individual person."

To build this option, I have worked with members of the service line to support and moderate the first caucuses within Mental Health. The first caucuses will be virtual and held from 12:00pm to 1:00pm on Thursday, July 16th. The initial names for the caucuses will be descriptive and my hope is that if a caucus chooses to continue to meet in the future, that it become entirely self-governing and choose a name that best describes itself. The initial caucuses and moderators will be:

- Caucus for individuals who identify as African American or Black – Moderated by: Kelly Allred and Michelle Borowitz
- Caucus for individuals who identify as people of color – Moderated by: Mani Dahmi and Andrew Paves
- Caucus for individuals who identify as white – Moderated by: Tracy Simpson and Kyle Czeh

Participation in these caucuses is entirely elective and voluntary. If caucuses choose to meet in the future, I am very happy to be supportive of this, but will in no way dictate or mandate it. I also understand that it is not possible to find a time that works well for everyone, but my hope is that setting up virtual space will allow more people to be able to participate if they choose to do so.

As I indicated before, I hope that this can create a type of space that will allow for discussion and support that might be unavailable in other ways. I am happy to hear feedback about this and also encourage people to participate or not in a way that works best for them and what they need.

This effort is also a part of on-going efforts to better consider diversity, equity, and inclusion in our service. I hope to present more details around other efforts for this next year and beyond when we have our next All-Staff call on Friday, July 17th.

Warmly,

Jesse

Jesse Markman, MD, MBA
Associate Chief of Staff for Mental Health, VA Puget Sound
Associate Training Director, Acute Care Services
Assistant Professor, University of Washington Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences

MHS Caucus for individuals who identify as a person of color



Markman, Jesse D.

Required

Optional PUG MH ALL

Thursday, July 16, 2020 12:00 PM-1:00 PM Via Webex

✓ Accept ▼ ? Tentative ▼ ✕ Decline ▼ ⌚ Propose New Time ▼ ⋮

Mon 7/13/2020 11:22 AM

12 PM MHS Caucus for individuals who identify as a person of color
Via Webex
Markman, Jesse D.

MHS Caucus for individuals who identify as African Am
Via Webex
Markman, Jesse D.

MHS Caucus for individuals who identify as white
Via Webex
Markman, Jesse D.

people of color caucus
Skype Meeting
Dhami, Mani

Please see the call-in information for the caucus below.

If you are not able to make the caucus, but would like the moderators to be aware of your interest for any future meetings, please reach out to them directly:

Mani Dhami: Mani.Dhami@va.gov

Andrew Paves: Andrew.Paves@va.gov

— Do not delete or change any of the following text —

When it's time, join your Webex meeting here.

Meeting number (access code): 199 103 1318

Meeting password: khABcPz@533

[Join meeting](#)

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+14043971596,,1991031318## USA Toll Number

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Dial [1991031318@veteransaffairs.webex.com](tel:1991031318@veteransaffairs.webex.com)

MHS Caucus for individuals who identify as African American or Black



Markman, Jesse D.

Required

Optional PUG MHALL

🕒 Thursday, July 16, 2020 12:00 PM-1:00 PM 📍 Via Webex

✓ Accept ▾ ? Tentative ▾ ✕ Decline ▾ ⌚ Propose New Time ▾ ⋮

Mon 7/13/2020 11:22 AM

12 PM	MHS Caucus for individuals who identify as African Am Via Webex Markman, Jesse D.	MHS Caucus for individuals who identify as a person of Via Webex Markman, Jesse D.	MHS Caucus for individuals who identify as white Via Webex Markman, Jesse D.	people of color caucus Skype Meeting Dhami, Mani
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Please see the call-in information for the caucus below.

If you are not able to make the caucus, but would like the moderators to be aware of your interest for any future meetings, please reach out to them directly:

Kelly Allred: Kelly.Allred@va.gov

Michelle Borowitz: Michelle.Borowitz2@va.gov

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MHS Caucus for individuals who identify as white



Markman, Jesse D.

Required

Optional PUG MH ALL: [REDACTED]

✓ Accept v ? Tentative v ✕ Decline v ⌚ Propose New Time v

Mon 7/13/2020 4



White Privilege - Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack - Peggy McIntosh.pdf
97 KB

⌚ Thursday, July 15, 2020 12:00 PM-1:00 PM Ⓧ Via Webex

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MHS Caucus for individuals who identify as white
Via Webex
Markman, Jesse D.

MHS Caucus for individuals who identify as a person of
Via Webex
Markman, Jesse D.

MHS Caucus for individuals who identify as African Am
Via Webex
Markman, Jesse D.

people of color caucus
Slype Meeting
Dhani, Mani

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Please see the call-in information for the caucus below.

The moderators of this caucus have asked participants to read the attached article, by Peggy McIntosh, in preparation for discussion.

If you are not able to make the caucus, but would like the moderators to be aware of your interest for any future meetings, please reach out to them directly:

Kyle Czeh: Kyle.Czeh@va.gov

Tracy Simpson: Tracy.Simpson@va.gov

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