



Connections Project Volunteer Handbook

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The Mental Health Association of Maryland (MHAMD) welcomes you as a new partner in our Connections Project. Volunteers are truly the heart of our past, present, and future work. We are thrilled and thankful that you have chosen to join us.

MHAMD has been advocating for better mental health in Maryland for over 100 years and as a volunteer, you are actively supporting the mental health of older adults in Baltimore County. With 10,000 Americans turning 65 every day and the lingering mental health impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, this work is more important than ever.

The Connections Project practices a model of meaningful connection called peer support, where we use our lived experience with mental health to encourage and relate with others. Not only is this beneficial for participants, but we often learn as much from our peers as they learn from us. We hope that your volunteer experience provides ample opportunity to learn about mental health and aging, practice mental wellness, and meaningfully connect with others.

The time you offer is a gift to our participants, staff, and volunteers. Thank you for your commitment to serve as a Connections Project volunteer. We believe that serving seniors through peer support is a pleasure and a privilege and hope you will as well.

Sincerely,

Casey Saylor

Mental Health Association of Maryland
Older Adult Project Manager

Linda Raines

Mental Health Association of Maryland
Executive Director



About the Connections Project

Why Focus on Aging & Mental Health?

- More than 22% of Marylanders were over age 60 in 2020. This is expected to increase to more than 26% by 2040. (Citation: Maryland [2022-2025 State Plan on Aging](#))
- A [Kaiser Family Foundation report](#) finds that 1 in 4 adults age 65+ reported anxiety or depression during most weeks since the onset of the pandemic – an increase from one in ten older adults who reported anxiety or depression in 2018.
- By reducing symptoms of depression and anxiety and misuse of medications or alcohol, older adults are often better able to address other problems and live satisfying lives.
- Older adults are significantly less likely to receive treatment compared to younger adults. They often are not aware that they may benefit from prevention and treatment because they are neither screened nor referred for diagnosis and care. Stigma and stereotypes around these conditions may also keep them from accepting referrals.
- Why is treatment important? Mental health and addiction disorders are linked to higher health care use; lower quality of life; increased complexity of illness, disability and impairment; caregiver stress; mortality; and risk of suicide. In Maryland, suicide is the 17th leading cause of death for adults age 65+ (Citation: [American Foundation for Suicide Prevention](#), 2020).

What We Do

The Connections Project works to decrease the potential effects and stigma of a mental health condition while supporting aging Baltimore County citizens. Under the guidance of MHAMD, the program provides community education, outreach, and volunteer support for adults age 60+ who are experiencing or at high risk for mental illness.

Volunteers provide support over phone, text, or video chat and meet with older adults at home or in the community. Volunteers are aware of early warning signs of mental illness and addiction, assist older adults in accessing help, provide socialization, and are active role models.

The Connections Project is based on the evidence-based model of peer support. Peer support is a practice of meaningful connection, and research shows it is highly effective in supporting mental health and addiction recovery. The following abbreviated definition from [Mental Health America](#) describes peer support's context and role. Please note that "behavioral health" is a phrase that includes both mental illness and addiction.

Put simply, a peer is a person we identify with in some capacity. This can include anything from age to gender to sexual orientation to shared language. In behavioral health, a peer is usually used to refer to someone who shares the experience of living with a psychiatric disorder and/or addiction.

Peer support is the "process of giving and receiving encouragement and assistance to achieve long-term recovery." Peer supporters "offer emotional support, share knowledge, teach skills,



provide practical assistance, and connect people with resources, opportunities, communities of support, and other people." In behavioral health, peers offer their unique lived experience with mental health conditions to provide support focused on advocacy, education, mentoring, and motivation.

Peer support is a growing professional workforce in Maryland, and the Connections Project doubles as a workforce training program. For more information, turn to the *Certified Peer Recovery Specialist (CPRS) Internship* section of this manual.

About the Mental Health Association of Maryland

The Mental Health Association of Maryland (MHAMD) believes every person has a right to respect, dignity, and the opportunity to achieve their full potential free from stigma and prejudice. We're working to ensure that all Marylanders have access to high-quality behavioral health care. MHAMD has been advocating for better mental health in Maryland for over 100 years.

The Connections Project is managed by MHAMD, which has two Older Adult Programs: the *Vibrant Aging Peers Program* (serving Baltimore County) and *Older Adults Vibrant Minds* (serving Baltimore City). These programs have provided mental health education and advocacy to aging Marylanders since 1993. In 2019, the *Vibrant Aging Peers Program* conducted 19 focus groups in Baltimore County, surveying 136 people including older adults, peer support specialists, family members, caregivers, and professionals from health, aging, and behavioral health organizations. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive towards peer support for older adults and participants had many suggestions for its implementation. Using this feedback, the Connections Project was developed and began in April 2020.



Volunteer Recruitment

Eligibility of Volunteers

Individuals may apply to volunteer if they:

1. live or work in Maryland,
2. are at least 21 years of age,
3. have lived experience with a mental health condition, either personally or through a loved one, and
4. are able to meet the responsibilities outlined in the volunteer job description, including time commitments and regular access to phone and internet-based technology such as email and Zoom.

If accepted, applicants will complete onboarding and orientation before beginning volunteer service. More information on volunteer qualifications, onboarding, and orientation is available in the next section.

Recruitment Methods

Open volunteer positions are announced via email/printed flyers to community partners and posted on the Volunteering in Baltimore County website: volunteers.baltimorecountymd.gov. Existing volunteers are also welcome to share openings with their networks. MHAMD's Connections Project webpage (located at: mhamd.org/what-we-do/outreach-and-education/peers/connections-project/) is kept updated with the status of volunteer recruitment (i.e. recruiting or not recruiting at this time). Applications received when not recruiting will be held until an opening becomes available, then the potential volunteer will be engaged in the application process as outlined below.

Application Process

Potential volunteers interested in learning more about the Connections Project are invited to review the Volunteer Handbook before applying. Please contact the Older Adult Project Manager with any questions.

Individuals interested in volunteering are invited to complete the Volunteer Application Form on the Connections Project webpage. Assistance can be requested by contacting the Older Adult Project Manager.

Screening/ Selection Process

Screening Criteria: Volunteer applications are reviewed for appropriate fit based on the Eligibility Requirements outlined above.

Interview: Applicants meeting the Eligibility Requirements will be contacted to interview. Part of the interview will be spent reviewing the Volunteer Job Description and confirming the applicant's ability to meet all position requirements. Interviews may be held in a group or individually.

Personal Reference Check: Applicants successfully completing the interview will be invited to



supply 1-2 references. References will be checked by MHAMD staff to confirm the appropriateness of fit.

Background Screening: Applicants will receive a *Background Check Acknowledgement/Information Form* to be completed and submitted to MHAMD Human Resources (HR). A copy of this form is available in the “Reference Versions of Paperwork” section of this Handbook. The first page discloses the scope of the background screening and requires a signature for the volunteer to authorize the release of records and/or data. The second page is for the information MHAMD is required to submit for Coeus Global to run the background screening, which includes full name, date of birth, social security number, driver’s license information, current address, phone number, and email address. At this time, all background checks are assessed for appropriate fit with volunteer opportunities on a case-to-case basis. A copy of the completed consumer report and copy of individual rights under the Fair Credit Reporting Act can be supplied to the volunteer upon request. All information collected by HR for background screening is confidential and will not be used for any other purpose. All submitted forms are stored by MHAMD according to the policies outlined in the *Volunteer Program Policies* form.



Volunteer Responsibilities & Benefits

Volunteer Job Description

Position Title	Connections Project Volunteer
Reports To	Older Adult Project Manager

POSITION PURPOSE

The Connections Project works to decrease the potential effects and stigma of a mental health diagnosis while supporting aging Baltimore County citizens. The program provides community education, outreach, and volunteer support for adults age 60+ who are experiencing or at high risk for mental illness.

Volunteers provide ongoing support via phone, text, or video chat and meet with older adults at home or in the community. Volunteers:

- Are aware of early warning signs of mental illness and addiction,
- Provide support and socialization through active listening, strengths-based interactions, and normalizing experiences.
- Model healthy habits and inspire hope.
- Share information and assist older adults in accessing help.
- Empower older adults to practice resilience, healthy coping skills, and self-advocacy skills. Teach skills as appropriate.

QUALIFICATIONS

- Live or work in Maryland.
- 21 years of age or older.
- Have lived experience with a mental health condition, either personally or through a loved one.
- Ability to perform all duties and responsibilities outlined in the volunteer job description.
- Regular access to internet-based technology such as email and Zoom.
- Regular access to phone service (alternate phone numbers can be obtained through Google Voice).
- Ability to navigate online forms and resource lists, or flexibility to learn how.
- Reliability: ability to consistently attend required meetings and communicate with participants at scheduled times.
- Strong communication skills and personal boundaries.
- Compassion and empathy for others who may be struggling and/or not "making progress."



- Ability to speak about mental illness and addiction experiences openly, without judgment or criticism.
- Ability to accept constructive feedback and willingness to learn about mental health, aging, peer support and wellness tools.

Duties and Responsibilities

ONBOARDING

- Participate in volunteer orientation.
- Review the Volunteer Handbook and bring any questions to volunteer supervision.
- Complete onboarding documents and background check.
- By participating in the Connections Project, volunteers agree to follow the policies, procedures, and guidance established by MHAMD.

SUPERVISION

- Participate in monthly group supervision sessions. A list of supervision dates for the year is available in this manual's "Quick References" section.
- Record monthly contact data and resource referrals to report at supervision.
- Additional supervision opportunities are provided weekly for make-up & drop-in supervision. These weekly office hours will be announced on a month-by-month basis.

ONGOING TRAINING & COMMUNICATION

- Read the monthly digest email for program updates.
- Participate in continuing education seminars (4 per year).
- If unable to attend a scheduled seminar, review the recording in a timely manner.
- MHAMD staff will communicate with volunteers in the following manner:
 - » English language: MHAMD staff will use the English language to communicate with volunteers written and verbally.
 - » E-Mails: Our "official" way of keeping everyone informed of new policies, changes in procedures, information, and special events. Please be in the habit of reading E-Mails regularly so you remain up to date.
 - » Virtual surveys: Staff periodically use virtual surveys to collect data from volunteers. Survey invitations will be sent via email.
 - » Hard copy/mailed versions of any communication, survey, or form are available upon request.

MAINTAIN CONSISTENT CONTACT WITH PARTICIPANTS

- Maintain consistent contact with assigned participant(s) at least once per week. Work



with the participant to determine a call schedule and stick to it.

- If you need to miss a scheduled call, do your best to let the participant know ahead of time.
- Communicate participant status, resource needs, and support needs to staff. Work together with staff to support participants.

MAINTAIN RECORDS

- Review and submit the volunteer agreement yearly.
- Communicate changes in address and/or telephone numbers to the Older Adult Project Manager.

GENERAL

- Maintain confidentiality as outlined in onboarding paperwork.
- Communicate any concerns with the Older Adult Project Manager.
- Transportation costs are covered by the volunteer. Costs such as mileage may be written off as a charitable deduction if itemized on an individual's annual taxes. Consult a tax professional for further information.

TRAVEL REQUIREMENT

None during COVID-19 pandemic. Outside of pandemic, in-person visitation will be scheduled with collaborative input from volunteer and participant.

LOCATION

Baltimore County, MD

Benefits

Volunteering with the Connections Project provides unique benefits. These benefits include:

- Membership in a supportive and encouraging community of volunteers.
- Access to the MHAMD's monthly events promoting mental wellness.
- Continuing education around mental health, aging, and peer support.
- Education on local resources and MHAMD staff assistance to locate resources.
- Periodic wellness kits containing information and items that promote mental wellbeing.
- Opportunities to suggest/lead events or projects aligning with the program's mission.
- Professional letter of recommendation (upon request).
- Credit hours for university requirements or CPRS internship.
- Meaningful connection with members of our Baltimore County community!



Self-Care as a Volunteer

Healthy Boundaries

Maintaining healthy boundaries as a critical role of the Connections Project volunteer that benefits both the volunteer and participant. The following steps are recommended for boundary creation and maintenance:

- Have designated communication tools.
 - » Use the Google Voice number to text and call participants. Information on setting up Google Voice is available in the “Quick References” section of this handbook.
 - » Video calls: Unfortunately, Google Voice cannot place video calls at this time. The Connections Project recommends utilizing a video service such as Google Duo or Zoom for video calls. Facetime is not recommended, since it is tied to your personal cell phone number.
 - » Email: Volunteers choosing to email participants are welcome to utilize their personal email address. Emails are easier to block than phone calls, texts, or video calls if needed, so having a designated email address for communication with participants is not a recommendation. That being said, volunteers are welcome to create a designated email address if preferred.
- Create a schedule and stick to it.
 - » Think about how often you’re willing to speak with your participant. (Every other day? Once a week?) The volunteer role requires that volunteers be available at least once a week. Once you identify this, communicate your availability to the participant and let them choose the schedule.
 - » Identify who calls who and when.
 - » Stick to the call schedule. Consistency and predictability are important for both of you.
 - » If you feel like the person may benefit from more frequent calls and you have additional availability, you can offer to do so. Follow the same process as creating the initial schedule, where you communicate your availability then give the participant a choice to accept and at what frequency.
- Clearly communicate expectations.
 - » At the beginning of the call, let the participant know how much time you have to speak (i.e. 1 hour). 10-15 minutes before the you need to leave, remind the participant what time the call needs to end. Conclude the call on time.
 - » If there is a planned activity that will interrupt the call schedule, let the participant know a few calls before the interruption and repeat the reminder on each call leading up to it.
 - » If you need to unexpectedly miss a scheduled call, do your best to let the participant know ahead of time. If that is not possible, contact the participant after the interrup-



tion concludes to apologize and confirm the next scheduled call date.

- » Are you open to texting or emailing between scheduled calls? Consider your preference, then follow the same process as creating the initial call schedule, where you communicate your availability then give the participant a choice to accept and at what frequency.
- Stay within your role as a Connections Project volunteer.
 - » You are not a crisis worker or a caseworker. Crisis and assistance resources are available in the “Quick References” portion of this handbook.
 - » Record a voicemail greeting on the Google Voice number that includes the phone numbers for crisis and assistance resources.
 - » For example: *“Hello, you’ve reached _____. I am not available to talk right now. If you need to talk to someone immediately, please contact 2-1-1, then press 1. Trained mental health and addiction specialists are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year to listen and connect you with resources. Crisis Specialists are also available to chat online at 211md.org or text. To text, text your zip code to 898-211.”*

Practicing Self-Care

“Self-Care” Definition:

1. *the practice of taking action to preserve or improve one’s own health.*
2. *the practice of taking an active role in protecting one’s own well-being and happiness, in particular during periods of stress.*

The above definition from Oxford Languages illustrates self-care as a repetitive practice with a clear goal: preserving health, well-being, and happiness. In the Connections Project, “health” includes both physical health and mental health.

Some self-care practices are automatic, such as eating when you’re hungry or hydrating when you’re thirsty. Other self-care activities need to be practiced more deliberately to care for mental, emotional, and physical health. While these activities are different for everyone, common ones include:

- Physical exercise, stretching, or movement.
- Mindfulness or meditation.
- Getting enough sleep.
- Eating nutritious food and drink.
- Meaningfully interacting with others.
- Spending time in nature.
- Practicing hobbies or activities that bring you joy.

The Connections Project prioritizes self-care because supporting another person can be stressful, particularly when that person experiences difficult times. While the volunteer’s role is to



support participants, the Connections Project is also here to support you as you navigate your own mental wellness.

We encourage you...

- **To use monthly supervision as a self-care opportunity:** Check in with the group about how you're doing and create a self-care intention for the month ahead.
- **To periodically pause and consider your own needs.** Would you benefit from any of the resources that we talk about for participants?
- **To use the Older Adult Project Manager as a resource.** Is there something that you or a loved one could use support with but are unsure where to start? Are you interested in peer support around an issue (i.e. cancer, depression, bipolar, addiction, diabetes, etc.) but are unsure how to access it? Please feel free to bring these inquiries to staff, who will do their best to help pair you with useful resources.
- **To connect with your fellow volunteers outside of supervision.** Volunteering with the Connections Project offers you membership in a community of volunteers who are supportive and encouraging. Connect with others via phone, email, or text.
- **To check in on your own mental health.** Mental health conditions are real, common, and treatable- and recovery is possible. Online screening is a quick and easiest way to determine whether you are experiencing symptoms of a mental health condition. Free screenings are available at Mental Health America: screening.mhanational.org/screening-tools/
- **To take advantage of MHAMD's events and resources,** which are built to support mental health. For example, MHAMD's publication library (mhamd.org/publications/) has easy-to-read factsheets on a variety of mental health experiences. Not seeing what you're looking for? Let staff know, and they can point you towards it elsewhere.
- **To recognize when you need a break.** We understand. See the "Ending Volunteer Service" section for more information on taking a leave of absence or resigning from volunteer service.

Volunteer Appreciation Month

April is National Volunteer Appreciation Month! Every year, April's Learning Seminar is dedicated to self-care to remind us about its importance and provide new tools and strategies for our own practice.





Stress

When our stress levels are too high, we can experience the following:

- Fatigue
- Moodiness
- Muscle tension or pain in the body
- Trouble sleeping
- Overeating or not eating enough
- Anger or irritability
- Feeling overwhelmed
- Using alcohol or drugs to feel better
- Inability to relax
- Changes in relationships

People experience and cope with stress in different ways. We often talk about having high levels of stress but are challenged to find workable solutions. Common sources of stress include work, relationships, parenting, finances, caregiving, and more. It is important to know our limits when it comes to stress to avoid more serious problems.

What is stress?

Stress can be defined as the brain's response to any demand. Many things can trigger this response, including change. Changes can be positive or negative, as well as real or perceived. They may be recurring, short-term, or long-term and may include things like commuting to and from school or work everyday, traveling for a yearly vacation, or moving to another home. Changes can be mild and relatively harmless, such as winning a race, watching a scary movie, or riding a rollercoaster. Major changes, such as divorce, a serious illness, a car accident, and exposure to violence or poor living conditions can lead to traumatic stress reactions.

FACT:

According to a recent study by the APA on stress in america, nearly **70%** of Americans experience physical and mental symptoms of stress, but only **37%** think they are doing very well at managing stress.

Stress

Healing & Recovery



There are many ways to manage stress and find relief. Tips to reduce stress include:

- Exercise
- Getting enough sleep
- Talking with supportive friends or family
- Eating healthy
- Staying hydrated
- Engaging in fun activities
- Taking deep breaths
- Mindfulness and meditation
- Keeping things as simple as possible
- Managing other health conditions
- Practicing good self-care
- Asking for help and support

Stress and Health

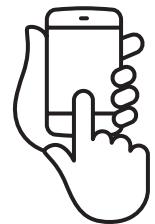
Our bodies are well equipped to handle stress in small doses, but when there are multiple stressors or when stress becomes long-term, chronic, or severe, it can have serious effects on our physical and mental health.

Unhealthy levels of stress can lead to:

Headaches and migraines	Stomach and digestive problems
Sleeplessness	Weight gain
Depression	Lack of energy
Shortness of breath or rapid breathing	Anxiety disorders
Heartburn	High blood pressure
High blood sugar	Trouble concentrating and memory problems
Muscle pain	Reproductive problems
Lowered immune system	
Skin problems	

We might choose to use alcohol or other drugs to “help” with stress. This strategy can backfire, causing more physical, mental, and social problems. Times of high stress make alcohol and drug use more risky and can increase problems with dependence or addiction.

Get connected to free, 24/7 support from a trained counselor at the Maryland Helpline. Call **(2-1-1, press 1)**, text your zip code to **898-211**, or visit **211MD.org**.





Mindfulness

Health Benefits of Mindfulness

Mindfulness has several benefits to our physical and mental health. Here are some of the ways mindfulness can improve our health:

- **Reduces Stress** – Stress can have serious effects on our physical and mental health. Mindfulness can help minimize or lessen our body's stress responses. This can have health benefits such as lowering blood pressure or strengthening your immune system.
- **Improves Mood** – Mindfulness can improve our overall mood and may reduce mental health conditions like depression and anxiety.
- **Improves Brain Function** – Practicing mindfulness can help build your ability to focus. Over time, meditation can sharpen memory and improve mental performance.
- **Improves Ability to Cope with Pain** – People with chronic pain who practice mindfulness meditation report less severe pain and pain-related distress.

Sometimes it can be difficult to focus on the present moment without worrying about what happened in the past or what may happen in the future. Mindfulness can help us tune into the present moment without judgement or reaction. Practicing mindfulness can also benefit both your health and well-being, and can easily be built into your everyday life.

What is Mindfulness?

Mindfulness is a state of focus on the present moment, while calmly acknowledging and accepting one's feelings, thoughts, and bodily sensations. Mindfulness includes the following elements:

- **Awareness** – Tuning in to what is happening in the present moment, such as sights, sounds, smells, or physical sensations.
- **Focus** – Paying attention to the present moment, without thinking about the past or the future.
- **Acceptance** – Accepting whatever you may be thinking or feeling, without judgement or trying to change it or your reactions.
- **Observation** – Recognizing unpleasant sensations, thoughts, and feelings as temporary, observe them objectively without reaction or judgement.



Experiment with different techniques. It may take time to find the mindfulness practice that is right for you.

Mindfulness

Other Ways to Practice Mindfulness



- Download a mindfulness app, there are several available for smartphones.
- Read a book about mindfulness.
- Take a meditation or yoga class online or check for in-person classes and resources at your local library, community center, or hospital.
- Journal non-judgementally about your experiences. An Emotion Wheel can be a useful tool to help identify emotions.
- Write 3 things you're grateful for in a journal or gratitude app. Try to list different items everyday.
- Close your eyes and immerse yourself in a happy or calming song. If your mind starts to wander, gently bring your attention back to the music.
- Close your eyes and visualize a calming place or happy memory. Focus on the details, using as many senses as you can.

Get connected to free, 24/7 support from a trained counselor at the Maryland Helpline. Call **(2-1-1, press 1)**, text your zip code to **898-211**, or visit **211MD.org**.



Mindfulness Techniques

There are a number of techniques you can use to practice mindfulness. Many of these techniques can be practiced anywhere.



Mindful breathing – Focus on the movement of your breath, as you breathe in and out, without trying to change it in any way. Do this for a few minutes. If your mind starts to wander, gently bring your attention back to the breath.



Body Scan – While seated or lying down, focus your attention on one body part at a time. Notice any physical sensations without judging or reacting to them. You can start with the soles of your feet and gradually move your awareness upwards towards your head.



Mindful Movement – While moving, pay attention to your breath, body movements, and surroundings. This exercise can be done during other activities such as stretching or walking.



Mindful Eating – Slow down the experience of eating. As you eat, pay attention to the sensations of holding, smelling, tasting, chewing, and swallowing.



Grounding – Use your 5 senses to reconnect with your environment. Pause in this moment and identify 5 things you can see; 4 you can hear, 3 you can touch, 2 you can smell, and 1 you can taste.

Additional Resources

- [UCLA Mindful Awareness Research Center](#)
- [Greater Good Mindfulness Information](#)
- [Mindfulness Northwest](#)
- [Emotion Wheels](#)

Program Procedures

Gifts: Giving & Receiving

GIVING GIFTS

The Connections Project encourages volunteers to do something thoughtful for participants when they experience a personal milestone (i.e. beating cancer or losing a loved one), celebrate a birthday, or observe a holiday. The Connections Project has limited funds available for these gifts and volunteers are encouraged to connect with the Older Adult Project Manager to request them. There is no obligation for a volunteer to give gifts to their participant outside of this structure.

If the volunteer chooses to give a gift to their participant from their own funds, the following guidelines apply:

- Keep it small (under \$10) or something homemade.
- Lending or gifting money is not allowed, including gift cards or cash.
- The volunteer may choose to pay for a participant's lunch or event ticket during an outing. However, since participants are not allowed to reciprocate, volunteers are encouraged to use their best judgement: if the participant is able to afford their own lunch, ticket, etc. then the best practice is for each party to cover their own costs.
- Due to their role, volunteers should not expect a reciprocal gift exchange with participants.
- There is no obligation for participants to accept gifts from volunteers. Please be responsive if a participant wishes not to accept a gift and agree to that desire.

RECEIVING GIFTS FROM PARTICIPANTS

As a volunteer with the Connections Project, you are not permitted to accept cash or service gifts from your participant. This includes but is not limited to:

- Gift cards or cash
- The participant paying for you when you do something together (i.e. lunch, ticket to an event, etc.)
- Rides or transportation

Should the participant choose to give their volunteer a gift, they are encouraged to keep it small (under \$10) or something homemade. There is no obligation for participants to give gifts to volunteers.

MHAMD staff will not give out volunteer mailing addresses; the participant will be redirected to request it from the volunteer directly. Alternatively, participants can mail items to the MHAMD office where volunteers can pick them up.



No Answer Procedure

When your connection doesn't answer your scheduled call:

1. Leave a voicemail, if possible.
 - i.e. "Hi this is *name*, calling for our regular chat. I hope all is well with you. I'll try reaching you again on *date of next scheduled call*."
 - If their voicemail box is full and you have agreed to text or email each other, send a note with the above information instead.
 - If there is no way to leave a voicemail, text, or email, skip this step and go right to #2.
2. Try calling them again on the next date that you're scheduled to connect.
 - It is important that we respect our connection's right to decline phone calls, so please refrain from texting or calling them beyond step 1 before your next scheduled chat.*
 - **Please note that this procedure may change based on the participant's needs (i.e. hard of hearing may require several calls to answer). If you notice your connection missing calls regularly, ask them what we can do to make them more accessible.*
3. If you are unable to get ahold of your connection for two weeks or more, alert the Older Adult Project Manager.
 - We will work together to review the situation and decide on next steps.
 - ***Please note that it is not the volunteer's role to call the police for a welfare check.*

Emergency Procedures

If your connection appears to be experiencing an emergency (defined on the next page), let them know that you care about them and encourage them to connect with professional help. You can do this by:

- Each participant will complete a Participant Emergency Consent Form to identify any special instructions for high concern incident situations. Know what your participant's form says and have it handy to reference. Be prepared to follow these special instructions when needed.
- Should the participant experience a high concern incident that falls outside of the instructions specified in the Participant Emergency Consent Form, connect them with professional help.
 - » Let the participant know that you are calling emergency services on their behalf to request that they come to the connection's location. If the participant is at home, reference the Participant Emergency Consent Form for their address. If the participant is not at home, verify the address before calling emergency services.
 - If you have the technology, obtain consent to call emergency services while they remain on the line, through a 3-way call. **Please note that Google Voice does not currently provide 3-way calling.*



- o If you hung up with the participant to call emergency services, call the participant back to let them know that help is on the way. Let them know that you are hanging up for now but will call back in 15 minutes to check in.
- o Call back in 15 minutes to check in. If there is no response, try again in another 15 minutes.

There are different emergency numbers for Physical Emergencies and Mental Health Emergencies.

- **Physical emergency: Call 9-1-1**

- » If your connection is experiencing any of the following, it could be a sign of a medical emergency.
 - o Unconscious
 - o Labored breathing
 - o Bleeding
 - o Severe disorientation
 - o Sweating, pallor, complaints of unexplained pain
- » If you suspect that your connection is experiencing an overdose from drugs or alcohol, call 9-1-1.
- » Please use your best judgement to identify other, non-health related emergencies that may put the individual at risk for immediate harm.

- **Mental Health emergency: Call 9-8-8**

- » A mental health emergency (or mental health crisis) is defined as a time of intense difficulty, trouble, or danger. If your connection is experiencing any of the following, it could be a sign of a mental health emergency.
 - o Severe disruptive behaviors
 - o Aggressive or threatening behaviors
 - o Self-injurious behaviors
 - o Acute psychosis (Possible symptoms include delusions, hallucinations, talking incoherently, and agitation. The person with the condition usually isn't aware of their behavior)
 - o Suicide or suicidal thoughts
 - o Threats to harm self or others

Remember:

- **Contact the Older Adult Project Manager to report any referrals to emergency services within 24 hours of the incident.**



- Carry the emergency numbers with you so you have them. Tip: program the numbers into your phone's address list, if possible.
- Never diagnose, medicate, or attempt to physically move the person.

Reporting Critical Incidents

MHAMD staff are required to report critical incidents involving program participants to Baltimore County within 24 hours of becoming aware of the incident. Critical incidents include:

- Suicide attempt
- Injury to self
- Assault or injury to others
- Sexual/ physical abuse or neglect, or allegation thereof
- Inappropriate use of resources
- Incarceration of the program participant for any reason
- Accidental overdose
- Death by overdose
- Death (any cause)

Should your participant report experiencing any of the above *during your volunteer relationship*, please report it to the Older Adult Project Manager ASAP.

Reporting Abuse & Neglect

This procedure is being developed as of June 2022. If you have any concerns in this area, please contact the Older Adult Project Manager.



The 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline

Marylanders have a new way to connect to a local behavioral health crisis call specialist. Calling 988 connects callers directly to the National Suicide & Crisis Lifeline which can provide assistance with substance use or mental health crises.

What does this mean for Marylanders?

When someone in Maryland calls 988, the call is routed based on the caller's area code. For those calls routed to Maryland, the call is answered by one of the eight strategically-located call centers. These centers provide phone-based support and information regarding local resources.

Maryland has been operating its own crisis hotline (call 211, press 1) which will remain in operation and accessible to Marylanders throughout the transition period and beyond.

Who can call 988?

Anyone in need of assistance with behavioral health-related problems.

What can callers expect when they call 988?

Callers will hear a greeting message while their call is routed to a Lifeline network crisis call center (based on the caller's area code)

- A trained crisis counselor will answer the phone, listen to the caller, understand how their problem is affecting them, provide support, and provide resources and interventions as needed

- If a Maryland crisis center is unable to take the call, the caller will be automatically routed to a national backup crisis center
- The Lifeline provides live crisis center phone services in English and Spanish and uses Language Line Solutions to provide translation services in over 150 additional languages for people who call 988
- Veterans can access the Veterans Crisis Line by calling 988 and pressing 1

What can someone expect during a chat or text?

- Texts and chats to 988 will also be routed to a Lifeline network crisis call center based on area code.
- A response to chats and texts will be given by a call center staff person

Learn more:

- 988.maryland.gov
- samhsa.gov/find-help/988

988 in Maryland

Maryland's 8 Lifeline (988) Call Centers:

Calls are routed based on the caller's area code. For calls routed to Maryland, the call will be answered by one of eight strategically-located call centers. These centers provide phone-based support and information regarding local resources.

Frederick County Hotline
EveryMind*
Community Crisis Services*
Grassroots Crisis Intervention Services*
Baltimore County Crisis Response
Baltimore Crisis Response
Life Crisis Center
Eastern Shore Crisis Response



**denotes a text and chat provider*

Evaluation & Impact

Evaluation Measures

- Satisfaction surveys are conducted with program participants at several points during engagement with a volunteer: 1 month, 6 months, 1 year, then every 6 months after for the duration of the relationship with the program.
 - » With the participant's permission, staff will share relevant feedback with the volunteer.
 - » Staff will also share generalized participant feedback with all volunteers during supervision via *Accolades & Advice*.
- Volunteers will be surveyed on their experience with the program annually.
- An exit interview will be conducted when a volunteer leaves the program.

Impact (Based on 2020-2021 Data)

Impact on Participants

83% of participants reported that the Connections Project had a positive impact on their life.

"I can't thank you and your volunteers enough. I don't know how I would have made it through the last 15 months [without you]- you and your volunteers were the only ones who were always there for me. I'm very grateful."

"[My volunteer] sent me coloring books and pens for Christmas. I just sat here and cried happy tears. It was very thoughtful of them."

"You have been so incredibly helpful. When my mother passed away, I was in the depths of despair. I didn't want to talk to anyone. Recently, I had the feeling to reach out and I contacted the warmline that you gave me on our very first call. I connected with Martylog last Friday and today I'm going to my very first Zoom meeting to meet them online! I'm so excited. Thank you so much for everything you've done for me."

"[My volunteer] has helped me build my self-confidence back up, and I've lost that hopeless kind of feeling... Your program has made a difference. Don't go nowhere!"

Impact on Volunteers

100% of respondents report that they feel "very well supported" or "supported enough" by staff in their work as a volunteer.

89% of respondents report that the Connections Project impacted them positively during the pandemic.

"The Connections Project gave me a purpose outside of caring for myself. I no longer feel all alone and disconnected from others."

"While I joined the Connections Project as a volunteer to reach out to those who were isolated



by the pandemic, I have enjoyed getting to know my connection and forming a bond with her, to the point where we look forward to hearing from each other and are excited to meet each other in person some time."



Ending Volunteer Service

Planning for Resignation or Leave of Absence

If you need to discontinue a connection for any reason (short term or long term), let staff know as far in advance as possible so we can work together to support the participant in your absence. Ideally, we want to let the participant know about a volunteer's leave of absence or resignation 3-4 weeks before it takes effect. This will:

- Give the participant time to receive the news and digest it with the volunteer during the last scheduled calls.
- Give the volunteer an opportunity to assist the participant in creating a plan for continued support. Based on the participant's preference, this plan may or may not include a new volunteer with the Connections Project.
- Give staff time to find a suitable volunteer replacement, if one is requested.

MHAMD understands that events may occur that require a volunteer to take a leave of absence and then return. All volunteers are encouraged to communicate their needs with the Older Adult Project Manager so we can ensure support for both volunteers and participants.

If Peer Support Becomes Friendship

Sometimes, Connections Project relationships go so well that the relationship moves beyond that of providing peer support to genuine friendship. While it is fine to be friends with your connection while honoring your volunteer role, program expectations, and policies, it is your responsibility as a volunteer to let MHAMD staff know if the relationship is no longer able to meet these expectations. In these cases, the following steps will occur:

- MHAMD staff will confirm that the participant is interested in continuing a relationship with the volunteer outside of the formal Connections Project structure.
- The pairing will be removed from the Connections Project to continue informally, without the Project's supervision.
- The participant will be offered a new volunteer within the Connections Project. The volunteer is also invited to work with a new participant.

Termination

As stated in the Volunteer Agreement that was signed at onboarding,

This agreement will "continue to be in effect for one (1) year [from signature] or until such time as the volunteer notifies Mental Health Association of Maryland in writing that they intend to discontinue their volunteer services. A new Volunteer Agreement will be required annually."

Volunteers who choose to discontinue their service can submit their intention in writing to MHAMD staff or decline to renew the annual volunteer agreement.

Further information on MHAMD's termination policy is located in the Volunteer Agreement.



Exit Surveys

When a volunteer leaves the Connections Project, they will have the opportunity to provide feedback on their volunteer experience via an exit survey. An invitation to complete the survey will be sent by email. Volunteers are encouraged to provide honest feedback so the program can continue to learn and grow.



Certified Peer Recovery Specialist (CPRS) Internship

The Peer Support Workforce

The following excerpt from [Mental Health America](#) describes peer support's context as a workforce.

Peer providers can play many roles in support for people living with psychiatric disorders and/or in addiction recovery. They are capable of facilitating education and support groups and working as a bridge linking people to services as they transition from hospitals or jails into the community. Peers also work one-on-one as role models, mentors, coaches and advocates and support people in developing psychiatric advance directions and creating Wellness Recovery Action Plans (WRAP).

The concept of "peer support" in mental health has its roots in the self-help movement that began in the 1970s. During a time of intense focus on civil rights and social change, people who had survived the abuses of psychiatric hospitals came together to support each other and work towards healing. They understood there was more to recovery than "symptom management" and that individuals who had been hospitalized were capable of supporting one another and living meaningful lives in the community.

Thanks to the leadership of peers and the growing evidence around the practice over the past decades, the peer workforce has grown to over 24,000 supporters working in all 50 states and U.S. territories. Considered an evidence-based practice by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), peer support is Medicaid reimbursable in over 41 states.

From the criminal justice system to housing services to hotlines, peers model recovery and contribute to the lives of others.

What is a CPRS?

Peer support services can be provided organically or professionally:

- Organic peer support occurs when trained or untrained individuals support each other by bonding over common experiences with mental health and/or addiction.
- A Certified Peer Recovery Specialist (CPRS) is someone who has participated in Maryland's certification process with core education requirements and internship practice hours. Please review the pamphlet on the next page for more information on these requirements or visit mabpcb.com/certified-peer-recovery-specialist.

Interning with the Connections Project

Peer support is a growing professional workforce in Maryland, and the Connections Project doubles as a workforce training program. Individuals pursuing their CPRS certification are welcome to intern with the Connections Project to gain experience conducting peer support with older



adults. The Older Adult Project Manager holds the Registered Peer Supervisor credential, meaning they are certified to help guide you through the CPRS application process. Please contact the Older Adult Project Manager to learn more about available CPRS internships.



WELCOME

Congratulations on your decision to pursue a peer recovery specialist certification.

This brochure is designed to guide peers in the process of obtaining certification as a CPRS. It offers the basic steps to accomplish this task, however, the peer is still responsible for referencing the CPRS application manual, available on the MABPCB website, as well as contacting MABPCB by phone or email with questions and concerns.

Keep copies of each page of your application submissions, your training certificates of attendance, and all other relevant paperwork for your files.



CONTACT US:

mapcb.wordpress.com/cprs
admin@mapcb.com
10807 Falls Road #1376
Brooklandville, MD
21022
1-866-537-5340

It is suggested that individuals generate a tracking file with MABPCB by submitting your application and the \$100 processing fee.

This process will allow MABPCB to organize all certified documents, training certificates, and other required documentation that is part of your certification process.

Maryland Certified Peer Recovery Specialist (CPRS)

Process & Requirements for Maryland's Peer Recovery Specialist Certification



*Celebrating 40 Years Certifying Maryland's
Behavioral Health Workers*

Training Requirements

The required 46 total hours are broken down into 4 specific domains. The table below shows the required number of training hours in each domain.

Required Hours	Identified Domain
16	Ethics
10	Advocacy
10	Mentoring & Education
10	Wellness & Recovery

See *MABPCB website for a list of training*

- One (1) CORE training is required
- Training must have been completed in the past 10 years
- Eligible trainings are offered by numerous agencies across Maryland (Listing available on MABPCB website)
- In-service trainings provided by an agency are also eligible. Maximum in-service hours for CPRS application is 12 of the required 46 training hours.
- Up to 5 hours of training can be facilitated through online or web-based training programs.

Work/Volunteer Requirements

- Must be currently working or volunteering in a peer support role.
- Provision of 500 hours in the role of a Peer Recovery Support over the last 2 years.
- 25 hours of Peer Supervision documented by a Registered Peer Supervisor (RPS)

(*MABPCB website has a current RPS List*)

Required Hours	Identified Domain
5	Ethics
5	Advocacy
5	Mentoring & Education
5	Wellness & Recovery
5	General Supervision/ Self Care

- The 500 work/volunteer hours as well as the 25 supervision hours can be completed in multiple settings and under multiple supervisors. Documentation for each is required.

Application

1. Download the CPRS application from the MABPCB website.
2. Complete pages 8, 9, 13, 14, and 16 on the application and submit with \$100 check or money order payable to MABPCB to initiate certification process.
3. Request official high school, GED, or college transcripts to be sent directly to MABPCB.
4. Three Recovery References to be sent directly to MABPCB and complete the Recovery Reference form on page 17 of the application.
5. Submit signed letter(s) from your employer(s) verifying 500 hours of work/volunteering.
6. Complete the Education/ Training Form on page 10 of your application and send to MABPCB along with training certificates from completed courses

Quick References

MHAMD Staff Contact Information

Staff Member	Phone Number	Email
Casey Saylor, Older Adult Project Manager	Office: (443) 901-1558 Cell: 443-470-9426	csaylor@mhamd.org
Program Associate	(443) 901-1568	peers@mhamd.org
Samantha Kick, Administrative Associate	(443) 901-1566	skick@mhamd.org
Susan Linkous, Administrative and Human Resource Manager	(443) 901-1586	slinkous@mhamd.org
Office Fax	Fax: (443) 901-0038	

Office location/Mailing Address:

Mental Health Association of Maryland
1301 York Rd.
Suite 505
Lutherville, MD 21093

Setting up Google Voice

What you need:

- A Google Account
- Computer or mobile phone with internet access (for sign-up)
- U.S. phone number that can forward calls after ringing

To activate your Google Voice number:

- Go to <https://voice.google.com/> and follow the prompts to set up.
- A walkthrough of the process is available here: <https://support.google.com/voice/answer/115061?co=GENIE.Platform%3DDesktop&hl=en>
- MHAMD staff is happy to assist if you have any issues.



Padlet Resource Boards

Padlet is a collaborative bulletin board software used to share resources with Connections Project volunteers.

Current Padlet resource boards include:

- Mental Health Resources for Older Adults: <https://padlet.com/csaylor4/MHresources>
- Community Resources: https://padlet.com/csaylor4/community_resources
- Volunteer Resources: https://padlet.com/csaylor4/volunteer_resources

Each Padlet board is divided into columns by topic, and each column contains individual posts. Posts may include a website or file, brief description, or an image. Volunteers can “like” posts that they found particularly useful for themselves or their connection. Padlet boards can be conveniently accessed both on the computer and through the Padlet app on iOS and Android.

Posts are added to each Padlet by the Older Adult Project Manager. Volunteers with suggestions for additional resources or Padlet topics should send relevant information to the Project Manager, along with which board they feel it should be posted to.

Supervision Check-in Questions

Looking back on the past month with your connection, please share:

1. A successful exchange that you had with your connection.
2. Any struggles that you would like to process.
3. How can the group support you today?
4. What resources did you share with your connection? Do you need any additional resources?
5. How are you doing personally? How are you taking care of your own mental wellbeing this month?



Supervision & Learning Seminar Dates

2022 Monthly Supervision Dates*

Month	Monday Meeting Date	Tuesday Meeting Date
July	7/11/22	7/12/22
August	8/1/22	8/2/22
September	9/12/22	9/13/22
October	10/3/22	10/4/22
November	10/31/22	11/1/22
December	12/5/22	12/6/22
January 2023	1/9/23	1/10/23

**Weekly office hours for make-up & drop-in supervision will be announced on a month-by-month basis*

Supervision Groups*

- Monday
 - » 3:15 - 4:15pm
 - » 6 - 7pm
- Tuesday
 - » 12 - 1pm
 - » 1:30 - 2:30pm
 - » 4:30 - 5:30pm

**Volunteers are assigned a group time at onboarding. Please let the Older Adult Project Manager know if you need to attend a different time temporarily or permanently.*

2022 Learning Seminar Dates

Date	Time	Topic
July 20, 2022	4:30 - 6pm or 7 - 8:30pm*	Volunteer Handbook review
October 19, 2022	6:30 - 8pm	To be announced
January 25, 2023	4:30 - 6pm	To be announced

**Some Learning Seminars will be offered at 2 times on the same date, so you can choose which time to attend.*



Go-To Resources

MARYLAND ACCESS POINT, BALTIMORE COUNTY:

410-887-2594 or email aginginfo@baltimorecountymd.gov

Available weekdays, 8:30am-4:30pm.

The entry point for obtaining information, screenings, and referrals for services and benefits for seniors, adults with disabilities, their families, caregivers and professionals. Calls are answered by a team of Certified Information and Assistance Specialists from the Department of Aging.

2-1-1 MARYLAND:

Dial 2-1-1 from any phone or visit 211md.org.

Available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.

211 connects Marylanders of any age to essential health and human resources.

211, Press 1 provides immediate access to a trained specialist in suicide prevention, opioid crisis intervention and mental health assistance. Crisis Specialists are also available to chat online at 211md.org or text. To text, text your zip code to TXT-211 (898-211).

If deaf or hard of hearing: call 7-1-1 to access 211 through Maryland Relay.

English and Spanish speaking specialists are available, as well as translation in 150+ languages.

MARTYLOG WELLNESS & RECOVERY CENTER WARMLINE:

410-917-2702

Available 9am-5pm on weekdays

Adults in their 50s, 60s, and 70s who know what it's like to feel depressed or anxious and are available to talk. If no one answers, leave a message with your name and number and they will call you back. The Center also provides peer support groups and events, which can be connected with through the warmline.

PRO BONO COUNSELING WARMLINE:

443-608-9182

Available 10am-8pm weekdays, 10am-6pm weekends

Speak with a licensed mental health professional who will listen to your concerns. Free and confidential. If no one answers, leave a message with your name and number and they will call you back.

CHANA BALTIMORE:


410-234-0030

CHANA provides confidential, free services to older adults who are experiencing abuse and to those who suspect an older adult is being abused. Also provide support for individuals experiencing domestic abuse.



Making Conversations Meaningful

Getting to truly know a person helps to build a solid relationship. In order to best support a person, peer support workers need to make conversations meaningful and revealing. Below are some questions adapted from [***“What Matters to Older Adults: A Toolkit for Health Systems to Design Better Care with Older Adults” \(p.13\)***](#) which will help to prompt responses which identify individual priorities, strengths and interests. This information will also help to shape goals, activities and de-escalation strategies as you will have a deeper understanding of what motivates a person, what soothes a person and what improves quality of life.

- What is important to you today?
 - What brings you joy? What makes you happy? What makes life worth living?
 - What would make tomorrow a really great day for you?
 - What are some goals you hope to achieve in the near future?
 - How do you learn best? For example, listening to someone, reading materials, watching a video.
 - What kinds of things make conversations easy and comfortable? (e.g. hearing aids, glasses, quiet spaces, private spaces)
 - What are your favorite times of day and why?
 - Name some things about your health that you hope to improve?
 - What concerns you most when you think about your happiness in the future?
- 
- Who are the people in your life that bring you comfort?
 - What do you worry about?
 - What people, places or things do you try to avoid?
 - What are the activities in your life that you never want to give up?
 - Are there other people you think I should talk with who are supporting you?

How to Participate in a Zoom Meeting

Using the “Attendee Controls”

<https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/200941109-What-Are-the-Attendee-Controls->

About

When you join a Zoom meeting hosted by another user, you are considered an attendee. The user who scheduled the meeting or was selected as the alternative host (if the host is unable to join) will have [host controls](#), including muting audio, using video, sharing your screen and more.

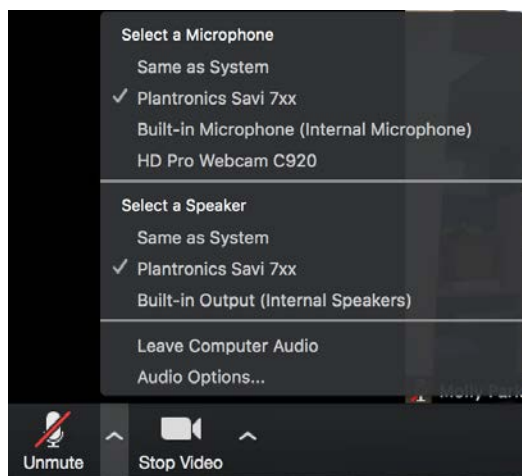


Join a Meeting

Join a meeting by clicking on a Zoom link provided by the meeting host => follow the prompts to download and run Zoom => enter the meeting ID if prompted => click to join the audio conference. When you're in the meeting, you may click on the Start Video button to start your video.

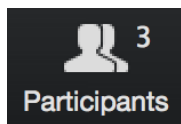
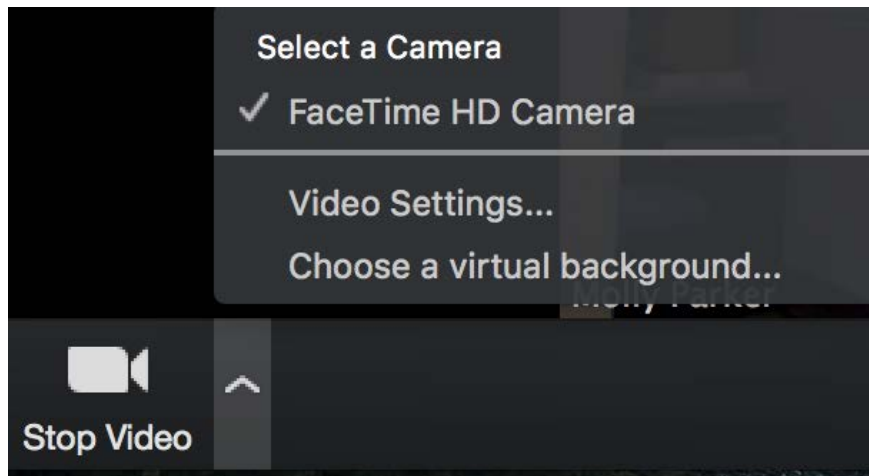
Mute/Unmute & Audio Settings

You can mute and unmute your microphone. The host also has the ability to mute you. If you click on the arrow next to the mute button, you will have additional options for audio settings. You can change your microphone, leave the computer audio or access the audio options.



Start/Stop Video & Video Settings

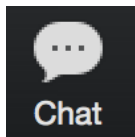
You can turn your camera on or off with the Start/Stop Video button. By clicking on the arrow next to the start/stop video button, you can change webcams, access your Zoom video settings, or select a virtual background (if enabled).



Participants

If you click on Participants, you can see who is currently in the meeting. The participants list also gives you the option to raise your hand or rename yourself.

- **Raise Hand** - notifies host and shows a prompt to simulate hand raise
- **Rename** - hover over your name to change it as it is seen in the participants list and video window

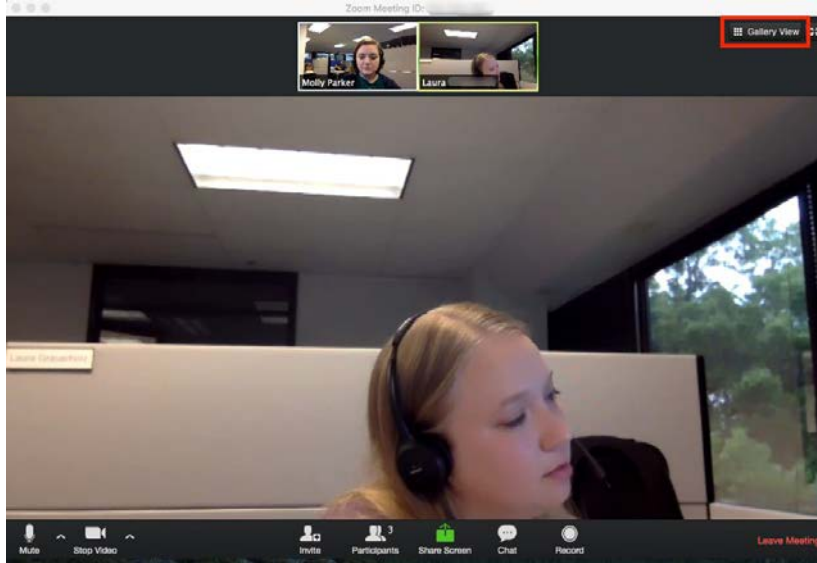


[Chat](#)

Chat with individuals or everyone in the meeting. Click **Chat** to open up the chat window and chat with other participants or view chat messages. Select the drop down next to **To:** to change who you are chatting with.

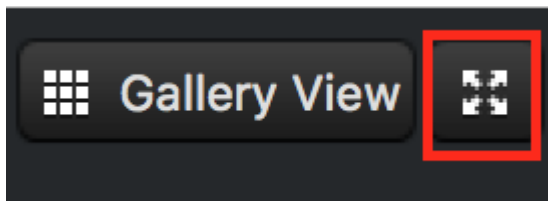
Choose video layout

At the upper right of the Zoom window, you can switch between active speaker view and gallery view. You can also switch between a shared screen and the video by clicking on a button available in this location during a screen share.



Enter/Exit Full Screen

At the top right of the Zoom window, you can enter or exit full screen mode. You can also exit full screen by clicking **Esc**.



Pin video

Pin video makes a user the primary speaker for you, instead of switching between the active speaker video. You can pin a video by right-clicking on the video of the person you want to pin or double click on their video window.

Leave Meeting

You can leave the meeting at any time by clicking on the **Leave Meeting** option at the lower right corner of the Zoom window.

For More Information

- Contact Technical Support <https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/201362003-Zoom-Technical-Support>
 - Zoom Help Center <https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us>
 - Getting Started <https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/categories/200101697-Getting-Started>
 - Tutorials <https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/sections/201740096-Training>
 - Mobile <https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/sections/200305413-Mobile>
-

Orientation Slides



Introduce yourself!

1. Your name,
2. how you spend your time,
3. some things you find meaningful,
4. and why you're choosing to volunteer with this project.



10 Things in Common

- Break into pairs and identify a writer for your group.
- Find 10 things that you and your partner have in common.
 - Make them meaningful!
 - No "we both have hands"
- After 10 minutes, we'll return to the group to discuss what worked and how we can use these skills with participants.



Learning Objectives

- 1) Introduce the Connections Project model and your role in it
- 2) Healthy Boundaries
- 3) Program Procedures
- 4) A Bit About the Brain
- 5) During a Pandemic
- 6) Practical Skills for working with Participants

Intro to the Volunteer Role

Providing hope, compassion, and encouragement.



The Connections Project is based on the evidence-based model of peer support. Peer support is a practice of meaningful connection, and research shows it is highly effective in supporting mental health and addiction recovery.

The Connections Project works to decrease the potential effects and stigma of a mental health condition while supporting aging Baltimore County citizens.

Under the guidance of MHAMD, the program provides community education, outreach, and volunteer support for adults age 60+ who are experiencing or at high risk for mental illness.

Volunteers provide support over phone, text, or video chat and meet with older adults at home or in the community.

Volunteers are aware of early warning signs of mental illness and addiction, assist older adults in accessing help, provide socialization, and are active role models.



What do peers do?

Support	Model	Share Knowledge	Empower	Connect
They are not alone! Includes active listening, strengths-based interactions, and normalizing their experiences.	Model healthy habits and inspire hope.	MHAMD has tons of information on managing stress, coping skills, and resilience. It's all at your fingertips to share.	Empower older adults to practice resilience, coping skills, healthy habits, and self-advocacy skills. Teach skills as appropriate.	Connect them with community-based supports to meet comprehensive needs during COVID-19.

Adapted from: Mental Health America, 2019



Core Values

- PERSON-CENTERED
- VOLUNTARY
- RELATIONSHIP-FOCUSED
- TRAUMA-INFORMED



Volunteer Duties & Responsibilities

Onboarding

- Participate in volunteer orientation.
- Review the Volunteer Handbook and bring any questions to volunteer supervision.
- Complete onboarding documents and background check.
- By participating in the Connections Project, volunteers agree to follow the policies, procedures, and guidance established by MHAMD.



Volunteer Duties & Responsibilities

Supervision

- Participate in monthly group supervision sessions. A list of supervision dates for the year is available in this manual's "Quick References" section.
- Record monthly contact data and resource referrals to report at supervision.
- Additional supervision opportunities are provided weekly for make-up & drop-in supervision. These weekly office hours will be announced on a month-by-month basis.



Volunteer Duties & Responsibilities

Ongoing Training & Communication

- Read the monthly digest email for program updates.
- Participate in continuing education seminars (4 per year).
- If unable to attend a scheduled seminar, review the recording in a timely manner.
- MHAMD staff will communicate with volunteers in the following manner:
 - E-Mails: Our “official” way of keeping everyone informed of new policies, changes in procedures, information, and special events. Please be in the habit of reading E-Mails regularly so you remain up to date.
 - Virtual surveys: Staff periodically use virtual surveys to collect data from volunteers. Survey invitations will be sent via email.
 - Hard copy/mailed versions of any communication, survey, or form are available upon request.



Volunteer Duties & Responsibilities

Maintain Records

- Review and submit the volunteer agreement yearly.
- Communicate changes in address and/or telephone numbers to the Older Adult Project Manager.

General

- Maintain confidentiality as outlined in onboarding paperwork.
- Communicate any concerns with the Older Adult Project Manager.
- Transportation costs are covered by the volunteer. Costs such as mileage may be written off as a charitable deduction if itemized on an individual’s annual taxes. Consult a tax professional for further information.



Volunteer Duties & Responsibilities

Maintain Consistent Contact with Participants

- Maintain consistent contact with assigned participant(s) at least once per week. Work with the participant to determine a call schedule and stick to it.
- If you need to miss a scheduled call, do your best to let the participant know ahead of time.
- Communicate participant status, resource needs, and support needs to staff. Work together with staff to support participants.



What to expect

- 1. Casey will interview potential participants.**
 - 2. You'll be paired with a participant.**
 - 3. Call the participant and introduce yourself!**
-



What to expect

4. Get to know them!

- Look for things you have in common!
- Notice strengths and struggles.

5. Empower and connect.

- Padlet bulletin boards: *Ideas for Connecting, Virtual Events in Baltimore County*
 - Coping skills and stress management tools.
-



We're all in this together.

- **Contact Casey** for support. If you have a concern about your participant or don't know what to do, reach out.
- **Group supervision meetings:** chat with Casey and other volunteers about your experiences with participants, ask questions, and get advice.
- **Connect with other volunteers**
- **Learning sessions and materials:** As topics come up, we'll work together to help everyone understand them. Volunteers can request these at any time.



Reporting

Please collect the following information to share with staff during group supervision:

- Track the number of times you connect with participants.
- Record any resources you share with participants.
- Communicate participant status, resource needs, and support needs to staff.



Healthy Boundaries



Google Voice

What you need to use Voice

- A Google Account
- Computer or mobile phone with internet access (for sign-up)
- U.S. phone number that can forward calls after ringing

Go to <https://voice.google.com/> to set up.

This link walks you through it:

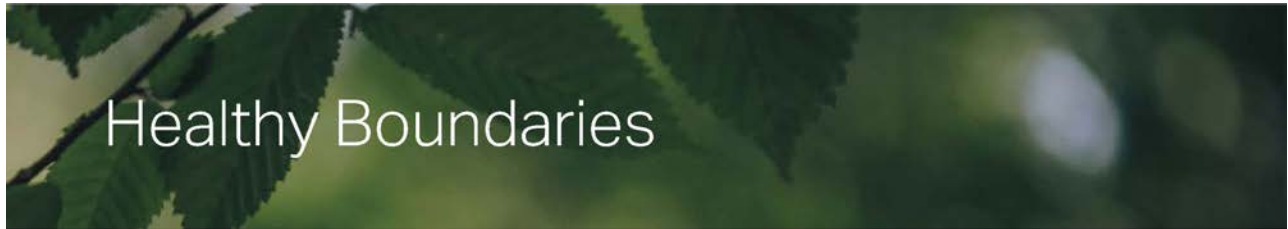
<https://support.google.com/voice/answer/115061?co=GENIE.Platform%3DDesktop&hl=en>



Healthy Boundaries

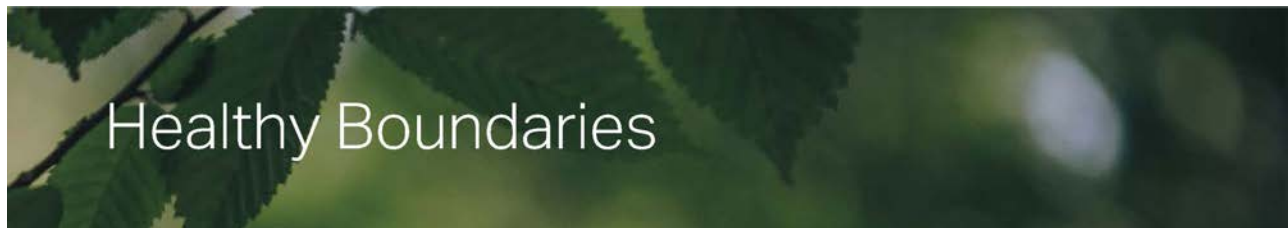
- Use designated communication tools.
 - Google Voice for texting and calling
 - Video calls: Google Duo or Zoom
 - o Email: Volunteers choosing to email participants are welcome to utilize their personal email address or create a designated email address if preferred.
- Create a schedule and stick to it.
 - Think about how often you're willing to speak with your participant. (Every other day? Once a week?)
 - Identify who calls who and when.
 - Stick to your call schedule. If you feel like the person may benefit from more frequent calls, offer to do so but let them decide to accept and frequency.





Clearly communicate expectations.

- At the beginning of the call, let the participant know how much time you have to speak (i.e. 1 hour). 10-15 minutes before the you need to leave, remind the participant what time the call needs to end. Conclude the call on time.
- If there is a planned activity that will interrupt the call schedule, let the participant know a few calls before the interruption and repeat the reminder on each call leading up to it.
- If you need to unexpectedly miss a scheduled call, do your best to let the participant know ahead of time. If that is not possible, contact the participant after the interruption concludes to apologize and confirm the next scheduled call date.
- Are you open to texting or emailing between scheduled calls? Consider your preference, then follow the same process as creating the initial call schedule, where you communicate your availability then give the participant a choice to accept and at what frequency.



- Stay within your role.
- You are not a crisis worker or a caseworker.
 - **Baltimore County Crisis line: 410-931-2214**
 - **Baltimore County MAP office: 410-887-2594**
- Record a voicemail greeting on the Google Voice number that includes the phone numbers for crisis and assistance resources.
- Take care of yourself- we're all living through a pandemic right now.



Self-Care as a Volunteer

“Self-Care” Definition:

- 1. the practice of taking action to preserve or improve one's own health.*
- 2. the practice of taking an active role in protecting one's own well-being and happiness, in particular during periods of stress.*



We
encourage
you...

- To use monthly supervision as a self-care opportunity.
- To periodically pause and consider your own needs.
- To use the Older Adult Project Manager as a resource.
- To connect with your fellow volunteers outside of supervision.
- To check in on your own mental health. Free screenings are available at Mental Health America: <https://screening.mhanational.org/screening-tools/>
- To take advantage of MHAMD's events and resources, which are built to support mental health. For example, MHAMD's publication library (<https://www.mhamd.org/publications/>) has easy-to-read factsheets on a variety of mental health experiences.
- To recognize when you need a break.



Program Procedures



No Answer Procedure

- leave them a voicemail (if possible)
- try calling them again on the next day that you're scheduled to connect.
- If you are unable to get ahold of your connection for a week or more, reach out to Casey and she will ask their emergency contact to check in on them.
- It is not our role to call the police for a welfare check.



Participant Emergency Consent Form

- Each participant will complete a [Participant Emergency Consent Form](#) to identify any special instructions for high concern incident situations.
- Know what your participant's form says and have it handy to reference.
- Be prepared to follow these special instructions when needed.



Emergency Procedures

Should the participant experience a high concern incident that falls outside of the instructions specified in the Participant Emergency Consent Form, connect them with professional help.

- Let the participant know that you are calling emergency services on their behalf to request that they come to the connection's location. If the participant is at home, reference the Participant Emergency Consent Form for their address. If the participant is not at home, verify the address before calling emergency services.
 - If you have the technology, obtain consent to call emergency services while they remain on the line, through a 3-way call. **Please note that Google Voice does not currently provide 3-way calling.*
 - If you hung up with the participant to call emergency services, call the participant back to let them know that help is on the way. Let them know that you are hanging up for now but will call back in 15 minutes to check in.
 - Call back in 15 minutes to check in. If there is no response, try again in another 15 minutes.



Emergency Procedures

Physical Emergency: Call 9-1-1

•If your connection is experiencing any of the following, it could be a sign of a medical emergency.

- Unconscious
- Labored breathing
- Bleeding
- Severe disorientation
- Sweating, pallor, complaints of unexplained pain

•If you suspect that your connection is experiencing an overdose from drugs or alcohol, call 9-1-1

•Please use your best judgement to identify other, non-health related emergencies that may put the individual at risk for immediate harm.



Emergency Procedures

Mental Health Emergency: Call 2-1-1, press 1

A mental health emergency (or mental health crisis) is defined as a time of intense difficulty, trouble, or danger. If your connection is experiencing any of the following, it could be a sign of a mental health emergency.

- Severe disruptive behaviors
- Aggressive or threatening behaviors
- Self-injurious behaviors
- Acute psychosis (Possible symptoms include delusions, hallucinations, talking incoherently, and agitation. The person with the condition usually isn't aware of their behavior)
- Suicide or suicidal thoughts
- Threats to harm self or others



Emergency Procedures

- **Contact the Older Adult Project Manager to report any referrals to emergency services within 24 hours of the incident.**
- Carry the emergency numbers with you so you have them. Tip: program the numbers into your phone's address list, if possible.
- Never diagnose, medicate, or attempt to physically move the person.



Reporting Critical Incidents

MHAMD staff are required to report critical incidents involving program participants to Baltimore County within 24 hours of becoming aware of the incident. Critical incidents include:

- Suicide attempt
- Injury to self
- Assault or injury to others
- Sexual/ physical abuse or neglect, or allegation thereof
- Inappropriate use of resources
- Incarceration of the program participant for any reason
- Accidental overdose
- Death by overdose
- Death (any cause)

Should your participant report experiencing any of the above *during your volunteer relationship*, please report it to the Older Adult Project Manager ASAP.



Reporting Abuse & Neglect

If you have reason to believe that a vulnerable adult is in danger (i.e. suspected or participant-reported physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, self-neglect, and/or exploitation), contact the Baltimore County Department of Social Services to submit a report.

Always let the participant know if you are going to make a report and encourage them to make their own report as well.

Baltimore County Department of Social Services:

410-887-8463 (8am-4:30pm on weekdays)

410-583-9398 (after-hours number)

Contact the Older Adult Project Manager to report any referrals made to Baltimore County Department of Social Services within 24 hours.



Reporting Abuse & Neglect

- Once a report is submitted, a caseworker from the Baltimore County Department of Social Services will reach out to the participant to investigate and provide support as needed.
- A report must be made even if the alleged victim is an adult when the incident "comes to light" and even if the alleged perpetrator is deceased. However, the Department of Social Services has indicated that it will not investigate these cases unless there is an indication that a child *at the present time* could be in danger.
- Participants are provided a copy of the Connections Project's procedure for Reporting Abuse & Neglect, which provides the numbers for Baltimore County Department of Social Services and CHANA Baltimore.
- Persons who report suspected incidents of abuse and neglect are protected under the law. Section 14-309 of the Family Law Article, Annotated Code of Maryland, states "any person who in good faith makes or participates in making a report under this subtitle or participates in an investigation or a judicial proceeding resulting from a report under this subtitle is immune from any civil liability that would otherwise result."



Protecting Participants Against Abuse

- All volunteers:
 - **Background checks**
 - **orientation**
 - **Supervision**
- Continued contact with referral source
- Check-ins with participant



Protecting Against Abuse

Do not:

- Ask participants for personal information including social security number, bank or financial information, etc.

Obtain personal documents or goods on behalf of participants. (i.e. picking up prescriptions, requesting personal documentation).

- Lend or give money/ ask for money.
- Place participants in situations where you stand to profit from them (i.e. try to sell them goods or property).



Evaluation Measures

- Satisfaction surveys are conducted with program participants at several points during engagement with a volunteer: 1 month, 6 months, 1 year, then every 6 months after for the duration of the relationship with the program.
 - With the participant's permission, staff will share relevant feedback with the volunteer.
 - Staff will also share generalized participant feedback with all volunteers during supervision via *Accolades & Advice*.
- Volunteers will be surveyed on their experience with the program annually.
- An exit interview will be conducted when a volunteer leaves the program.



Ending Volunteer Service



Ending Volunteer Service

- **Resignation or Leave of Absence:** If you need to discontinue a connection for any reason (short term or long term), let staff know as far in advance as possible so we can work together to support the participant in your absence. Ideally, we want to let the participant know about a volunteer's leave of absence or resignation 3-4 weeks before it takes effect
- **If Peer Support Becomes Friendship:** While it is fine to be friends with your connection while honoring your volunteer role, program expectations, and policies, it is your responsibility as a volunteer to let MHAMD staff know if the relationship is no longer able to meet these expectations.



Ending Volunteer Service

As stated in the Volunteer Agreement that was signed at onboarding,

This agreement will "continue to be in effect for one (1) year [from signature] or until such time as the volunteer notifies Mental Health Association of Maryland in writing that they intend to discontinue their volunteer services. A new Volunteer Agreement will be required annually."

- Volunteers who choose to discontinue their service can submit their intention in writing to MHAMD staff or decline to renew the annual volunteer agreement.
- Further information on MHAMD's termination policy is located in the Volunteer Agreement.



A Bit About the Brain



Aging is a normal
process-
we are aging from
the moment of birth.



Normal Changes in the Brain

- Committing new information to memory might require reinforcement
- Recall of data / names / numbers can take longer
- Multi-tasking can slow processes
- Brain shrinks raising risk for brain injury
- Metabolism slows raising risk for toxicity



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Regardless of age, healthy brains...

- Learn new information
- Create and remember memories
- Adapt to changes and challenges
- Communicate who you are as a person through your personality, behaviors, and beliefs.



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“Ageism is the stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination against people on the basis of their age.

” — WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION



Negative Impacts of Ageism

- **Cardiovascular stress.**
- **Shortened life expectancy:** when a person thinks positively about aging, their life expectancy *can increase 7.5 years*.
- **Disproportionate burden:** the way we age is impacted by the physical and social environments we live in. "Older adults with the greatest health-related needs often have the least economic and social resources available to meet them."
- **Self stigma.**

World Health Organization: [Ageism FAQ](#) and Fact File: Misconceptions on Aging & Health



Self Stigma

Decreases productivity and confidence in controlling one's motivation, behavior, and social environment.

- "I'm too old to ____."
- "No one cares about my problems, so I keep them to myself."
- "I'm retired, I have nowhere to be."

Socially ingrained: society's messages about aging can actually create self-fulfilling culture of social isolation, physical and cognitive decline, lack of physical activity and economic burden.

- **Learned helplessness:** "Everyone says I can't ____ for myself so I must not be able to."

World Health Organization: [Ageism FAQ](#) and Fact File: Misconceptions on Aging & Health



Double Stigma: Brain Health & Aging

- Of course older adults are sad, they're dying.
- Dementia is a normal part of aging.
- All older adults are lonely. It's sad but true.
- Suicidal thoughts are normal- they're going to die soon anyway.
- Addiction doesn't happen to older adults.
- Older adults are stuck in their ways; treatment won't work for them.



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Behavioral Health Data

- An estimated 1 in 5 seniors in the community experience a mental health or substance use disorder.
- Less than 1 in 3 receive the behavioral health treatment they need.
- Late life behavioral health education, prevention and early intervention programs are few and far between.
- Individuals with long- standing mental illness are living longer and many live-in settings that do not have appropriate behavioral health services.



During a Pandemic



Common reactions to crisis/ pandemic

- Increased anxiety and fear about finding resources.
- Uncertainty: how do we plan for today, tomorrow, 6 months from now.
- Checking with selves and others about symptoms.
- Excessive sanitizing and cleaning.
- Hypervigilance.
- Don't know how to keep themselves and others safe.



Tips for Coping

- Create new routines and keep the routines that make you feel good.
- If you take medication, continue taking it as prescribed and refill your prescriptions as early as possible.
- Stay in touch with the people you care about.
- Connect with others through virtual therapy and support.
- Minimize media consumption.



Managing Stress

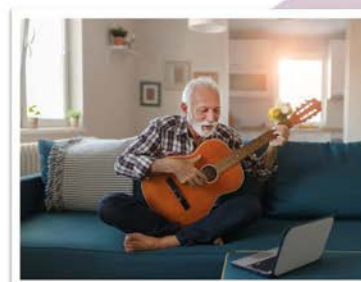
- Exercise regularly.
- Take the time to try new things or reinstate old hobbies
- Focus on things you can control.
- Set priorities.
- Control your media consumption.
- Use your support system.
- Communicate hope.



Practical Skills for working with Participants



Pillars of Wellness



When working with older adults...

- Let them lead; maximize choice.
- Be supportive but not patronizing.
- Treat them with dignity and respect.
- Appreciate that they have goals, aspirations, talents and strengths and remind them of this.
- Provide education; Avoid jargon; frame mental health as a health benefit.



Communication

- Avoid **elderspeak**: *intentionally or unintentionally demeaning communication similar to baby talk.*
- Slow your pace and repeat yourself if necessary.
- Not confrontation, but education. Focus on what can be gained, not lost.
- Dignity of Risk: self-determination and the right to take reasonable risks are essential for dignity and self esteem. Should not be impeded by overly cautious caregivers.





1. Maintain a hopeful tone.
2. Relate by sharing your own struggles and how you're coping with them.
3. Share new information, coping strategies, and resources that you learn about.
4. Ask questions to prompt participants to think about how they have addressed similar needs in the past.
5. Listen actively.
6. Provide suggestions to help people come up with ways to address their needs that might work in this pandemic environment.



What do peers do?

Support	Model	Share Knowledge	Empower	Connect
They are not alone! Includes active listening, strengths-based interactions, and normalizing their experiences.	Model healthy habits and inspire hope.	MHAMD has tons of information on managing stress, coping skills, and resilience. It's all at your fingertips to share.	Empower older adults to practice resilience, coping skills, healthy habits, and self-advocacy skills. Teach skills as appropriate.	Connect them with community-based supports to meet comprehensive needs during COVID-19.

Adapted from: Mental Health America, 2019



Padlet Resource Boards

Current Padlet resource boards include:

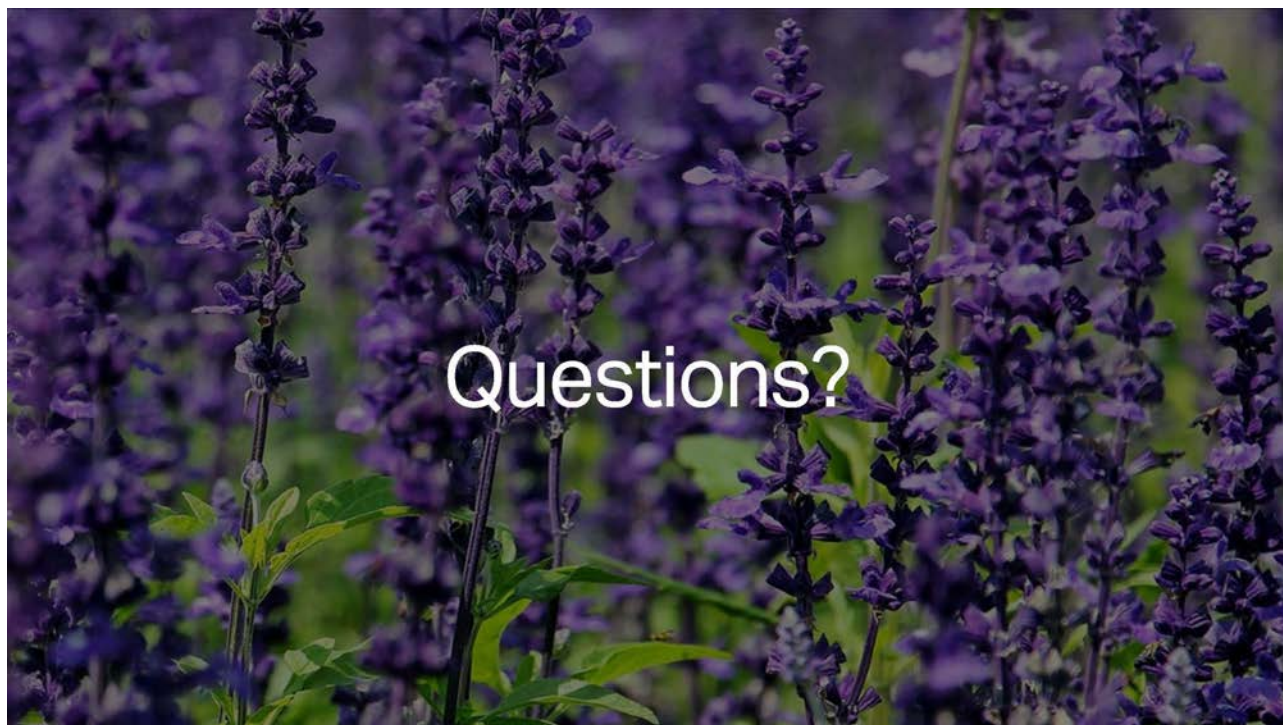
- Mental Health Resources for Older Adults:
<https://padlet.com/csaylor4/MHresources>
- Community Resources:
https://padlet.com/csaylor4/community_resources
- Volunteer Resources:
https://padlet.com/csaylor4/volunteer_resources



Your homework

- Complete background check.
 - Create your Google Voice number.
 - Think about how often you're willing to speak with your participant. (every day? Every other day? Once a week?) We encourage you to connect with each other at least once a week.
 - Review the Padlet bulletin boards and add any resources that you encounter.
 - Jot down thoughts and questions for our first supervision meeting.
-





Reference Versions of Paperwork

***For reference purposes only – signed versions are stored in volunteer file at MHAMD's office.*

- Volunteer Application
- Volunteer Agreement
- Confidentiality Statement for MHAMD Associates
- Volunteer Program Policies
- Background Check Form
- COVID-19 Precautions Policy
- Transportation Policy



Connections Project Volunteer Application

Thank you for your interest in volunteering to support older Baltimore County residents through the Connections Project!

The Connections Project works to decrease the potential effects and stigma of a mental health diagnosis while supporting aging Baltimore County citizens. The program provides community education, outreach, and volunteer support for adults age 60+ who are experiencing or at high risk for mental illness.

Eligibility of Volunteers

Individuals may apply to volunteer if they:

1. live or work in Maryland,
2. are at least 21 years of age,
3. have lived experience with a mental health condition, either personally or through a loved one, and
4. are able to meet the responsibilities outlined in the volunteer job description, including time commitments and regular access to phone and internet-based technology such as email and Zoom.

MHAMd's Connections Project webpage (located at: <https://www.mhamd.org/what-we-do/outreach-and-education/peers/connections-project/>) is kept updated with the status of volunteer recruitment (i.e. recruiting or not recruiting at this time). Applications received when not recruiting will be held until an opening becomes available, then the potential volunteer will be engaged in the application process as outlined below.

Application Process: Potential volunteers interested in learning more about the Connections Project are invited to review the Volunteer Handbook before applying. Please email questions to peers@mhamd.org. Individuals interested in volunteering are invited to complete the Volunteer Application Form on the Connections Project webpage. Assistance can be requested by contacting peers@mhamd.org.

Screening Criteria: Volunteer applications are reviewed for appropriate fit based on the Eligibility Requirements outlined above.

Interview: Applicants meeting the Eligibility Requirements will be contacted to interview. Part of the interview will be spent reviewing the Volunteer Job Description and confirming the applicant's ability to meet all position requirements. Interviews may be held in a group or individually.

Personal Reference Check: Applicants successfully completing the interview will be invited to supply 1-2 references. References will be checked by MHAMD staff to confirm the appropriateness of fit.

Background Screening: Applicants will receive a Background Check Acknowledgement/Information Form to be completed and submitted to MHAMD Human Resources (HR). A copy of this form is available for reference in the Volunteer Manual.

We look forward to receiving your application! It should take about 10-15 minutes to complete.
-The Connections Project Team

* Required

1. Name *

2. Phone number *

3. Email address *

Technology Questions

We want to utilize web-based calling to connect volunteers and participants. Please answer the questions below to help us understand your technology capabilities.

4. Do you have reliable access to a phone? *

☐ Yes

☐ No



5. If yes, is it a smartphone? *

☐ Yes

☐ No

6. Do you have reliable access to a computer with microphone and speakers for online training? *

☐ Yes

☐ No

7. Do you have reliable access to internet or wifi? *

☐ Yes

☐ No

8. How confident are you in your ability to video chat on your computer or phone? *

☐ Very confident

☐ Somewhat confident, if I have training

☐ Not confident

Getting to Know You Questions

We'll use this information to help pair you with participants.

9. Why does this volunteer opportunity appeal to you? *



10. What experience have you had providing support to someone in distress? *

11. Please explain experience you've had with older adults. *

12. How old are you? *

☐ 20-39

☐ 40-49

☐ 50-59

☐ 60-69

☐ 70-79

☐ 80+

13. How would you identify your gender? *

☐ Male

☐ Female

☐ Other

14. How would you identify your ethnicity and/or culture? *



15. If you speak any additional languages (beyond English), please list them here. *

16. What are some of your personal strengths? *

17. What are some of your personal values? *

18. What hobbies and activities do you enjoy? *

19. How many participants would you be interested in being paired with? (you can change this later if needed) *

- ☐ 1
- ☐ 2
- ☐ 3
- ☐ Other

20. If you could have one thing in common with the older adult you're paired with, what would it be? (if you have no preference, feel free to skip this question) *



Behavioral Health Background

21. How would you describe your lived experience with mental health disorders? (i.e. personally experienced depression, anxiety, or substance use; family member of someone in recovery, etc.)

22. How comfortable are you talking with others about your behavioral health experiences?

- ☐ Very comfortable
- ☐ Somewhat comfortable
- ☐ Neither comfortable nor uncomfortable
- ☐ Somewhat uncomfortable
- ☐ Very uncomfortable
- ☐ Other

23. Do you have any formal education, training or experience around behavioral health? If yes, what topics are you familiar with?

Final Questions

Almost done!

24. The safety of Connections Project participants is a priority. Do we have your permission to conduct a background check? *

☐ Yes

☐ No

25. The Connections Project also has opportunities for volunteers to help support the program beyond 1:1 phone calls. Using the list below, please check any additional projects that you would like to learn more about/ may be interested in supporting:

☐ Administrative duties (I.e. data management).

☐ Assisting with mailings at MHAMD office (I.e. packing wellness kits, stuffing envelopes)

☐ Bringing participants into the Connections Project (intake calls).

☐ Waitlist management (checking in on waitlisted participants on a monthly basis).

☐ Program evaluation calls to participants.

☐ Creative projects (I.e. designing flyers, designing cards for participants & volunteers).

☐ Volunteer Appreciation, including planning Volunteer Appreciation Week in April.

☐ Hosting or co-hosting social events for volunteers.

☐ Hosting or co-hosting social events for participants.

☐ I do not have additional volunteer interests at this time.

☐ Other



26. Peer support is a growing professional workforce in Maryland, and the Connections Project doubles as a workforce training program. Individuals pursuing their Certified Peer Recovery Specialist (CPRS) certification are welcome to intern with the Connections Project to gain experience conducting peer support with older adults. The Older Adult Project Manager holds the Registered Peer Supervisor credential, meaning they are certified to help guide you through the CPRS application process. Are you interested in learning more about available CPRS internships?

☐ Yes

☐ No

27. Are you joining the Connections Project to earn supplemental hours as a social work field student?

☐ Yes

☐ No

28. Do you have any questions about the project? If so, write them out here and we'll be sure to answer them when we follow up with you!





VOLUNTEER AGREEMENT

Please read and understand prior to engaging in a volunteer opportunity with the Mental Health Association of Maryland.

This volunteer agreement is made as of _____, 20____, between the Mental Health Association of Maryland (MHAMD), a non-profit organization, with its principal place of business at 1301 York Road, Suite 505, Lutherville, MD 21093 and _____ (Volunteer) with an address at _____.

The Mental Health Association of Maryland asks that all volunteers read and understand this document prior to agreeing to serve as a volunteer with MHAMD.

The Mental Health Association of Maryland will make every effort to match the volunteer's interests with available opportunities and needs. At best, MHAMD will have a conversation that will help match the volunteer's interests and skill set(s) with opportunities that are currently available. MHAMD reserves the right to limit or select volunteers for opportunities as deemed appropriate.

The Mental Health Association of Maryland commits to the following:

- To provide adequate information, training, and supervision for the volunteer to be able to meet the responsibilities of their position
- To treat the volunteer with respect and be receptive to the volunteer's feedback regarding ways in which we might mutually accomplish our respective tasks and/or improve the way we achieve our goals
- To provide resources and support necessary for project completion

The Volunteer commits to the following:

- To the best of their ability, to participate in required orientations and trainings and to work under the supervision of Mental Health Association of Maryland staff
- To be courteous and respectful of the views and opinions held by others with whom they come in contact with while volunteering with the organization and refrain from promoting any commercial products, religious doctrines or beliefs, or political candidates/parties during their volunteer time
- To be open and honest in all communication with MHAMD
- To comply with the law at all times

1) Term

This agreement will become effective on the date listed above and will continue to be in effect for one (1) year or until such time as the volunteer notifies Mental Health Association of Maryland in writing that they intend to discontinue their volunteer services. A new Volunteer Agreement will be required annually. The Mental Health Association of Maryland may terminate this agreement at any time with written notice.

2) Relationship of the parties

MHAMD and the volunteer agree that the relationship created by this Agreement is that of volunteer/non-profit organization and **not** that of employee/employer and that it does not create any agency, partnership, joint venture, or franchise of other similar or special relationship between the parties. The volunteer shall not have the right or authority to assume or create any obligations or to make any representations, warranties, or commitments on behalf of the Mental Health Association of Maryland, whether expressed or implied, or to bind the Mental Health Association of Maryland in any respect whatsoever.

3) Compensation and expense reimbursement

The volunteer and the Mental Health Association of Maryland agree that no compensation will be paid for the services. The volunteer agrees that they are not entitled to any of the rights of benefits afforded to MHAMD employees, including disability, unemployment, worker's compensation, medical or other insurance, vacation or sick leave, or any other employee benefit. Unless specifically agreed to in advance in writing, the Mental Health Association of Maryland is not responsible for any travel or business expenses paid or incurred by volunteer in performing the services. The Mental Health Association of Maryland may permit, in its discretion, the volunteer to use certain office space, office equipment, and supplies.

4) Volunteer Project Description

The Connections Project was developed by the Mental Health Association of Maryland as an extension of the Vibrant Aging: Peers Program. The Connections Project utilizes trained community volunteers to provide support (telephone and/or video) at least once per week to Baltimore County older adults who are experiencing mental health challenges (fear, anxiety, depression, loneliness, etc.) or an exacerbation of mental health disorders as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

See attached document for volunteer position description.

5) Availability

Please define your availability for volunteering; availability can be modified during volunteering project:

From: ____ / ____ / ____ **until:** ____ / ____ / ____

Number of hours per week: ____

Number of days per week: ____

Number of weeks per month: ____

Number of months per year: ____

Position Title	Connections Project Volunteer
Reports To	Peers Program Manager

Position Purpose

To provide supportive phone or video visits to older Baltimore County residents who are struggling with anxiety, fear, hopelessness, loneliness and other challenges

Duties and Responsibilities

- Participate in a two-hour online orientation session
- Participate in monthly supervision sessions
- Participate in monthly continuing education seminars/opportunities
- Record and report required monthly contact data to Program Manager
- Maintain consistent contact with assigned participant(s) at least once per week. Length/number of calls per week and the length of time that a pairing continues will depend on mutual agreement between the older adult and volunteer

Qualifications

- Access to a phone and email service (alternate phone numbers can be obtained through Google Voice).
- Be 21 years of age or older
- Possess good communication skills, compassion, and empathy for others who may be struggling
- Reliability; ability to consistently attend required meetings and communicate with participants at scheduled times
- Ability to speak about mental illness and addiction experiences openly with participants, without judgement or criticism
- Ability to accept feedback and willingness to learn about mental health, aging, and wellness tools
- Successful completion of a volunteer screening and background check
- Successful completion of the volunteer orientation and training

Travel Requirement

None during COVID-19

Location

Baltimore County, MD

CONFIDENTIALITY STATEMENT FOR MHAMD ASSOCIATES

As an associate of the Mental Health Association of Maryland (MHAMD), I understand that maintaining the confidentiality of the consumers, program staff and staff members, and any and all information gathered by MHAMD is essential. I will follow the following policies to safeguard the confidentiality of all information:

Any and all information regarding consumers, program staff and staff members is strictly confidential, whether obtained directly or through a third party.

I will not share any aspect of consumer, program staff or staff member information, except within appropriate activities.

I will store properly, in locked electronic and paper files, all notes and reports including consumer, program staff, or staff member information.

I will properly dispose of all notes and reports including consumer, program staff, or staff member information. Paper documents that are no longer needed will be shredded prior to disposal. The Older Adult Project Manager will inform me when a document is no longer needed.

If I have questions or concerns about information that I learn through the work activities, I will inform the Older Adult Project Manager or Director of Older Adult Programs of the information and the concern.

I agree that these policies apply to me while I am an associate of MHAMD and at all times after my association with MHAMD has ended.

I agree to abide by all federal, state and local laws in relation to confidentiality.

I agree that I have read, I understand, and I agree to abide by the guidelines above.

Printed Name: _____

Title: Connections Project Volunteer

Signature: _____

Date: _____

VOLUNTEER PROGRAM POLICIES

Volunteers are critical to the success of the Peers Connections Project and are essential to the MHAMD's day-to-day operations. Volunteers and paid staff are considered partners in implementing the mission and programs of the organization, each with complementary roles to play. Designated staff can be expected to provide orientation, training, supervision, and feedback to volunteers. MHAMD maintains a strong policy of equal volunteer opportunity. We recruit, accept, train, promote, and dismiss volunteers on the basis of personal competence and position performance, without regard to race, creed, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, age, marital status, or handicap.

Volunteer Program Procedures

Prospective volunteers are required to complete an application form for consideration in the volunteer program. All volunteers will receive a general orientation on the nature and purpose of the program and all pertinent policies and procedures. Volunteers will receive specific training to provide them with the information and skills necessary to perform their volunteer assignment. Background checks are required for the Vibrant Aging: Peers Program and Connections Project volunteers.

Harassment Policy

Volunteering should be an enjoyable experience. Harassment is not only illegal, but it also creates uncomfortable conditions and unpleasant experience for everyone involved. Any volunteer who feels harassed, by participants or MHAMD staff members, should contact the Human Resources manager, Susan Linkous (slinkous@mhamd.org or 443-901-1550 x235).

Grievance Procedure

Volunteers and staff are expected to act professionally and in accordance with their position descriptions. Should a volunteer have a grievance concerning their work environment, they should report it promptly to the MHAMD Human Resources manager, Susan Linkous (slinkous@mhamd.org or 443-901-1550 x235). Every effort will be made to achieve speedy and effective resolution, and all complaints will be treated confidentially. Confidentiality may not be guaranteed for complaints involving sexual harassment or child abuse.

Personal Responsibility

The MHAMD Vibrant Aging: Peers Program and Connections Project advises the following measures to protect volunteer privacy during participation in our programs:

- Use a Google Voice number for all telephone contacts with participants
- Use a third-party video app for video calls (i.e. Google Hangouts, Zoom, etc.) instead of Facetime, which is connected to your personal phone number
- Do not share personal information such as home address, social security number, bank, or financial information with participants

Safety and Liability

MHAMD relies on volunteers to be the best protector of their own personal safety. Volunteers should always be aware of where they are and what they are doing. Volunteers should pay attention to safety instructions and proper equipment use. Volunteers should speak with their supervisor if they have a safety concern. When a volunteer acts as a representative of the agency, acting on the agency's behalf and with its authority and within the scope of the volunteer's duties, the agency may be held vicariously liable for the actions of the volunteer. However, liability is based upon the personal acts of a person so the volunteer may also be liable for his or her actions.

Volunteer Acknowledgment

By signing below, I, the volunteer, acknowledge that I have read and understand the documents included in the Volunteer Agreement. I understand that it is my responsibility to comply with all statements included within this Volunteer Agreement. I further understand that I should consult my supervisor regarding any questions I may have. As a Volunteer, I agree to assume the risk of any accident or injury to person or property which I may sustain in connection with participation in the Connections Project. In addition, I, as a volunteer, agree to release and discharge MHAMD and any of its directors, officers, employees, partners, affiliates, and successors from any and all liability or responsibility for any such accident or injury.

Printed Name (Volunteer)

Signature

Date



1301 York Road, #505, Lutherville MD 21093 - (443) 901-1550

DISCLOSURE AND AUTHORIZATION FOR RELEASE OF INFORMATION FOR BACKGROUND CHECK

Background Screening Disclosure

I hereby authorize Mental Health Association of Maryland, through Coeus Global and its designated agents and representatives, to conduct a comprehensive review of my background through a consumer report and/or an investigative consumer report to be generated for student admission, volunteering, employment, promotion, reassignment and retention as a student, employee, independent contractor, consultant, intern or volunteer.

I understand that the scope of the consumer report/investigative consumer report may include, but is not limited to, the following areas: names and dates of previous/current employment, work experience, worker's compensation claims, criminal history records (from local, state, federal, international and other law enforcement agencies' records), sexual offender's lists, wants and warrants records, motor vehicle records, military records, educational verification, license verification, credit history, civil cases, OIG/GSA, OFAC/patriots act, any sanction lists, and drug testing.

Upon request, Mental Health Association of Maryland or Coeus Global, located at PO Box 885, Cottonwood, CA 96022, will supply a copy of the completed consumer report or investigative consumer report along with a copy of an individual's rights under the Fair Credit Reporting Act.

Authorization and Release

I authorize to Mental Health Association of Maryland and Coeus Global the complete release of these records or data pertaining to me which an individual, company, firm, corporation, nonprofit, or public agency may have. I authorize the full release of the information described above, without any reservation, throughout any duration of my student, employment or volunteer placement at Mental Health Association of Maryland.

I certify that all information provided below and on my application is correct to the best of my knowledge. Any false statements provided in this form and my application will be considered just cause for the termination as an employee or volunteer at any time.

This authorization and consent shall be valid in original, fax, or copy form.

The information provided as part of this request for background check is required by criminal courts, law enforcement agencies and other entities for identification purposes when checking records. It is confidential and will not be used for any other purpose.

All information provided by Coeus Global shall be in compliance with the Fair Credit Reporting Act (FCRA) and all applicable Federal, State and local regulations.

Signature

Date

BACKGROUND CHECK VERIFICATION FORM

TO BE COMPLETED BY APPLICANT

The information provided will be used for background screening purposes only.

Last Name	First Name	Middle Initial	
Date of Birth	Social Security Number		
Driver's License Number	Driver's License State		
Current Address	City	State	Zip Code
Primary Phone Number	Email Address		

COVID-19 Precautions Policy

Mental Health Association of Maryland, Inc.

Vibrant Aging: Peers Program and Connections Project

Regardless of vaccination status, volunteers and participants who are meeting in-person as part of the Vibrant Aging: Peers Program and/or Connections Project are required to adhere to the COVID-19 Precautions Policy outlined below. The intention is to safeguard everyone who participates in the program and reduce the spread of the virus during the pandemic.

GENERAL POLICY

COVID-19 Vaccination:

- Vaccinations are not required for volunteers or participants.
- It is up to individual discretion whether or not to share vaccination status.
- For the health and safety of all participants, volunteers, and employees MHAMD highly recommends obtaining the COVID-19 vaccination. Please contact your healthcare provider for guidance on COVID vaccines and boosters.

Mask Wearing:

As of March 21, 2022 the CDC recommends that individuals should

- "Wear a Mask When There is A Lot of COVID in Your Community.
- Wear a mask in public places where there are a lot of people around.
- If you visit someone who might get very sick from COVID-19, wear a mask when you are with them.
- If you might get sick from COVID-19, talk to your doctor about when you should wear a mask.
- You can wear a mask inside public places like grocery stores and movie theaters at any time.
- You can wear a mask in outdoor public places like parks at any time.
- If you have been with someone who is sick with COVID-19, take a self-test or go to a doctor to get tested for COVID-19."

**end excerpt from CDC Mask Guidance

The Connections Project recognizes that many of our volunteers and participants may be at risk for getting very sick when contracting COVID. The CDC recommends wearing a mask when visiting someone who might get very sick from COVID-19. Therefore:

- Volunteers and participants who are at high risk and/or prefer wearing masks for in-person visits are strongly encouraged to make this known to their connection when planning in-person visits.
- When this preference is voiced, the other party is expected to respectfully comply. If the other party is not able to comply, the in-person visit will not occur.



- The Connections Project will provide masks to volunteers and participants who request them for in-person visiting, including clear masks for use with individuals who may be hard of hearing.
- The Connections Project continues to encourage that in-person visits occur outdoors and in well-ventilated areas whenever possible.

How to wear a mask, according to the CDC:

- The mask must cover your nose.
- The mask must cover your mouth.
- The mask must fit under your chin.
- The mask must be snug on your face.
- Make sure it is easy to breathe.

REPORTING EXPOSURE

Symptoms or Exposure:

- Individuals who are experiencing COVID-19-type symptoms (such as fever, coughing, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, etc.) cannot attend in-person visits. If you develop any symptoms related to COVID-19, please call your healthcare provider right away and cancel any scheduled in-person visits. Individuals diagnosed with COVID-19 should consult with their healthcare provider for guidance on when it will be safe to resume in-person activities.
- Individuals who are not vaccinated against COVID-19 and have been in close contact with someone who has COVID-19 cannot attend in-person visits for 14 days from the date of exposure.

Contact tracing:

- If you test positive for COVID-19 within ten days of completing an in-person visit, please let MHAMD staff know so we can make every effort to contact those who were present.

CONTACT MHAMD

- Volunteers and participants who cannot adhere to this policy due to medical necessity should communicate that to MHAMD staff prior to meeting in-person. MHAMD will review appropriate accommodations on a case-by-case basis but reserves the right to limit in-person visitation with participants and volunteers who cannot adhere to this policy.
- Volunteers and participants who feel that their need for mask-wearing is not being respected are encouraged to contact the Connections Project to express their concerns.
- Contact information for Connection Project staff Casey Saylor, Older Adult Project Manager:
 - » Phone: 443-470-9426
 - » Email: csaylor@mhamd.org



By signing below, I acknowledge that I've read and understand the policies and procedures for the COVID-19 Precautions Policy. Furthermore, I recognize that as restrictions change our policies may change. I will read, review, and follow any updates to the Policy.

Signature

Date



ADDENDUM TO CONNECTIONS PROJECT VOLUNTEER ONBOARDING PACKET

Transportation Policy

Volunteers are strictly prohibited from transporting Peers Connections Project participants.

I agree that I have read, I understand, and I agree to abide by the guidelines outlined in the addendum.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Addendum Date: 09/26/2022