

Montgomery County Commission on Aging
Task Force on Racial Equity, Dementia Services and Policing
Background Information, Recommendations, and Resources

REPORT DESCRIPTION: The Montgomery County Commission on Aging’s Task Force on Racial Equity, Dementia Services and Policing (REDSP) was formed in July 2020 with a goal to provide better health and safety services in the County that are readily accessible and utilized by seniors in communities of color. Thus, the REDSP wished to explore the policies, culture, and services that influence racial equity in policing. The task force sought to understand the utilization and accessibility of dementia and Alzheimer’s services in communities of color – many of which need the services the most.

THE TASK FORCE, GUIDED BY THE MONTGOMERY COUNTY HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES (HHS) PRINCIPLES IN RECOVERY PLANNING [EQUITY DISCUSSION TOOL](#):

- Hosted listening sessions with relevant County agencies and long-term health care non-profit organizations.
- Participated in independent background research.
- Recommended policy changes on best practices and local needs for police departments and public safety agencies.
- Explored ways to increase diversity (including cognitive diversity, racial diversity, cultural diversity, and diversity of thought, culture, and approaches) with law enforcement Montgomery County.

INFORMATION REGARDING PUBLIC OPINION OF LAW ENFORCEMENT AND PUBLIC SAFETY

Systemic Racism, Beyond Policing:

Communities of color have experienced decades of pain, hardship, and devastation as a result of systemic racism and lax policies that fail to hold police accountable for misconduct necessitating support for transformative policies that promote police accountability and reimagine public safety. This lack of trust continues to the present. According to the latest PBS News Hour-NPR-Marist poll, “two-thirds of Black Americans don’t trust the police to treat them equally while most White Americans do. Also, nearly half of Black Americans have very little or no confidence that police officers in their community treat people with different

skin colors the same. But overall, only 18 percent of Americans take that view — an illustration, in itself, that people of different races are living different realities in the United States.”

The Task Force explored one aspect of these complex relationships: the overlap between Black and Brown seniors’ safety and health needs by examining the dementia outreach services provided by law enforcement and other public safety agencies who implement existing locative guidelines, rules, and procedures. While current practices are intended to prevent wandering, increase vulnerable individuals’ safety, and facilitate rescues in Montgomery County, concerns about existing law enforcement and other public safety agencies’ systems continue to mount as seniors of color are disproportionately impacted by adverse experiences with policing and hardest hit by overcriminalization.

Montgomery County Government’s Office of Legislative Oversight, July 21, 2020, Report Number 2020-9, on “Local Policing Data and Best Practices” stated that comprehensive changes are needed to address the current policing practices and achieve meaningful accountability.

The Task Force took a closer look at this issue as it is related to seniors of color with forms of dementia such as Alzheimer’s Disease who, due to their condition, may wander from safe environments. These seniors may potentially face problematic encounters with law enforcement.

RESEARCH CURRENT PRACTICES

During summer 2020, the Task Force met the Mid-Atlantic Alzheimer’s Association to discuss dementia prevalence and care among Black and Brown communities compared to the White population. The Task Force also met with units of the Montgomery County Police Department that have responsibility for interventions with people experiencing the effects of dementia. Below are summaries of those meetings.

Synopsis of Listening Sessions:

- **Mid-Atlantic Alzheimer’s Association** – On August 6, 2020 Community Liaison, Sheila Griffith of the Mid-Atlantic Alzheimer’s Association, presented facts and figures regarding Alzheimer’s and dementia care in communities of color. Black seniors are two times more likely to have dementia than White seniors. According to the National Institute on Aging, dementia is the loss of cognitive functioning—thinking, remembering, and reasoning—and behavioral abilities to such an extent that it interferes with a person’s daily life and activities. Latinx are one and a half times more likely, than White seniors, to have dementia. Ms. Griffith explained that while “not a disease, dementia is an underlining set of symptoms that may develop into or expose cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and Alzheimer’s disease.” She also delineated that stressors from “racism- related” depression negatively affects Black seniors’ health.
- **Montgomery County Police Autism/Intellectual, Developmental Disabilities (IDD), Alzheimer’s and Dementia Outreach Unit** – On August 20, 2020 Police Officer Laura Reyes of the Montgomery

County Police’s Alzheimer’s and Dementia Outreach Unit presented estimated demographic information about seniors’ race, ethnicity, gender, and neighborhood of the outreach programs provided by the dementia unit. However, from her presentation Task Force members were able to learn that the County does not uniformly collect the rate and frequency of law enforcement services used by seniors of color. While the utilization information is collected at the initial intake, it is not shared with agencies within the County in a manner that allows analysis to improve services. She talked about the programmatic outreach to provide tools and resources that prepare individuals, caregivers, including family, and the community for effective safety measures. During this presentation, we learned that police recruits undergo 40 hours of Crisis Intervention Team training. In terms of funding for this Unit, the Re-imagining Public Safety Informational Report showed a dedicated operating budget for Crisis Response and Support.

- **Montgomery County Management Search and Rescue** – On September 2, 2020 Officers Jason Huggins and Johnathon Greene of the Management Search and Rescue team presented the quantity of encounters their unit has had with seniors exhibiting signs of dementia or some other cognitive impairment or mental illness. They confirmed that they do carry weapons when responding to both “pro-active” and “call-in” searches in approaching seniors. However, the team reported that none of the encounters they have had to date involved violence or weapons. The Management Search and Rescue confirm that race related data is not tracked, although they believe this data is collected at intake.

TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on information gained through the listening sessions and independent background research the recommendations developed by the Task Force on Racial Equity, Dementia and Policing are as follows:

OBJECTIVES	SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS
<p>Use of Resources-- Assess the interaction of the Police Department and People with Dementia.</p>	<p>A. The County should review and consider the feasibility of implementing a program like the CAHOOTS program. This is a thirty-one year old program in Oregon. It provides a model of best practice for triaging calls to teams of social workers and medics who work together to handle crisis intervention calls, instead of the police. The cost savings are considerable. The CAHOOTS program budget is about \$2.1 million annually, while the combined annual budgets for the Eugene and Springfield Police Departments are \$90 million. In 2017, the CAHOOTS teams answered 17% of the Eugene Police Department’s overall call volume. The program saves</p>

	<p>the City of Eugene an estimated \$8.5 million in public safety spending annually. https://whitebirdclinic.org/what-is-cahoots/More detailed information is provided below, under “References.”</p> <p>B. Alternatively, if there is capacity, we recommend having trained Fire and Rescue staff handle these Alzheimer's/Dementia outreach services, along with social workers, who work for Fire & Rescue. Field fire and rescue staff and social workers are unarmed and generally viewed in “helping” rather than “hurting” roles.</p> <p>C. If the police department continues to provide these services, we recommend considering use of officers working with social workers, specifically performing searches, and trained in dementia and crisis intervention.</p> <p><i>Options A, B, or C could be tested through a pilot program.</i></p>
<p>Training –</p> <p>In-depth, ongoing training of police officers and first-responders on a more frequent basis on cognitive disabilities, engaging seniors, Dementia/Alzheimer’s, and mental illness.</p>	<p>Training should include racial equity practices. Training should be provided no less than quarterly. We recommend “competency testing” on information learned and practiced before police/first-responders are dispatched to handle these services. Intensive training on handling mental health crises and trauma should be similar to that received by mental health professionals and the mental health first-aid training offered to community organizations.</p>
<p>Database –</p> <p>Use a uniform database for providing definitive, usable data and tracking on race/ethnicity, age, gender, neighborhood/location, living situation, (e.g., at home, assisted living).</p>	<p>Data needs to include disaggregated demographic categories. Data held by the police department, or any other County agency should be transparent and posted on the County website for public to view and access. The data collected should be applied to determine if services are being provided in a racially equitable manner.</p> <p>Montgomery County Police Department’s computerized dispatching systems should allow all 911 or emergency calls for persons living with dementia, to be immediately reported, or “tagged,” to Montgomery Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Aging and Disability Resource Unit. This process is consistent with Freedom of Information Act. This allows for all calls dealing with aging issues to be viewable by HHS. HHS is then</p>

	equipped to gather information about demographics, particularly race and ethnicity, to build insight around persons with dementia to better understand practices surrounding race and policing. Information gained through data sharing can foster fact-based technologies, develop better decisions, and improve standards for police engagement.
Community Surveys – Surveys to communities of color to assess their trust in and use of police services as well as other Montgomery County agencies.	A survey will determine if, because of police mistrust, communities of color may be less likely to use needed services. Asking residents if they would use services, why/why not, and if they may ever have needs for them would provide valuable insight and a baseline for future measurement. Feedback from communities of color would help to identify if Dementia Services are underutilized based on distrust of police, unfamiliarity with the services or other factors.
Program Assessments – Assessments of interactions with people with dementia	Periodic assessments must take place to evaluate the effectiveness of Dementia Services. Audits should take place at a minimum of bi-annually or more frequently if deemed necessary.
Considerations on Racial Equity – Montgomery County Government agencies must apply a racial equity lens when delivering services to and utilized by County residents.	Racial equity is an urgent moral and socioeconomic endeavor for our community to thrive. Applying a racial equity lens will drive focus and actions towards building services that are racially equitable. Focusing on racial equity helps with placement of the services in communities where they are most needed.
Legislative – Add the word “dementia” to Maryland state law - The Ethan Saylor Alliance for Self-Advocates as Educators or Ethan’s Law.	Ethan’s Law is named for Ethan Saylor, who died of asphyxiation, in January of 2013, at the hands of an off-duty Frederick County Sheriff’s Deputy. Ethan’s Law should include the word “Dementia” as a part of its overall provisions and training for public safety professionals. Ethan’s death made advocates push for increased training for first responders to improve communication with people who have intellectual or developmental disabilities, however the law omits those with dementia.
Funding –	Montgomery County Police Department, Fire and Rescue, or whichever public entity continues to handle the Dementia Services, has an opportunity to apply for a grant. It is the Competitive Grant Solicitation for ‘Reducing

<p>Pursue grant opportunities with the U.S. Department of Justice.</p>	<p>Injury and Death of Missing Individuals with Dementia and Disabilities Program.’ The program provides funding to agencies and nonprofit organizations to develop or operate programs to prevent wandering, increase vulnerable individuals’ safety, and facilitate rescues. .</p>
<p>Partnership Opportunities-- Foster partnership opportunities with community organizations to augment safety and dementia outreach services.</p>	<p>Partnerships with Montgomery County Government agencies and Regional Municipalities and organizations is a way to learn, brainstorm, and share best practices. The partnership may include the African American Health Program, Latino Health Initiative, Asian American Health Initiative and Commission on Aging.</p>
<p>Special Needs Registry-- Develop a voluntary special needs registry to give emergency personnel quick access to critical information on registered individuals with special needs</p>	<p>In some police departments, there is a Voluntary Autism and Special Needs Registry that gives emergency personnel quick access to critical information on registered individuals with special needs. The County could adopt a similar voluntary registry to enroll persons with dementia. Information could be shared with the Montgomery County Health Department, Police, Fire, and other emergency workers to assist in responding to an emergency situation. This would streamline communication and coordination between departments and agencies.</p>

CONCLUSION

Strengthening local accountability systems that complement racially equitable practices is in the best interest of seniors in communities of color within Montgomery County. While definitive data is not yet available regarding the use of dementia services, it is important to adhere to racial equity principles in health and safety. Local and state policy changes are vital to setting accountability standards for the safety and well-being of older residents in Montgomery County.

Thank you, in advance, for your attention and consideration, on our report and recommendations, on Racial Equity, Dementia Services and Policing. The following individuals contributed to this report: Amoke Alakoye, Jean Dinwiddie, Karen Maricheau, Katie Smith, Arlee Wallace (Program Manager of the African American Health Program) and Arthur Williams.

Respectfully,

The Montgomery County Commission on Aging

REFERENCES

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- NPR on the CAHOOTS program, <https://www.npr.org/2020/06/10/874339977/cahoots-how-social-workers-and-police-share-responsibilities-in-eugene-oregon>