

2023 VA Be Connected Community Mental Health Summit

October 19, 2023 | 8:30 - 12:00 Virtual Event

All times are Arizona (MST)

Speakers & Breakout Session Presenters

(General Session: in order of Appearance)

Thomas Winkel, MA, LPC, NCC - Director, Arizona Coalition for Military Families



Thomas is the Director of a nationally-recognized collective impact initiative focused on building Arizona's statewide capacity to care for all service members, veterans, their families and communities. He was a principle team member in reducing the deaths by suicide among Arizona National Guard members from the highest level in its history to zero for over three years. He is also a principle leader in the creation and implementation of both Be Connected and the Arizona Roadmap to Veteran Employment.

Mr. Winkel worked on the development of the White House Executive Order - PREVENTS, is on the Governor's Workforce Arizona Council and Commission for Service and Volunteerism, has spoken, nationally, internationally, at the White House and at Congressional Hearings on a range of subjects and has been the Lead and Co-Lead on Arizona's Governor/Mayor Challenges SAMHSA/VA Team for the past 11 years.

Mr. Winkel is a combat veteran of the United States Marine Corps and served in the Arizona and Oregon Army National Guard. His service in the U.S.M.C. included tours in Japan, the Philippines and Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm during the first Gulf War.

Jennifer S. Gutowski, MHA, FACHE - Director, Southern Arizona VA Health Care System (SAVAHCS)



Jennifer S. Gutowski, MHA, FACHE was appointed as Director of the Southern Arizona VA Health Care System on February 2, 2020. The SAVAHCS comprises a VA Medical Center in Tucson, and seven community clinics located in Safford, Casa Grande, Sierra Vista, Yuma, Green Valley, and Northwest and Southeast Tucson.

Ms. Gutowski joined the VA in 1999 and has a track record of progressive professional development and career growth spanning field management experience, operations support, and program management. She served as Director of the VA Pacific Islands Health Care System (VAPIHCS) Honolulu from May 2017 to January 2020. In that position, she oversaw a broad range of medical services, with an annual budget of over \$335 million serving approximately 129,000 Veterans throughout Hawaii, Guam, American Samoa and Saipan in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

Ms. Gutowski was Interim Director of the SAVAHCS from January 2016 through March 2017. She served as the System's Associate Director from July 2012 through January 2016 and again from March through May 2017. Prior to 2012, Ms. Gutowski had served as Acting Associate Director and Assistant Director of the Edward Hines, Jr. VA Hospital near Chicago, and held various positions at the VA Long Beach (California) Health Care System.

Leslie Lockridge DNP, RN - Associate Director of Patient Care Services, Phoenix VA Health Care System (PVAHCS)



Dr. Lockridge is the Associate Director, Patient Care Services/Nurse Executive (ADPCS/NE) for the Phoenix VA Health Care System (PVAHCS). She previously served as the Acting ADPCS/NE since November 2019, overseeing Nursing Services, Social Work Service, Sterile Processing Service, and the Chaplain Service.

Dr. Lockridge earned a Doctor of Nurse Practice (DNP) with an emphasis in Health Systems Leadership from Chamberlain University, a Master of Science in Nursing (MSN) from Middle Tennessee State University, and a Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) from Tennessee State University. Dr. Lockridge is a 2022 graduate of the Federal Executive Institute (FEI) and a 2018 graduate of Healthcare Leadership Development Program (HCLDP). She has served as clinical faculty at Tennessee State University and is a Professor of Practice at Arizona State University's (ASU) Edson College of Nursing and Health Innovation. Dr. Lockridge is board certified as a critical care nurse (CCRN) and a Nurse Executive (NE-BC).

Steven J. Sample, MS, CHC, VHA-CM - Director Northern Arizona VA Health Care System (NAVAHCS)



Steve Sample was appointed as the Medical Center Director at the Northern Arizona VA Health Care System (NAVAHCS) effective August 14th, 2022. He had served as the Associate Director of NAVAHCS since July 2021. Prior to his appointment, Mr. Sample served as the Assistant Director for the Southern Arizona VA Health Care System (SAVAHCS).

Mr. Sample is a 2017 graduate of Leadership VA (LVA) and Health Care Leadership Development Program (HCLDP). He joined the VA as the Tucson VA Compliance Officer in 2007. He subsequently served as the team lead for the Office of Compliance and Business Integrity's Consultation and Assessment Section under Quality, Safety and Value. Prior to his appointment to the Executive Leadership Team, he served as the Chief of Group Practice and Management Support Service encompassing patient access to care, strategic planning, executive decision support, systems redesign, VERA, managerial cost accounting, and data analytics.

Prior to his tenure with the VA, Mr. Sample served in a variety of leadership positions, completing 23 years of service in the Air Force. He was a command pilot and flew combat missions during Operations Desert Storm and was the deployed commander of a combat flying squadron during Operation Allied Force. Mr. Sample is a graduate of the Air War College and Air Command and Staff College.

Marcus Johnson - Deputy Director of Community Engagement and Regulatory Affairs, Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (AHCCCS)



Marcus Johnson became the Deputy Director of Community Engagement and Regulatory Affairs position for Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (AHCCCS) beginning June 12, 2023. Previously, he served as Director of State Health Policy and Advocacy for Vitalyst Health Foundation, where he oversaw Vitalyst's public policy agenda and strategies to support integration of the physical, mental, and social determinants of health. In that work, he contributed to numerous policy changes in Arizona and is committed to advancing systems that are designed to improve community health.

Dana C. Allmond - Cabinet Executive Officer of the Arizona Department of Veterans' Services



Following in the footsteps of her grandfather and father, retired Army Lt. Col. Dana Allmond has committed her life to public service and currently serves as the Cabinet Executive Officer of the Arizona Department of Veterans' Services.

The daughter of a Vietnam-era Veteran, Lt. Col. Allmond enlisted in the U.S. Army Reserve as an administrative specialist in 1989. She later attended the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York, graduating with a Bachelor of Science degree in Individual Psychology. She earned her commission as a Second Lieutenant in 1994. Lt. Col. Allmond also has a Masters in Counseling and Leader Development from Long Island University and a Master of Business Administration from Arizona State University.

Throughout her military career, Lt. Col. Allmond was a tactical officer, company commander, served in a combat zone, and was a Chief Executive Officer and Battalion Commander. She also led Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine, Coast Guard and Department of Defense civilian personnel at six Military Entrance Processing Stations. After retiring from the military, Lt. Col. Allmond continued her service with Veteran health care groups in Southern Arizona.

Walt Strong - Assistant Director, Phoenix VA Regional Office



Walt was appointed as an Assistant Director in July 2023. He shares responsibility for the effective and efficient direction, control, and operation of benefits delivery for Veterans and dependents residing in Arizona.

Alexandra Cassidy, MSW - Program Manager for PRRC/ICMHR, Northern Arizona VA Health Care System (NAVAHCS)



Ali Cassidy has served in multiple roles within the Northern Arizona VA Health Care System (NAVAHCS) during the past 15 years, including being the first Suicide Prevention Coordinator at the facility. She has been in her current role for 12 years as Program Manager for the PRRC/ICMHR Teams which serve Veterans with Serious Mental Illness (SMI). Before coming to the VA, Ali worked in community mental health in Virginia and Arizona. She has a Master's degree in Social Work from Virginia Commonwealth University and is a proud Army spouse.

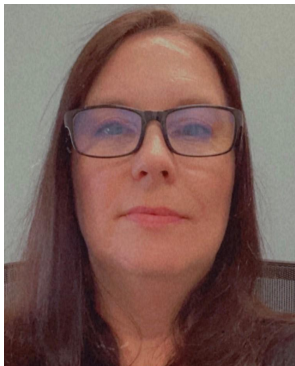
Chuck Weinberg, LICSW, BCD - Local Recovery Coordinator and Coordinator for Employee Assistance Program, Veterans Health Administration, Hershel 'Woody' Williams VAMC



Chuck Weinberg received a BA in psychology from the College of William and Mary, and an MSW from the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. Now an independently licensed board certified clinical social worker, Chuck has worked at the Huntington VAMC for sixteen years. He is also the Coordinator of the Employee Assistance Program. Chuck has published articles in the Psychiatric Rehabilitation Journal (with Boston University), the Recovery to Practice Initiative through Yale and SAMHSA, the Copeland Center, and the National Empowerment Center. He has recently co-authored an article on Mindful Meditation for Veterans and Employees which was published in Healthcare Executive magazine.

Breakout Session Speakers: *Listed in alphabetical order*

Nicole Abdul-bari, MSW, LCSW - Suicide Prevention Coordinator, Phoenix VA Health Care System (PVAHCS)



Nicole Abdul-Bari graduated from Portland State University with a Master of Social Work. Nicole is Board Certified as a Licensed Clinical Social Worker in the State of Arizona and Nevada, and has over 20 years' experience as a Social Worker. Nicole's experience has led her to work for Southwark Council, Sheffield City Council, and Devon County Council in the United Kingdom for over eight years, Washoe County Nevada, State of Nevada Dini-Townsend State Hospital, VA Hospital in Reno, Nevada and several Departments in the Phoenix VA Health Care System (PVAHCS). Nicole currently works on the Suicide Prevention Team as a Suicide Prevention Coordinator the Phoenix VA. Nicole's diverse background and experience has led her to live and visit several countries, including Guinea, West Africa while working with the Peace Corps and working in the United Kingdom. Nicole's husband is an Air Force Veteran, and she has a passion for helping Veterans improve the quality of their lives by helping them gain access to services, knowledge of available resources and beneficial knowledge in order to be happy and mentally healthy.

Billy Gibson, Jr. - Health and Wellness Coach, Whole Health Department, Phoenix VA Health Care System (PVAHCS)



I am Billy Gibson, a United States Air Force veteran, and a motivational speaker. I will graduate from Grand Canyon University next spring with a degree in Sociology before returning to begin a Master's program in Social Work. Currently, I work at the Phoenix VA Health Care System (PVAHCS) in the Whole Health Department as a Health and Wellness Coach.

Since finding recovery, I have been dedicated to helping people who suffer from wounds that do not show scars. My experience comes from being one of those people and sharing my experience, strength, and hope that took me from being wounded to my present life experiences in recovery.

Jennifer S. Gunther, MD - Medical Director of Inpatient Psychiatric Unit and Electroconvulsive Therapy (ECT) Service, Southern Arizona VA Health Care System (SAVAHCS)



Dr. Gunther is a board-certified Psychiatrist and an Assistant Clinical Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Arizona. She is the Medical Director of the Southern Arizona VA Health Care System (SAVAHCS) 1W Inpatient Psychiatric Unit and of the Electroconvulsive Therapy (ECT) Service. Dr.

Gunther is a member of the International Society Of Electroconvulsive Therapy and Neurostimulation (ISEN). She received her Doctorate of Medicine from the University of Hawaii John A. Burns School of Medicine (JAMBSOM) and completed her Psychiatric Residency at the Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC). Prior to coming to SAVAHCS in 2008, she worked in community mental health. Her ambition is to provide quality and compassionate care to those Veterans with severe mental illness.

Rebekah Leigh - Site Director, VA My Life, My Story Project for Phoenix VA Health Care System (PVAHCS)



Rebekah Leigh currently works as the Site Director and writer/editor at the Phoenix VA Health Care System (PVAHCS) where she manages the My Life, My Story project (MLMS). As part of the original team at the Madison, WI VA where the project was developed, Leigh helped disseminate the program to VA hospitals around the country. She has collaborated with The University of Arizona Medical School and Arizona State University to train students and medical residents in the patient interview process. Additionally, in her role as a Whole Health Peer Partner, Leigh facilitates sessions with veterans to help support their health and wellness goals. As a consultant to Televeda, Ms. Leigh is assisting in the development of Project Hózhó which seeks to expand mental health and suicide prevention services to American Indian and Alaska Native populations.

Kris Leon - Recreation Assistant - Whole Health program, Phoenix VA Health Care System (PVAHCS)



I am a US Army Signal Corps Veteran, and now I am happy to be a Recreation Assistant with the Whole Health program at the Phoenix VHA Phoenix VA Health Care System (PVAHCS). Whether I am guiding Yoga, Tai Chi, or a Fitness class, I offer mindful movement to Veterans, and encourage them to live their best lives. Discover what matters most to you and live Whole Health every day.

Brandi Luedtke, PsyD, HSPP - Program Manager/Psychologist for PTSD and MST Program; Psychologist and Director of Clinical Operations, Phoenix VA Health Care System (PVAHCS)



Dr. Brandi Luedtke is a Clinical Psychologist and Consultant whose main interests include working with those impacted by trauma exposure and PTSD, and in the development and dissemination of scientific-based mental health interventions.

Dr. Luedtke received her undergraduate degree at The Ohio State University and her Master's and Doctorate degrees at the University of Indianapolis. She completed her doctoral internship at the Cincinnati Veterans Affairs Medical Center and has spent the last decade and more in clinical, research, and leadership positions. She currently serves as the Program Manager of the PTSD/MST program at the Phoenix VA Health Care System (PVAHCS). In addition, she has served as a consultant lending her clinical expertise in trauma-related disorders to develop various couples-based interventions and retreats, including working with Walter Reed National Military Medical Center and American Sniper's Chris Kyle Frog Foundation. Dr. Luedtke's passion lies in teaching, training, and supervision in addition to clinical work. She has trained and supervised over 100 clinicians in Cognitive-Behavioral Conjoint Therapy for PTSD and has provider status in several other effective PTSD treatments, such as Cognitive Processing Therapy and Prolonged Exposure and MDMA-assisted psychotherapy for PTSD. She is currently the PI on an Investigator Initiated Trial examining MDMA-assisted CBCT for PTSD at the PVAHCS in collaboration with the Multidisciplinary Association of Psychedelic Studies (MAPS) organization.

Troy Parson, M.Div., D.Min., BCC - Chief of Chaplain Service, Southern Arizona VA Health Care System (SAVAHCS)



Troy Parson is a former Army Infantry Chaplain. He completed his doctorate research, "Examining the Efficacy of Pastoral Interventions with Inpatients Diagnosed with PTSD" in 2013.

Troy facilitates the Evidenced-Based Program, *Building Spiritual Strength*, which was developed by VA Researcher, Dr. Irene Harris, and continues to be empirically proven as a viable resource for Veterans experiencing PTSD and Moral Injury.

Troy is passionate about connecting with Veterans who are experiencing spiritual crises to facilitate their vision to see past their spiritual injury by the use of integrated Evidence Based Practices and appropriate spirituality that breathes life back into their soul.

Lori Robinson - Veteran, Northern Arizona VA Health Care System (NAVAHCS)



I was born in Southern California, but moved to Missouri when I was 16 to help care for my grandmother. While in Missouri I attended Northeast Missouri State University and obtained my Bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice. Upon graduation in May 1984, I was commissioned into the US Army as a 2LT in the Signal Corps.

After completing Officer Basic School at Fort Gordon, Georgia, I was deployed to South Korea to serve as a Tropospheric Scatter Platoon Leader. While in Korea, I also served as the leader of the Korean Telephone Upgrade Survey Team. During my return trip to the United States, I was promoted to 1LT.

My next assignment was at the US Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. I held several positions there, all within the same organization.

I had planned to make the military my career, however, as a result of my failure to make promotion to Captain (a devastating blow), I was honorably discharged in 1988, and moved to Virginia with my now ex-husband. In 1997, I moved to Arizona, and I have lived in the Prescott area since then.

R. Scott Williams, MAC - Program Support Assistant, Southern Arizona VA Health Care System (SAVAHCS)



I am a U.S. Army veteran who has been clean now for 23-years, following a 22-year extensive drinking and drugging career. While arresting the disease of Addiction is challenging, it is not HARD. Let's connect the dots together.

Joseph Zollo, MD - Team Lead for Repetitive Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation at Phoenix VA Health Care System (PVAHCS)

An engineer and a psychiatrist, Dr. Zollo uses machines and non-oral medications to make people happy. He earned his BS with honors from Columbia University in Mechanical Engineering and his MS from Stanford University, where he concentrated in Digital Control Systems and Robotics.

His first career was at Northrop Aircraft in Los Angeles as a design engineer. He graduated from Vanderbilt University Medical School and completed his psychiatry residency at the University of Chicago, where he was the chief resident in 2002. Dr. Zollo provided psychiatric and substance use disorder treatment to adolescent and adult patients in the Midwest and Northeast, before coming to Arizona in 2023. Of note, he was the director of Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation (TMS) at The Ohio State University Medical Center, where he co-managed the Intravenous Ketamine Clinic and delivered Electroconvulsive Therapy. At the Phoenix VA Health Care System (PVAHCS), Dr. Zollo is the team lead for Repetitive Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation (TMS) and is developing programs in Nasal Esketamine, Intravenous Ketamine, and Electroconvulsive Therapy.