

Press Release

March 16, 2022



Finding our Way Back to Mental Health

The Need for Accessible, Affordable Treatment in the midst of collective trauma

Yesterday, Elizabeth Hughes, Senior Director of Insight Region™, The Community Foundation for Northern Virginia's Center of Community Research, presented the findings in the report *Finding our Way Back to Mental Health* at the annual [Shape of the Region Conference](#). This conference highlighted the complex barriers to basic mental health service-therapy, helpful medications, early interventions, as well as others. Over 300 persons attended, about half in person, and half online, from a near complete cross section of civil society- government workers, nonprofit and foundation employees, social changemakers, private sector businesses, and representatives from state, local, and national government offices. The conference featured multiple panels of national and local experts for candid discussions of the challenges of accessing basic mental health services in Northern Virginia, and what innovative ideas and opportunities may exist to address this critical issue that impacts us all.

The discussion of the unique challenges for access to mental health presents a massive opportunity, and a stark warning: whilst 750,000 adults in Northern Virginia have mental health needs, 370,000 who want therapy or counselling are unable to get it.

The report investigates four systemic barriers to people getting the care they need, offering recommendations on how Northern Virginia can work to support this large group of people by addressing systemic barriers to treatment, and what roles the nonprofit sector, from foundations to community programs and others, can play. The full report is available [here](#).

In the words of Regina James M.D, our keynote speaker, **“Getting to mental health is like finding a monument in an old city on winding, diverging roads- the destination may be obvious, but getting there is not.”**

Thank you once again to our presentation partners, the [American Psychiatric Association Foundation](#), [Asian American Chamber of Commerce](#), [Claude Moore Charitable Foundation](#), [Dulles Regional Chamber of Commerce](#), [Greater Reston Chamber of Commerce](#), [Loudoun Chamber of Commerce](#), [George Mason University College of Health & Human Services](#), [Northern Virginia Black Chamber of Commerce](#), [Northern Virginia Chamber of Commerce](#), [Northern Virginia Health Foundation](#), [Northern Virginia Community College](#), [Northern Virginia Regional Commission](#), [Northern Virginia Technology Council](#), [Potomac Health Foundation](#), [Prince William Chamber of Commerce](#), [VA Asian Chamber of Commerce](#), and [VA Hispanic Chamber of Commerce](#).

We would also like to thank our event sponsors, whose support helped make the event possible:

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And we would like to thank our speakers, who offered their expertise and experience in addressing the critical issues discussed:

Chaplain Tahara Akmal, MA, BCC, Medstar Washington Hospital Center

Dr. Alfiee M. Breland-Noble, Founder of the AAKOMA Project

Claudia Campos Galván, Chief Programs Officer and Mental Health Director at Nueva Vida

Sandy Chung, M.D, President-Elect of the American Academy of Pediatrics

Eileen Ellsworth, President and CEO of the Community Foundation for Northern Virginia

Darcy Gruttadaro, J.D, Director at the Center for Workplace Mental Health at the American Psychiatric Association Foundation

Elizabeth Hughes, Senior Director of Insight Region™, the Community Foundation for Northern Virginia's Center for Community Research

Regina James, M.D, Deputy Medical Director and Chief of the Division of Diversity and Health Equity at the American Psychiatric Association

Dr. Germaine M. Louis, Dean of the College of Health and Human Services at George Mason University

Deborah D. Oswalt, Executive Director at the Virginia Health Care Foundation

Navid Rashid, M.D, FAPA, Practicing Clinician at the Northern Virginia Mental Health Institute

Keith D. Renshaw, Department Chair and Professor of Psychology at George Mason University

Drew Wilder, reporter at NBC4's Northern Virginia Bureau

The Community Foundation for Northern Virginia would like to express our gratitude for all who attended, our partners, sponsors, as well as the event staff of Capital One Hall. We hope that this conference can serve as a foundation for ongoing change and progress in our region.

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About Community Foundation for Northern Virginia

The Community Foundation for Northern Virginia grows philanthropy to respond to need, seed innovation and lead and convene the community. During the past 2 years the Community Foundation awarded \$20 million in grants and scholarships and now reports \$96 million in managed philanthropic assets. For more information please visit us at www.cfnova.org, follow up on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#), and [Instagram](#).