



**ELDER ISSUES COMMITTEE/
MAYOR'S INITIATIVE ON HEALTHY AGING AND LIVABILITY**

Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, March 31, 2026
Microsoft Teams 2:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.



TOPIC	DISCUSSION	ACTION NEEDED
Member Attendees	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Islamiyat N. Adebisi, Florida Department of Health in Miami-Dade County 2. Joe H. Baldelomar, Alzheimer's Association 3. Daniel Brady, Brady and Associates 4. Cristina Brito, United Way Miami 5. Elvis A. Caines, Miami-Dade County – <i>Guest</i> 6. Martine Charles, Alliance for Aging, Inc. 7. Marla Cocalis, StudentsCare 8. Rob Collins, The Miami Foundation 9. Olivia DeCastro, Florida Department of Health in Miami-Dade County 10. Gordon M. Dickinson, University of Miami Miller School of Medicine 11. Nattaliah Earle, Urban Health Partnerships – <i>Vice-Chair</i> 12. Mayra Garcia, Florida Department of Health in Miami-Dade County 13. Alain Gauthier, Banyan Community Health 14. Natalie Gray, Western Atlantic University School of Medicine 15. Susan O. Holtzman, NAMI Miami 16. Ricardo Maldonado, Total Life - <i>Presenter</i> 17. Roberto McCalla, Quickimpact 18. Lina Menendez, Epilepsy Alliance Florida 19. Melinda Morrow, Clinical Director, Total Life – <i>Guest</i> 20. Dennise Nicola, PACE/Miami Jewish Health – <i>Chair</i> 21. Virama Oller, Green Family Foundation NeighborhoodHELP, FIU 22. Anna Oirik, Right at Home Miami Lakes 23. Cindy Perez, Florida International University 24. Dayamyra Perez-Fernandez, Florida Department of Health in Miami-Dade County 25. Carmen Ramos-Watson, B/Adaptable 26. Louisenie Remy, Jackson Health Roxcy Bolton Rape Treatment Center 27. Lilliana Rey, Alliance for Aging 28. Natalia Shtompel, Barry University School of Social Work 	



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	<p>29. Yadira M. Olaguiber Soler, Florida PACE Centers – <i>Guest</i> 30. Lily Suazo, Jewish Community Services of South Florida 31. Laurie Varona, Florida Department of Health in Miami-Dade County 32. Marjorie York, Community Action Agency (via phone call)</p>	
Welcome and Introductions	<p>Chair, Dennise Nicola welcomed everyone and started the meeting at 2:00 p.m.. General meeting guidelines were provided for the attendees by Dennise N. and Vice-Chair, Nattaliah E. assisted with the agenda once she joined a little later around 2:30 p.m.. Attendee introductions were done during <i>Partner Updates</i>, and virtual attendees were encouraged to put their contact information and any organizational updates/announcements in the chat. The meeting was held virtually via Microsoft Team.</p>	
Review and Approval of Minutes	<p>The minutes from the last meeting on February 24, 2026, were reviewed by the Committee members in attendance. A motion was made to approve the minutes by Marjorie Y. and seconded by Marla C. The minutes were approved unanimously without corrections.</p>	
Previous Action Items(s)	<p>Reviewed scheduled 2026 presentations for alignment with EIC 2025-2030 Work Plan</p>	
Executive Board (EB) Update	<p>Chair, Dennise N. provided the updates from the last EB meeting held on 3/9/2026, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Board has been discussing ideas for the 2025-2030 Consortium Strategic Plan and Executive Board Work Plan • Reviewing Consortium Bylaws which will need to include State and Federal language • Community-Driven Health Planning (CDHP) Presentation 	
Legislative Report	<p>Chair, Dennise N. provided the following legislative update:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes to State and Federal and State government language may change the way older adults (& babies and families) qualify and/or receive programs and services are administered (e.g., food, nutrition, etc.) by as early as November 2026 and into 2027. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Consortium committees will have to continue to discuss how work plan activities may need to be adapted, and continue to look for opportunities for cross-collaboration amongst the committees (e.g., Elder Issues working with Children Issues Committee). 	
<p>Presentation: <i>Behavioral Health & Aging: Access, Impact, and Support</i></p>	<p>EIC partner and member, Ricardo Maldonado, Director of Partnerships, Total Life, gave a 15-minute presentation, <i>Behavioral Health & Aging: Access, Impact, and Support</i>. The presentation was focused on mental health and aging and supporting the emotional well-being of older adults. Some of the statistics related to mental health in older adults were reviewed including that 1 in 4 of older adults experience anxiety or depression, and 70% of older adults do not get the care they need. Also, depression rates increase significantly among medically ill or hospitalized seniors. Mental health symptoms in older adults include fatigue, chronic pain, memory concerns and withdrawal from activities. Patients who are treated for medical conditions such as cancer are experiencing fear, isolation, caregiver stress and loss of independence which can lead to lower treatment adherence, higher total cost of care, increased emergency visits and worse quality of life. Statistics related to loneliness include 1 in 3 older adults reports feeling lonely, and 1 in 4 adults are socially isolated. Additionally, loneliness increases risk of heart disease (29%), stroke (32%), and dementia (50%); chronic loneliness has a health impact similar to smoking 15 cigarettes a day. Older adults 75+ have the highest suicide rate of any group in the United States. Untreated depression is associated with 50% higher healthcare costs, worse chronic disease outcomes, increased ER visits, and higher hospital readmission rates. The presentation reinforced the importance of mental health care as preventative care, especially for older adults living in Florida with unique factors impacting their mental health. For example, many seniors in Florida moved here away from family support networks, higher number of widows living alone, natural disasters like hurricanes which can increase stress and isolation, large population of seasonal residents and retirees, and shortages of geriatrics mental health providers. Additionally, many seniors do not access mental health support due to</p>	<p>Action Item(s):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Email your suggestion(s) for future Elder Issues Committee meeting presentations to: DNicola@miamijewishhealth.org, Nattaliah@urbanhp.org, & Mayra.Garcia@flhealth.gov.

	<p>transportation challenges, mobility limitations, stigma around therapy, provider shortages, and confusion about Medicare coverage. Total Life makes behavioral health care possible, easy and better for older adults, with national access available online. Referral forms are available online at https://totallife.com/referrals. Patients can also be referred by calling the care team directly at 1-800-567-LIFE (5433). When mental health is supported seniors stay healthier, caregivers feel supported, healthcare systems perform better, and communities become stronger.</p> <p>With the consent of the presenter, a follow-up email was sent to all EIC members on 3/31/26 after the meeting with the presenter's contact information, presentation slides, and the following mental health resource: Medicare & Your Mental Health Benefits.</p>	
<p>Performance Measures in Need of Improvement (Work Plan Review)</p>	<p>Today's presentation by Total Life on mental health for older adults will be reported towards work plan activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • #1 under <i>Access to Care</i>, p. 1, related to <i>have a minimum of four presentations per year on key health topics for older adults including best practices, model programs, and services for this population and/or their caregivers.</i> • #11 under <i>Mental Health</i>, p. 4, related to increase education on mental health conditions for older adults. <p>Chair Dennise N. also led an initial discussion on the following measure under <i>Mental Health</i>, activity #12:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By September 30, 2030, the Elder Issues Committee will host and/or support social activity/event(s) for older adults at senior living facility(s) or other gathering sites (e.g., meal sites). • Suggestions included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Host event(s) at 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • County's congregate meal sites at Senior Centers (Susan H., NAMI Miami-Dade County). • Arcola Lakes Senior Center, 8401 NW 14 Ave, Miami, FL 33147, operated by MDPROS (Nattaliah E., UHP). • Miami Lakes City Hall (Anna O., Right at Home Miami Lakes); provided contact: Rosario Navarro, 786-417-5996, Rrass89@aol.com. • Sculpture Garden for older adults in partnership with Miami Design District could host; they have activities, like yoga & art in the park, or partner presentations; English, Spanish & Haitian Creole (Carmen Ramos-Watson B/Adaptable). ○ Possible activities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentations on Medicare Fraud Prevention by Lilliana Rey, Alliance for Aging; could host a raffle for a few of seniors to receive promotional items. • Miami Dementia Care & Cure Initiative Taskforce is hosting a 1-hour Memory Café at Aventura Branch of MDPLS in May; Alliance would like to participate in planning (Martine Charles, Alliance for Aging). • Updates on vaccines & any aspect of vaccination by Gordon M. Dickenson, M.D., UM School of Medicine. 	
<p>Recognition of Improved Performance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 30 total attendees at virtual monthly meeting on 2/24/2026 • Reviewed scheduled 2026 presentations for alignment with EIC 2025-2030 Work Plan at February meeting • Miami-Dade County Public Transportation Options for Older Adults presentation at February meeting 	
<p>Reminders</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Next monthly meeting is in-person on April 28 at 2PM to be hosted at the Florida PACE Centers in Westchester • 2026 monthly meetings: 	<p>Action Item(s):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Consortium for a Healthier Miami-Dade is a

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Virtual meeting on Tues., May 26 at 2PM ○ Virtual meeting on Tues., June 30 at 2PM ○ Virtual meeting on Tues., July 28 at 2PM ○ In-person meeting on Tues., August 25 at 2PM to be hosted at Alliance for Aging in Doral (confirmed by Martine Charles via follow-up email) ○ Virtual meeting on Tues., September 29 at 2PM ○ Virtual meeting on Tues., October 27 at 2PM ○ November and December meetings to be cancelled ● Join the Consortium for a Healthier Miami-Dade online at www.healthymiamidade.org/membership, and/or share this invite with others who may be interested in participating. 	<p>collaboration between the Florida Department of Health and community partners/organizations promoting health in Miami-Dade County; register to become a member for free online: https://www.healthymiamidade.org/membership/.</p>
<p>Partner Updates</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Presenter: Ricardo Maldonado, Director of Partnerships, Total Life, ricardo@totalife.com. ● Olivia DeCastro CCHW, CTTS, Health Services Representative, Florida Department of Health in Miami-Dade County, Office of Community Health and Planning, olivia.decastro@flhealth.gov, 786-732-8860. ● Marla Cocalis, Program Manager, StudentsCare a nonprofit that trains college students to be volunteers with isolated seniors at local facilities; Marla@students-care.org, 773-573-7328. ● Melinda Morrow, Total Life Inc, melinda@totalife.com. ● Islamiyat Nancy Adebisi, Florida Department of Health, Islamiyat.Adebisi@flhealth.gov. ● Lina Menendez, Community Resource Specialist, Epilepsy Alliance Florida, LMenendez@eafla.org. ● Joe Baldelomar, Psy.M., Alzheimer's Association, jhbaldelomar@alz.org. ● Laurie Varona, Tobacco Prevention Program, Florida Department of Health Miami-Dade County, Laurie.Varona@flhealth.gov; shared Hope For Miami DEA's National Prescription Drug Takeback Day on 4/25/26 event flyers in English & Spanish in the meeting chat. 	<p>Action Item(s):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● EIC members who are subject matter specialists in healthy lifestyles and health promoting topics for older adult population are asked to volunteer to submit written article and/or social media postings for 2026 calendar year; please confirm your interest, topic suggestions via email to liaison: Mayra.Garcia@FLHealth.gov. <p><i>Written submissions are due by 15th of month prior to publish month.</i></p>

- Virama Oller, NeighborhoodHELP, FIU
- Roberto McCalla w/Palm Beach ACO; previously with my own business of Quickimpact (954) 649-4045; I'm here to support and volunteer as needed.
- Susan Holtzman, CEO, NAMI Miami-Dade, susan.holtzman@namimiami.org; NAMI Helpline 305-665-2540 (9AM-5PM); programs information go to www.NAMImiami.org; Join us for our Walk for Mental Health Awareness, visit www.NAMIWalks.org.
- Louisenie Remy, Roxcy Bolton Rape Treatment Center, Louisenie.remy@jhsmiami.org; they have support groups and outreach education on sexual assault prevention; call the Helpline for more information: 24/7 Helpline: 305-585-RAPE (7273).
- Yadira Olaguiber, Florida PACE Center, Long Term Care Program for Seniors 55 and up; 305-632-6743.
- Carmen Ramos-Watson, B/Adaptable, 202-413-8899, carmen@b-adaptable.com; Passion Project: The Sculpture Garden for Older Adults located at 27 NW 39 Street; hosting *April Spring* event on Saturday, April 4 at 4PM; RSVP to Carmen Ramos Watson at 305-713-7706.
- Dayamyra Perez Fernandez, Health Services Representative, Florida Department of Health in Miami-Dade County; shared information about the Journey to Wellness Rx prescription pads which can be requested for free online: <https://www.healthymiamidade.org/forms/journey-to-wellness-rx-green-prescription-request-form.html#gsc.tab=0>.
- Lilliana Rey, Senior Medicare Patrol Specialist, Alliance for Aging, Inc., 305-786-1947, 305-670-6500 x11268, ReyL@AllianceForAging.org; if you have anyone experiencing Medicare Fraud, please contact me SMP Specialist SHINE at 305-670-6500 ext. 11268.
- Martine Charles, Director Planning and Population Health, Alliance for Aging, Inc., charlesm@allianceforaging.org; for information about older adult programs, email Programs@AllianceforAging.org; shared link to register for May 7 annual conference, New Face of Aging: <https://afaconference.miami/>.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rob Collins, The Miami Foundation, 305-357-2088, rcollins@miamifoundation.org. • Mayra Garcia, Community Liaison for the Elder Issues Committee (EIC)/Senior Community Health Nursing Supervisor, Office of Community Health & Planning, FL Department of Health in Miami-Dade County, Mayra.Garcia@FLHealth.gov. • Dennise Nicola, Director of Business Development, FL PACE Centers at Miami Jewish Health; DNicola@miamijewishhealth.org, 786-661-564. • Nattaliah Earle, Collective Impact Manager, Urban Health Partnerships (UHP), nattaliah@urbanhp.org, 786-412-0469; shared Save the Date: MDC Age-Friendly Initiative Capacity Building Event, May 21st, 2026. • Gordon Dickinson, MD, Professor Emeritus of medicine, UM and WOC staff at Miami VA Medical Center, Gdickins@miami.edu; advocating for preventive health with vaccination and willing to speak to small groups; I am part of an NGO that re-vitalizing the immunization coalition of Miami Dade, 786-382-6919. • Anna Oirik, owner of Right at Home Miami Lakes serving the senior population; visit website for more information https://www.rightathome.net/miami-lakes. 	
Adjournment	Chair, Dennise N. adjourned the meeting at 3:04 p.m..	
Next Meeting	The next Elder Issues Committee meeting is planned as an in-person hybrid (with virtual join meeting option) on Tuesday, April 28, 2026, 2:00-3:30 p.m. to be hosted by EIC Chair, Dennise Nicola at Florida PACE Centers in Westchester located at 2700 SW 97 Ave, Miami, FL 33165.	