

**METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS  
777 NORTH CAPITOL STREET, NE  
WASHINGTON, DC 20002**

**RESOLUTION TO COOPERATE REGIONALLY TO ADDRESS MENTAL HEALTH STIGMA**

**WHEREAS**, the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) comprises the region's 24 local governments and their governing officials, plus area members of the Maryland and Virginia legislatures and the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives, and COG provides a focus for action on issues of regional concern; and

**WHEREAS**, area jurisdictions have a shared vision, *Region Forward*, for a more prosperous, accessible, livable, and sustainable future; and

**WHEREAS**, the Human Services Policy Committee provides policy recommendations on health, housing, homelessness, and other critical human service needs to the COG Board of Directors; and

**WHEREAS**, the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting economic recession has heightened the need to maximize limited local government resources effectively across the region to end mental health stigma; and

**WHEREAS**, efforts within local jurisdictions can reduce the stigma surrounding mental health to enhance mental wellness among residents; and

**WHEREAS**, the Human Services Policy Committee recommends the COG Board encourages member jurisdictions to expand and build upon current efforts to address the stigma surrounding mental health by achieving greater awareness around mental health issues, improving access to mental and behavioral health care, and more equitably meeting the needs of our constituents who suffer with mental and behavioral health issues; and

**WHEREAS**, the Board supports the Human Services Policy Committee's continued effort to combat mental health stigma and to highlight promising opportunities developed within our communities to improve mental and behavioral health outcomes for all residents of the metropolitan Washington region; and

**WHEREAS**, substance abuse and addictive disorders are recognized mental health disabilities that were exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, and are often stigmatized.

**NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS THAT:**

The COG Board of Directors directs the Human Services Policy Committee to work together collaboratively to combat mental health/substance dependence disorders in the metropolitan Washington region. To achieve this regional vision, the Board recommends all COG member jurisdictions consider implementing the following actions to the greatest extent possible:

- 1) **Enhance Awareness:** Develop communication strategies to combat the stigmas on mental health/substance dependence disorders and to promote mental wellness throughout communities.

- 2) Access to Care: Consider performing a needs assessment to identify barriers to mental health wellness and substance dependence treatment in order to destigmatize these recognized medical conditions and promote greater community awareness that mental health is health and close service gaps.
- 3) Racial Equity: Support and increase culturally competent providers from diverse backgrounds, various ages and throughout the COG region.

**I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT the foregoing resolution was adopted by the COG Board of Directors  
January 12, 2022  
Janele Partman  
COG Communications Specialist**