



# Gulf Coast Mental Health Counselors Association

## Membership for Professionals

\$75.00 per year will include access to all events

## Membership for Student

\$25.00 per year will include access to all events

## All memberships include:

- 4 luncheon workshops with expert trainings and CEUs.
- Option to be included in the GMHC directory
- Networking for referrals and potential employment opportunities
- Scholarship opportunities for mental health graduate students and registered interns
- Legislative updates for the mental health profession

[www.gmhc.net](http://www.gmhc.net)

*A Special Thank You to Dr. Gregory Sonn for his presentation on Medical Marijuana*

## Upcoming Events

Oct 28th, 2019

11:15- 2:00 PM

Suicidality- A Growing Concern

Presented by Pam Peters

Jan 27th, 2020

11:15 – 2:00 PM

Title by Relational Trauma, Addiction, & Family Treatment

Presented by Ryan Soave

## 2019 Gulf Coast Mental Health Counselors Board:

President: April Brown  
 Vice President: Anthony Garcia  
 Secretary: Wendy Powell  
 Treasurer: Pam Peters  
 Member at large: Mary Nuosce, Elizabeth Martin, Katie Stabile, Jama Thurman, Charity Godfrey, Michael O'Brien, Dana Buonanducci, Kim Stevens  
 Webmaster: Jody Magras  
 Registered M.H. Intern: Angie Snyder  
 Graduate Student: Jeannie Schmidt

## 2019 Gulfcoast Mental Health Counselors Board

### Committees:

Legislative Committee – Mary Nuosce  
 Membership Committee – Jama Thurman  
 Professional Development Committee – Anthony Garcia  
 Marketing-Public Relations Committee – Elizabeth Martin  
 The Graduate Student Committee – Charity Godfrey  
 Past President Council – David Sarchet, Douglas Fowler, George Drobinski

# Mental Health and Medical Marijuana

The debate regarding medical marijuana use for clients diagnosed with mental health diagnoses is still a concern for practitioners nationwide. Over 18 million people nationwide use medical marijuana as a form of mental health symptom relief (Morrow, 2015). 33 US states and D.C. have legalized the use of medical marijuana. Reports of symptom relief include decreased anxiety and depressive symptoms associated with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.

The legalization of marijuana for medical reasons is viewed favorably by many Americans, including members of the medical community and Congress. Some of the arguments for medical marijuana include:

- Marijuana can help treat appetite loss associated with conditions such as HIV/AIDS and certain types of cancers.
- Marijuana can relieve certain types of chronic pain, including neuropathic pain.
- Marijuana is safer than some other medications prescribed to treat the same symptoms. For example, it may be used instead of opioids for pain management. Opioids are highly addictive and are typically not recommended for long-term use in treating chronic pain.
- Studies show that smoking marijuana alone (without the concurrent use of tobacco) does not increase the risk of lung diseases.
- Cannabis does not need to be smoked to be medically beneficial. Products such as cannabidiol (CBD) oils, topical pain relief treatments, edibles, and other non-smoking applications are now available.

For every person who advocates for the legalization of marijuana for medical purposes, there is another who argues against it. Some of the arguments from the opposition include:

- Frequent marijuana use can seriously affect your short-term memory.
- Frequent use can impair your cognitive ability.
- Smoking anything, whether it's tobacco or marijuana, can seriously damage your lung tissue.
- Smoked marijuana contains cancer-causing compounds.
- Marijuana carries a risk of abuse and addiction.
- Marijuana has been implicated in a high percentage of automobile crashes and workplace accidents.
- Marijuana is illegal under federal law. It is classified as Schedule I drug in the Controlled Substances Act (CSA), alongside heroin. This classification says that the substances have no currently accepted medicinal value (Morrow, 2019).

At this time, scientific evidence remains limited on the benefits and/or consequences for medical marijuana usage. Medical marijuana remains controversial but it is gaining traction as a legitimate recommendation for a variety of symptoms. Even though many states have legalized the use of cannabis for medicinal purposes (and a few for recreational use), it's going to take more moves by policymakers and the U.S. government for it be accepted and sold nationwide. These actions will likely require a much larger body of legitimate scientific research to prove or disprove the efficacy of medical marijuana, and potentially loosen the restrictions on its use (Morrow, 2019).

Charity Godfrey LMHC, NCC

# New Board Members Spotlight

## Michael O'Brien



I was a college social science professor for 16 years guiding college students in courses that explain how we become who we are, why we do the things that we do, and how we change. I am a passionate and dedicated professional with 7 years of clinical experience treating people in a variety of settings. DePaul University's community-based, (open to the public) counseling center, called the DePaul University, Education and Counseling Center, provided me the opportunity to develop effective evidence-based techniques before working in private practice as does the 1 year of clinical experience I acquired as a clinician in the College of DuPage Counseling and Psychological Services Center. I have been in private practice here in SW Florida for the past 3 years. The 7 years of counseling and psychological care that I have given includes care for; individuals, couples, families, and groups from a wide variety of ages and backgrounds. Since moving to SW Florida 3 years ago my focus has been on my clinical private practice work, specifically, treating individuals, couples, families in my private practice.

## Dana Buonanducci



I am an LMHC and NCC. I spent 10 years working in Community Mental Health in the Central FL area. I have experience working in different levels of care including case management, outpatient, and residential. I currently work as a Clinical Provider Trainer for a managed care organization (Sunshine Health). I facilitate CE worthy clinical trainings for a variety of behavioral health providers, including registered interns, licensed clinicians, nurses, case managers, etc.

## Angie Snyder



Although I have been a Registered Mental Health Counselor Intern for a short time, I have worked as a paraprofessional in crisis behavioral and mental health since 1999. I am currently the Assistant Dean of Students and Case Manager at Florida Southwestern State College, where I provide supportive services to students who face mental, behavioral, and social challenges. As a member of the Behavioral Intervention Team, Bucs C.A.R.E., my role includes assessing student risk and threat, planning and providing a variety of interventions and referrals, responding to students of concern, and providing outreach to all campus communities. Additionally, I am a member of Genesis Counseling of Fort Myers. Under the supervision of Linda Reynolds, I specialize in sexual and domestic violence and personal growth. My particular focus is helping individuals and couples build awareness, resilience, and greater connections with self and others through mindfulness, compassion, and acceptance.

## Kim Stevens



I have been in the field since 2017 when I did a year internship at the Willough in Naples as a part of my masters' degree through Nova University. January, 2018 after graduation I started as a RMHCI at an agency in Port Charlotte where I will finish at the end of this calendar year and be close to full licensure and I am relocating back to Lee and Collier counties for clientele. Before counseling, I was a CPA working at the same firm for over 20 years; hence my comfort in volunteering to help out the treasurer if she wants. After almost two years of paid internship in Port Charlotte, I am actually gaining a desire to work solely with women/children clientele. Where I've been working, I see clients of all ages, male and female. At my age and experience I feel I have a lot to offer working with women, children and parents.

*Newsletter was created by Charity Godfrey and edited by Mary Nuosce and April Brown*