

## **Maryland Counseling Association November 7, 2020 President Letter**

### *Current Stressors and the Mission of MCA*

Since Election Day November 3, 2020, our country has experienced increasing stress and anxiety due to uncertainty about election results and the persistent threat of the COVID-19 pandemic. The mission of the Maryland Counseling Association (MCA) is to promote public confidence, and trust in the counseling profession and to influence policies that affect professional counselors and the welfare of the diverse clients they serve. Therefore, in the interest of counselors, students, and the larger community, it seemed apropos to communicate the continuing commitment of MCA to your mental health needs.

Today, we have learned about the results of the national election that has identified Joseph R. Biden, Jr. as the 46<sup>th</sup> President of the United States. This determination is likely to impact individuals in our society in positive and negative ways and the Maryland Counseling Association (MCA) is committed to the support of counseling professionals and community members throughout this time of transition. It is likely that the recent counting processes and the up-coming recounts and challenges will promote some level of stress, weariness, and/or burn-out for many members of our community and we want to reach out to help.

Marylanders are confronted at this time with the continued renewal of our state of emergency by Governor Larry Hogan due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Our state's COVID-19 positive test rate of 4.54% (<https://coronavirus.maryland.gov/>) is currently higher than the 3% hoped-for rate and we continue to remain diligent in maintaining the wearing of masks, social distancing, and vigorous hand-washing. Other states are not faring as well as we are in fighting the COVID-19 pandemic and this knowledge can also lead to enhanced worry and stress for friends, relatives, and coworkers who may be at higher risk in their geographic areas. To make things even harder, the holidays are just around the corner and everyone is contemplating how these important events may be handled as well.

Counselors know that these unique stressors are likely to result in increased mental health issues that can lead to depression, excessive anxiety, increased substance use, abusive behaviors, suicidal ideation, and other negative outcomes. The isolation of quarantine and social distancing can exacerbate negative thoughts and emotions that can compromise even the best coping strategies and it can be alarming to find that even "good news" can lead to an increase in sadness, fear, and worry.

Please know that professional counselors in your area have knowledge and skills to help you in these trying times. If you are experiencing an increase in any of these negative symptoms, please take a moment to reach out to a licensed professional counselor in your area. For more information, please visit our resources website and MCA for more information. For immediate assistance, call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255 or text GO to 741741 to reach a trained crisis counselor 24/7.

Stay safe and be well,



Carol ZA McGinnis PhD, SIP, BC-TMH, LCPC, NCC  
2020-2021 MCA President