



# Maryland Counseling Association

A BRANCH OF ACA

## COMPASS POINTS

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### Mission

"SERVING THE COUNSELING, GUIDANCE, AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT PROFESSIONS"

### MCA Officers

**President:**  
Ajita Robinson

**President Elect:**  
Carol ZA McGinnis

**Secretary:**  
Cynthia Taylor

**Treasurer:**  
LaNail Plummer

**Immediate Past President:**  
Catherine Eaton

**Member-at-Large:**  
Glenda Laurent Dickonson

**Executive Director:**  
*Open*



### President's Letter

Dear MCA Members,

I am excited to serve as the President of the Maryland Counseling Association 2019-2020! It is my distinct honor to serve and support the continued growth of the organization. I look forward to continuing the work of my predecessors to ensure that MCA is a strong, sustainable organization that serves and represents the members of our community.

I would like to thank past-presidents Cathie Eaton and Karol Taylor for their warm welcome and support during this transition. Additionally, I am thankful for our executive committee members and board members for the selfless work they do to support our growing professional organization.

I also want to welcome our newest executive board members and offer congratulations. First, our new President-Elect, Dr. Carol McGinnis, who was previously our Awards Chair; our new Treasurer, Dr. LaNail Plummer, who served as our Treasurer in 2017, Cynthia Taylor our Secretary-Elect. For our committee leaders we have: Dr. Eunice Humphrey and Dr. Lenese Stephens as our Conference Co-Chairs, Perri Hooper is our Credentialing Chair, Dr. Felicia Pressley is our Emerging Leaders Chair. Our division leaders are Dr. Sara Pula for MACES, Maya Georgieva for MASERVIC, Leslie Holley for MAMCD, Lucinda Nobles for MCDA, Miranda Mixon for MAMFC,

Sergio Washington for MALGBTIC, and our newest division, MCSJ with Dr. Don Trahan. We are thankful for Karol Taylor, our Past-past President; Janelle Bettis and Melissa Wheeler our Secretary and Secretary-Elect, and Daniel Fleshner, Bylaws chair for their service to MCA and wish them well in their future endeavors.

We have several positions open on the board and hope that you will consider lending your time and expertise to serve the MCA board and community.

My goal for this next year is to increase the amount of training and support we offer to our members. Additionally, I hope to increase our advocacy and visibility to promote mental health and wellness in the field and larger community. I hope to hear from each of you as we continue to shape an organization that represents all of us. I look forward to seeing you all at the numerous fall events as well as our annual conference on November 8th and 9th.

Take good care,

Ajita Robinson  
[President, Maryland Counseling Association](#)



# \*SAVE THE DATE\*

## 2nd Annual Maryland Counselors for Social Justice (MCSJ) CONFERENCE

# April 18, 2020

\*Keynote Speaker \*Education Sessions \*Poster Sessions \*Vendors  
\*Panel Discussions \*Networking \*Breakfast \*Lunch \*CE's



### Thriving Group Practice seeks Talented Clinician!



Anne Arundel Counseling (AAC) continues to grow! AAC is seeking an experienced licensed psychologist/psychotherapist (PhD, PsyD, LCPC, LCADC, LCSW-C or LCMFT) to join our managed care and self-pay practice. This person must be dedicated to providing quality therapy and treatment. They must also be available in the evening and/or weekend.

**Clinical openings in all 7 of our Baltimore/Washington regional offices.**  
Glen Burnie – Annapolis – Edgewater – Bowie – Columbia – Stevensville – Centreville

Please visit our website at [www.annearundelcounseling.com](http://www.annearundelcounseling.com) to learn more.

Please submit your cover letter and resume to Connie Thomas, Practice Manager @  
[cthomas@annearundelcounseling.com](mailto:cthomas@annearundelcounseling.com)

We look forward to hearing from you!

## Articles

### **Understanding Suicide Risk Assessment** *Written by Lisa Sara Pula, PhD, NCC, LCPC, ACS, MACES President*

In Counselor Education, we teach suicide risk assessment as an intervention that occurs once a client has communicated suicidal ideation or potentially lethal risky behaviors. It is at this point that a counselor conducts a suicide risk screening. Clinical mental health counselors and school counselors are similarly taught this procedure and timeline at their schools and agencies. Dr. Sara Pula, President of the Maryland Association for Counselor Education and Supervision, argues that suicide risk screening must take place far sooner and with all clients, not just those showing explicit signs of suicide risk. Dr. Pula calls for training in pre-assessment skills.

#### **Why is suicide assessment so important?**

According to the American Association of Suicidology (AAS), in 2017 there were 47,173 suicides in the United States. The following shows the breakdown by gender and age:

- 77.97% male
- 22.03% female
- 01.11% children (5-14)
- 13.25% adolescents (15-24)
- 32.40% adults (25-44)
- 35.07% middle-aged (45-65)
- 18.16% older adults (65+)

Suicide is the tenth leading cause of death in the United States, but for those 15-24 years old it is the second leading cause of death. Every year, 1.1 million suicide attempts are made. Women attempt suicide 3 times more than men, and men complete suicide at a higher rate than women (men = 22.9, women = 6.3). LGBTQ youth are also at high risk, with 39% having seriously considered attempting suicide in the past twelve months and more than half of trans gender and non-binary youth having seriously considered suicide (AAS, 2018).

Race is also a factor. Caucasians have higher rates of suicide than any other race (per 100,000). Rates by race are listed below. The rates from 2012 to 2017, a 5-year span, more than doubled for Caucasians and African Americans. That alone is troubling and startling.

- Caucasian = 33.2 (14.75 in 2012)
- African American = 13.7 (5.46 in 2012)
- Asian/Pacific Islander = 6.8 (6.36 in 2012)
- Hispanic American = 6.7 (5.36 in 2012)

We know our current strategies for conducting suicide risk assessment are not working when 32% of Americans make contact with a mental health provider and 77% with a primary care provider during the year prior to their suicide and approximately 1 in 10 suicides are committed by individuals seen in a hospital emergency room within 2 months of their suicide (Silverman & Berman, 2014).

*...continued*

## What is Pre-assessment?

Because of the astounding figures stated above, Dr. Pula calls for a shift in counselor education from a suicide risk assessment training model to one of pre-assessment training. Pre-assessment is defined as:

- Knowing when to begin even thinking that your client could be having dangerous thoughts involving self-harm
- To determine if individual is on path toward suicide ideation
- Having a keen and deep sense of how your client is feeling despite what they communicate verbally or nonverbally
- Not waiting until a client feels so desperate that they disclose suicide ideation to you

While not a thorough list, some pre-assessment skills to consider include:

1. Understanding how depressive thinking/feeling manifests in differing populations.
2. Using a Suicide Risk Formulation.
3. Using a stage/path model.
4. Assessing clients early and often, without outward symptomatology, and with a thorough instrument (not using a 2-step process).

In August 2019, Dr. Pula conducted a webinar on suicide pre-assessment. It was well received and attendees asked for further training that would include resources specific to age and setting (school vs. clinical). On behalf of MCA and MACES, Dr. Pula will conduct a half-day training on pre-assessment skills in early Spring 2020. The training will include more thorough coverage of pre-assessment skills, as well as role plays with case scenarios, training on the Columbia Suicide Severity Rating Scale, and resource packets. Please stay tuned for details on date, time, and location. We hope to see you there!

Silverman, M. M., & Berman, A. L. (2014). Suicide risk assessment and risk formulation part I: A focus on suicide ideation in assessing suicide risk. *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior*, 44(4), 420-431.





# Jeanette Walls

AUTHOR OF THE GLASS CASTLE

## THE GLASS CASTLE: FACING YOUR FEARS AND OTHER LIFE LESSONS

**A presentation by Jeanette Walls**  
Saturday, December 7  
2-3 p.m. • followed by a  
book signing

In *The Glass Castle*, Jeanette Walls shares her moving story – growing up with dysfunctional parents in extreme poverty and overcoming her circumstances. Her memoir captures the power of the human spirit in the face of unimaginable obstacles.

### Exclusive offer

**Exclusive offer for clinical counselors,  
school counselors and teachers:**  
Reserve your seat **FOR FREE** through  
**November 10.**

*(Tickets go on sale to the public on November 11.)*



One Neumann Drive • Aston, PA 19014

**RSVP at [www.neumann.edu/GlassCastle](http://www.neumann.edu/GlassCastle)**

# Why Should You Join MCA?

Membership is important to your professional growth and career development. It provides:

- Continuing education units at discount prices
- Early notification of MCA and all division events
- Current public policy issues and new laws of interest to professional counselors
- Grant opportunities
- Four newsletters with opportunities to publish and advertise
- Leadership training and greatly reduced registration costs to annual, regional or national conferences for board members
- Support and advocacy for professional counseling in the state of Maryland
- Electronic reminders to renew your membership
- A list of events that you have participated in



**[Click here](#) to join MCA today!**

Not ready to join? Choose the non-Member Contact option for a no-cost way to add your name to our email list.



To register for MCA or any of our events, please go to [www.md-counseling.org](http://www.md-counseling.org)

Find us on Facebook ([@mdcounseling](https://www.facebook.com/mdcounseling)) and Twitter ([@md\\_counseling](https://twitter.com/md_counseling))

Contact the MCA President for more information about committees and open board positions.

## DIVISION PRESIDENTS

### **MACES President**

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### **MAMFC President**

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### **MCSJ President**

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### **MALGBTIC President**

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### **MCDA President**

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## COMMITTEE CHAIRS

### **Advocacy Chair**

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### **Emerging Leaders Chair**

Felicia Pressley

### **Program Planning Chairs**

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### **Awards Chair**

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### **Membership Chair**

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### **Registrar Chair**

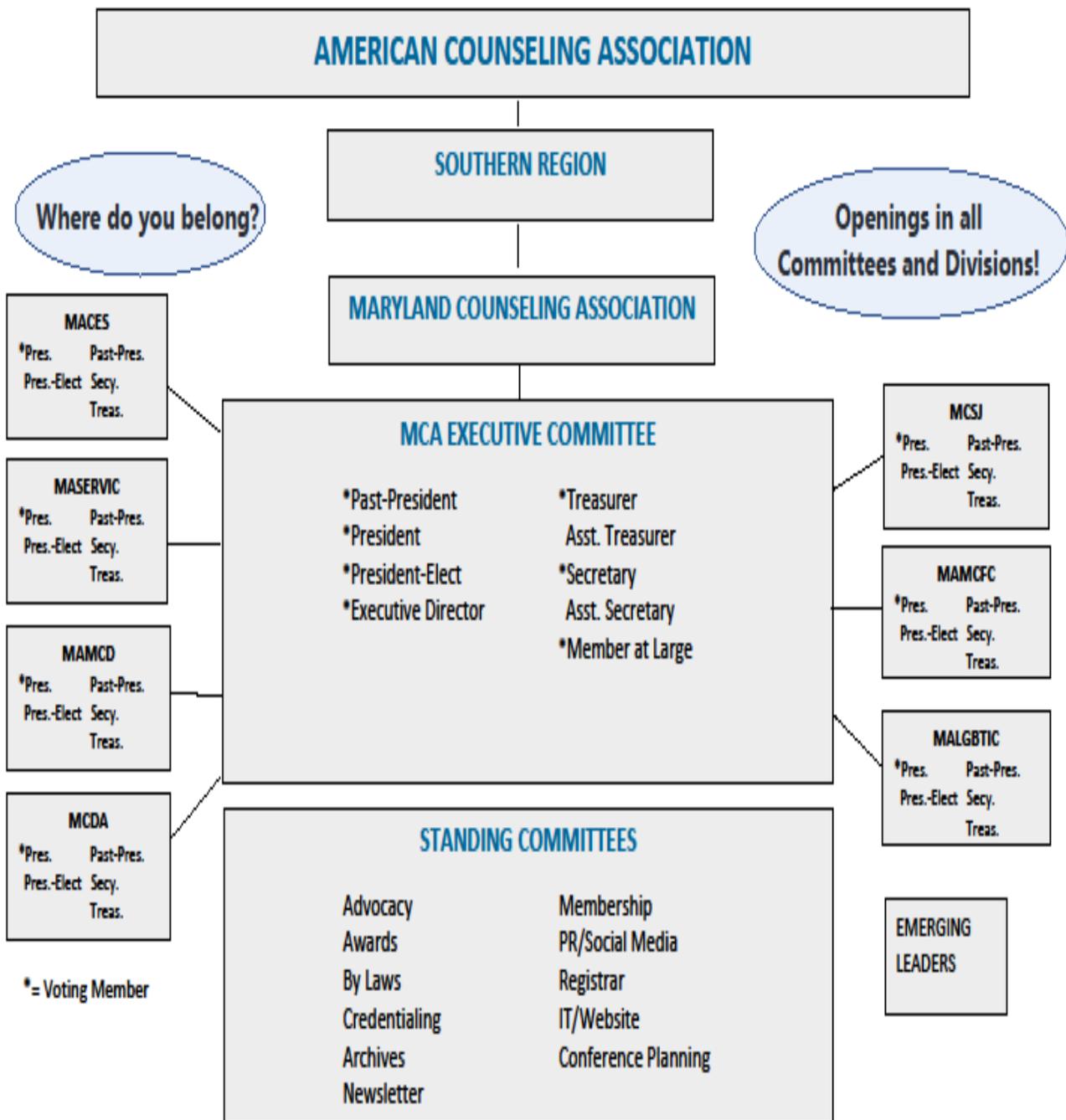
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### **Bylaws Chair**

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### **Newsletter Chair**

Michelle Schoonmaker  
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\* = Voting Member

- MACES**-Maryland Association of Counselor Education and Supervision
- MASERVIC**-Maryland Association for the Spiritual, Ethical and Religious Values in Counseling
- MAMCD**-Maryland Association for Multicultural Counselor and Development
- MCDA**-Maryland Career Development Association
- MCSJ**-Maryland Counselors for Social Justice
- MAMCFC**-Maryland Association for Marriage, Couples and Family Counseling
- MALGBTIC**-Maryland Association of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Issues in Counseling

- MSCA  
Liaison
- LCPC-M  
Liaison
- MAMHC  
Liaison

\*\*MSCA-Maryland School Counselor Association

\*\*LCPC-M-Licensed Clinical Professional Counselors of Maryland

\*\*MAMHC-Maryland Association of Mental Health Counselors

\*\*These organizations are not active divisions, but we have liaisons with each.