

# University of Arkansas Medical Sciences

## **The South Central VA Mental Illness Research, Education, and Clinical Center (SC MIRECC)**

The South Central VA Mental Illness Research, Education and Clinical Center (MIRECC), a multi-site, “virtual” center, has as its mission to “close the gap” between what research demonstrates is possible to achieve with mental health treatments and services, and what is actually achieved in day-to-day clinical practice. MIRECC researchers and educators focus their efforts in three areas (1) promoting access to mental health care, especially in rural areas, (2) understanding stress and resilience related to trauma; and (3) improving mental health care for older veterans. The South Central MIRECC operates through five anchor sites (VA Medical Centers in Houston, Jackson, Little Rock Oklahoma City and New Orleans), and draws on the clinical, education and research expertise from all network facilities. The MIRECC is affiliated with four medical schools: Baylor College of Medicine (Houston), University of Mississippi Medical Center (Jackson), University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS) (Little Rock), and Tulane University School of Medicine (New Orleans).

Services research is a particular strength and focus, and the MIRECC works directly with the network Mental Health Product line (MHPL) to improve the quality of mental health care delivered at the 10 VA facilities in the network and at the Community Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs). We have also closely partnered with the Division of Mental Health Services Research at UAMS, with VA HSR&D programs in Houston and Little Rock, with the VA Mental Health QUERI program, and with the UCLA/Rand Health Services Research Center.

Since the recent hurricanes occurred mainly in our VA network, we are beginning to conduct research particularly relevant to this major natural disaster.

We are also conducting programs and research projects relative to the local Little Rock community, in particular with the local religious community (Kramer, Mattox), with school personnel, and with other communities, including “community” defined as a community of providers (Sullivan).

### **Attending partners**

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**Rev. Jim Freeman**

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### **Partner organization**

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#### **St. John Missionary Baptist Church**

**Rev. Leonard Hawkins**

As Pastor of St. John Missionary Baptist Church for the last nine and a half years, I have seen and visited with several persons who, in my opinion, needed more than I could provide through spiritual counseling alone. Often their needs required specialized care that only professional therapy could provide. I have long thought and hope for the day when these two much needed services would be bridged to bring comprehensive healing to those who are battling depression and confusion as a result of

so many triggers. St. John has been around, in, and part of the community for 116 years and has been very active in a variety of ways in trying to provide a holistic ministry that ranges from abstinence, community wellness, health fairs, senior care, to summer camps for youth. It is the position of the church that wellness is an integral part of being able to do ministry, of which, mental wellbeing is no exception. As a body of believers, we wholeheartedly embrace the need for this kind of connection and are anxiously awaiting the time when it will not be viewed as a good idea if we can make it work, but a necessity that we must make work.

## Contact Information

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