

Our History

In October, 2001 the Annie E. Casey Foundation and the University of Texas at Austin, School of Social Work, with in-kind support from the Missouri Institute of Mental Health, sponsored a conference for the purpose of initiating a national dialogue and strategy to address mental health disparities among African Americans as identified by Surgeon General David Satcher, M.D., Ph.D. in his 1999 and 2001 reports on mental health, culture, race and ethnicity. An array of disciplines was represented including social work, law, medicine, and education and attendees included psychologist, psychiatrist, mental health services consumers, family members of consumers, social workers, professors, nurses, administrators in addiction treatment, researchers, and graduate students in the social sciences. The conference had two expressed purposes. The first was to outline plans for a national mental health organization designed to advocate for the inclusion of the interest of African Americans in the creation of national, state, local and private behavioral health care policy, services, research, staffing, education and financing. A second purpose was to explore the feasibility of a national conference addressing mental health and substance abuse issues found in African American communities.

The NLC was formed as a result of that initial conference and established its non-profit 501 © 3 status in August, 2002. The second goal of having a national conference was realized in November, 2003. The three divisions of SAMHSA – The Center for Mental Health Services, the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention, and the Center for Substance Abuse Treatment, co-sponsored and funded the National African American Mental Health and Substance Abuse Summit: Solidifying the Dialogue to Eliminate Disparities.

National Leadership Council on African American Behavioral Health, Inc.