



January 25, Minutes

Present: Kaycee Barham, Archie Barrow, SGT MAJ Paul Berry, Michelle Blanding, Chris Brandenburg, Lisa Brown, Brenda Brubaker, Joel Cartwright, Meredith Comer, Hank Debnam, Lynn Dexter, Katina Dial-Scott, Dr. Brooke Dickhart, Paul Dillon, Russ Ditzel, Angella Dunston, Bryan Duran, Lane Dyer, Sandra Edwards, Robert Elliott, Linda Exner, Dr. Li Fang, Dr. Alan Freitag, John Freudenberg, Brandon Garrick, Moses Gloria, Metisa Graham, Michael Graham, Christopher Hailey, Secretary Larry Hall, Kim Harrell, Judy Harmon, Angela Harper-King, Robin Henry, Troy Hershberger, Jessica Herrmann, James Hicks, Cheyenna Irwin, Teresa Johnson, Sandy Jolley, Terri Kane, Stan Kimer, Wes Kyatt, Phil Landis, Dr. Becky Lane, Curtis Leary, Mary Jo Littlewood, Jerome Malloy, Ron Mangum, Michael Marhelko, Ralph Markwood, Ray Martin, Anthony McLeod, Corinna McMillon, Megan Miller, Travis Mitchell, Jeff Mobley, Jeff Netznik, Sandy Pendergraft, Larry Peterson, Toni Pinkston, Kim Poff, Jim Prosser, Ronald Putnam, Kevin Reed, Tara Ricks, Sandra Robinson, Susan Robinson, Sara Royster, Ken Schuesselin, DeAnne Seekins, June Sewell, Jacob Shaheen, Austen Shearer, Betty Jo Shephard, Leigh Ann Skeens Wilson, Elree Smith, Jeff Smith, Jeff Smith, Wayne Smith, Tony Sowards, Richard Spyrison, Flo Stein, Dr. Sam Strickland, Mark Teachey, Marilyn Terrill, Donald Thomas, Pamela Thomas, Yoneka Trent, Betty Turner-Shelton, Jerrick Vernon, Dr. Jason Vogler, Lucas Vrbsky, Dr. Joe Wescott, Kevin Whitabker, Steve Wilkins, Martin Woodard, and Michelle Work

Secretary Hall kicked off the meeting by thanking UNC-TV for hosting the first meeting of the GWG in 2018. Dr. Vogler noted that during the site visit from the federal agency, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, representatives lauded the unique collaborations with different state and community agencies. Mr. Prosser said that his travel across the State has highlighted this collaboration. Ms. Seekins was appointed the VISN 6 Executive Director as of July 1, 2017 and will assume the co-chair for the VA.

Jeff Smith gave a brief update on the suicide prevention initiative that was launched at the Statewide conference, *5: Veteran Suicides* in November 2017. He plans to use the GWG as a forum to make a difference this year. Social media, communication, outreach, and training will also play roles. Through improved partnerships, services for Veterans with OTH discharges will increase, thereby reducing the number of deaths by suicide.

Ms. Skeens Wilson discussed modernization initiatives of the Veterans Benefit Administration, including the Justice-involved Veteran Outreach Initiative and an outreach modernization plan, which will affect Veterans with an OTH discharge. Decision ready claims were introduced in September 2017 so that the claims process would take less than 30 days with VSO assistance. She also outlined the Rapid Appeals Modernization Program (RAMP), which will run through February 2019,

Ms. Miller discussed VBA benefits, including disability compensation; non-service connected pension; benefits for family members; and the National Work Queue (NWQ).

Ms. Irwin provides vocational rehabilitation and employment services in the Fort Bragg office. Services include training, job placement, independent living services, and career testing and counseling. She also noted the differences between the GI Bill, where the focus is on education while the emphasis of VR&E is on employment.

Ms. Seekins discussed the priorities of the VA: (1) greater choice for Veterans, (2) modernize the VA system, (3) focus resources more effectively, (4) improve timeliness of services, and (5) suicide prevention. The goal of modernization is to meet Veterans where they are by expanding services and partnering with community agencies and organizations. Their initial goals focus on modernizing urgent care, primary care, mental health geriatric extended care, prosthetics, and care coordination.

Mr. Berry provided an update on NC Serves, which is part of America Serves. NC Serves consists of 4 networks in the State: Metrolina (2<sup>nd</sup> oldest in the country), Central Carolina, Coastal, and Western. It is a cloud-based navigation and referral platform/network, which enables Veterans to get right services at right time for right reason. The key to its success are the providers who build trust with Veterans when they seek services often for multiple needs. In December, 368 Veterans were served across 4 sites; the top service was housing and shelter. His personal goal is to eliminate Veteran suicide across the State.

Mr. Smith said that UNC-TV will be rolling out SitRep or Situation Report on February 10. This collaboration with the GWG will feature topical interviews with experts. He requested that folks send ideas to [Veterans@unctv.org](mailto:Veterans@unctv.org).

The next GWG meeting will be on February 22 in Emergency Management's Situation Room at Joint Force Headquarters in Raleigh. Attendees were encouraged to enter their events by going to <http://nc4vets.com/events>. Flyers can also be uploaded. Any event that is vetted will automatically roll over to the calendars on both the NC Department of Military and Veterans Affairs and the GWG.

**[WWW.NCGWG.ORG](http://WWW.NCGWG.ORG)**

*The Governor's Working Group is supported in part by block grant funding from the US Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration through the Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities, and Substance Abuse Services, North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services*