



## April 26, 2018 Meeting Minutes

Present: Terry Allebaugh, Marilyn Avila, SGT MAJ Paul Berry, Brenda Brubaker, Damon Butler, John Camp, Dr. Antonio Carr, Donna Carr, Meredith Comer, Gary Cunha, Brooke Dickhart, Paul Dillon, Max Dolan, Jeff Doyle, Nick Drake, Mark Edmonds, Tori Eichorn, Linda Exner, Shelton Faircloth, Dr. Li Fang, Roger Farina, Dr. Keita Franklin, Dr. Nicole French, John Freudenberg, Moses Gloria, Metisa Graham, Michael Graham, Chris Hailey, Kim Harrell, Greg Hughes, Andy Jackson, Gordon Jeans, Phil Landis, Brad Lanto, Emily Mannel, Laura McCarthy, Jeff Netznik, Ilario Pantano, Kim Poff, Jay Price, Jim Prosser, Susan Robinson, Brandon Rollings, Ken Schuesselin, Jeff Smith, Wayne Smith, Tony Sowards, Doug Taggart, Mark Teachey, John Turner, Jamie Upchurch, Rogelio Valencia, Brian Ward, Susan Watkins, and Steve Wilkins

Mr. Prosser welcomed all and yielded the floor to the Chairs. Mr. Edmonds said that Commerce is figuring out how to integrate efforts to support Veterans in the workforce. They are reassessing where DVOPs and LVERs are located throughout the State (DVOPs and LVERs work with Veterans to reduce barriers to entering the workforce). In addition, Commerce is continuing its partnership with NC4ME, are involved in hiring Veteran events across the State, and incorporating military and Veteran spouses in the workforce.

Mr. Ward reported that the VBA is partnering with Goodwill Industries to sponsor a VEAC on April 26-27 and a town hall tomorrow in Winston-Salem. They have been encouraging all Veterans to go through the decision ready claims process, which allows a claim to be processed within 30 days. The Veteran must work with an accredited service organization or private attorneys to submit claims. To date, 922 claims have been submitted nationally, with an average of less than 11 days to reach a decision. They are also involved in outreach activities such as the MilVets Summit & Expo on May 2 in Raleigh, the Field of Honor on May 19 in Kernersville, the May 24-27 Nascar event, the Memorial Day celebration in Winston-Salem, and Saluting Women Veterans on June 10. Mr. Ward also noted that the public contact unit is open at 251 Main Street (8-4, Monday through Thursday; 9-4 Friday). The VBA also has a presence at the Kernersville HCC, Fort Bragg, and Camp Lejeune where they are willing to talk with Veterans about their claims

Ms. Exner said that the VA is in the process of revamping the CHOICE program. VISN 6 is in wave 1 of the rollout due to rapid growth of Veterans in the State. They are also working on a program, Choose Home, which targets aging baby boomers; this program will utilize telehealth, home health aides, and other strategies so these folks can stay home. Thanks to Senator Tillis, NC received \$700M to build state Veteran homes in Guilford and Wake counties and to update the home in Salisbury. The VA has been conducting market assessments to determine how to best expand the partnership with DoD and community agencies for more integrated and seamless services. One of the challenges is the use of different medical record systems. Emphasis is on expanding services and using resources more effectively so that Veterans can be served well our Veterans.

Mr. Schuesselin said that DMH is conducting a follow-up of the NCPIC conference on suicide prevention of military members and their families. What is at stake is reducing the number of Veteran/military suicides in NC, which is currently estimated to be 5 per week. DMH is working collaboratively with partners. Examples include the VSS program, the NC Serves network, the Women Mil/Vets Summit & Expo, and Situation Report on the NC Channel.

Mr. Prosser noted that the NC Veterans Council will be meeting on June 6 to bring the top three needs to the attention of the Speaker of House and Senate Pro Tem so that they are familiar with issues and needs affecting Veterans and their families. The top 3 needs are to fully fund wartime children's scholarship program; fully fund cemetery programs; and fully fund the NC Department of Military and Veterans Affairs. He thanked the Department of Commerce for funding the 2018 Resource Guide and the NC DMH for supporting the Women MilVets Summit & Expo and the VSS training program.

Mr. Smith said that the GWG is now live streaming its meetings on Facebook. In January, 539 viewers joined the live feed, 2335 in February, and 2068 in March. Videos of the meetings are uploaded to the Governor's Institute YouTube channel afterwards.

Dr. Keita Franklin discussed suicide as a national problem in that it is the 10<sup>th</sup> leading cause of death in the US. Whereas 20 Veterans die by suicide each day, 169 civilians die by suicide daily. She noted that white male Veterans over the age of 55 and female Veterans are more vulnerable. Periods of transition also pose a risk, particularly the first 12 months after leaving active duty. She emphasized the need to design interventions based on data since complex factors (e.g., behavioral health issues, relationship problems, debt, unemployment) are in play. What works for one person may not work for another so it is vital to look at actionable outcomes and assess the effectiveness of interventions. Also important is that only 6 of 20 Veterans are seen at the VHA prior to suicide. That means that the other 14 were not under VHA care. What outreach is needed to save these lives? Because there are 22M Veterans, VHA cannot do it alone, but must partner with community-based agencies and organizations. She pointed out that during transition, focus should be on both career readiness and social readiness. Dr. Franklin promoted the need for additional gatekeeper training (e.g., SAVE by PsychArmor) and for prevention strategies that are universal, selective, and indicated. She also touched on the role of social media, suicides by military-connected kids and spouses, and the implementation of evidence-based interventions.

Mr. Berry reviewed this month's data from the four NCServes sites in the State. He posited that the network of providers for Veterans has reduced barriers to health, increased awareness about benefits, provided employment opportunities, and reduced the risk of suicide. These networks are accomplishing wonderful outcomes and making a difference in the lives of the people that they serve.

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