



February 22, Minutes

Present: Lora Alexander, Fred Baker, SGT MAJ Paul Berry, Mark Bilosz, Michael Bishop, Michelle Blanding, Brenda Brubaker, Eric Burgos, Joel Cartwright, Jennifer Chauncey, Pat Childers, Twala Coleman, Maisha Collier, Meredith Comer, Hank Debnam, Alexis Deck, Katina Dial-Scott, Paul Dillon, Russ Ditzel, Jeff Doyle, Angella Dunston, Julie Dyer, Mark Edmonds, Dr. Li Fang, John Freudenberg, Richard Geisel, Rhonda Geisel, Moses Gloria, Metisa Graham, Michael Graham, Secretary Larry Hall, Kim Harrell, Josh Hernandez, Andy Jackson, Tiffany Jacobs, Gordon Jeans, Duggy Johnson, Sandy Jolley, Terri Kane, Alyce Knaflich, Wes Kyatt, Phil Landis, Dr. Becky Lane, David Laws, Martha Lobo, Jerome Malloy, Ralph Markwood, Kevin McClendon, Anthony McLeod, JV Miller, Megan Miller, Jeff Netznik, Frankie Oxendine, Larry Peterson, Toni Pinkston, Jim Prosser, Kevin Reed, Susan Robinson, Brandon Rollings, Shawn Ross, Ken Schuesselin, June Sewell, Dr. Amy Smith, Elree Smith, Jeff Smith, Wayne Smith, Tony Sowards, Flo Stein, Annette Stevenson, Marie Stewart, Dr. Sam Strickland, Jim Swain, Doug Taggart, Matt Thewes, Pamela Thomas, Annie Thompson, Yoneka Trent, Betty Turner, Jerrick Vernon, Dr. Jason Vogler, Lucas Vrbsky, Napoleon Wallace, Alex Watkins, Dr. Joe Wescott, Steve Wilkins, Shenekia Williams Johnson, Kelli Willoughby, Martin Woodard, and Michelle Work

Dr. Vogler kicked off the meeting by welcoming all. He noted that Face Book was live streaming the event and that it was being videotaped for YouTube. He highlighted the Mental Health Minute on Situation Report, which the NC Department of Health and Human Services is supporting. He also appreciated the multiple partners working together to combat the opioid crisis. SAMHSA has provided additional funds for this purpose. About 2000 individuals have been referred to treatment through MAT and other supportive treatments in North Carolina.

Secretary Hall noted that the topic for the month, March, and April is suicide prevention and reduction.

Mr. Prosser promoted the Women MilVets Summit and Expo on May. He also called attention to Operation North State, which provides support to the military through holiday care packages to NC service members. USS NC also received 1500 packages. They also sponsor fishing expeditions for disabled Veterans, from April to November.

Mr. Bilosz announced the Veterans Experience Action Centers at the Elks Lodge, 5102 Oleander Drive, Wilmington on March 22-24. VBA is partnering with the VHA and Vet Centers and helping Veterans file for new claims and providing information on health care and benefits. In April, there will be a similar event in Winston-Salem in conjunction with Goodwill.

Mr. Wallace said that the NC Department of Commerce is working with the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs to improve collaboration. They will be conducting two trainings in eastern and western NC to ensure that they know what each is doing, how to deliver the best handoff, and ways to collaborate. They are trying to be responsive to the needs of Veterans in the State. NC4ME has achieved great

success in working with employers to hire Veterans across the State. Upcoming hiring events will be held at Cisco on 2/28 and at MetLife on 3/1. Led by Mark Edmonds, NC jobs initiative focuses on business leadership, developing skills, and local innovation.

Mr. J Smith gave a brief update on the suicide prevention initiative that was launched at the Statewide conference, *5: Veteran Suicides*, in November 2017. He noted the utilization of social media through live streaming of the GWG meetings and their availability on the YouTube channel and the new program, Sit-Rep, on NC Channel, which is part of UNC-TV. Using social media will enable us to reach out to all Veterans and their families as well as anyone who wants to watch. We are working with the VA to produce the Mental Health minute with the goal of saving lives and getting linked to services.

Ms. Kane and Ms. Stevenson announced the Women MilVets Summit and Expo, *I Served. My Voice Matters*, at North Carolina State University McKimmon Conference Center, Raleigh, on May 2. NC is 6th in the number of women Veterans (86,791 as of October 2016) and may be 4th in less than 10 years. While women Veterans need the same resources as their male peers, the approach is different. For more information and to register, go to <http://women.nc4vets.com>. Men are welcome to attend.

Ms. Williams-Johnson reported that there has been a 79% increase of women Veterans in the VA over the past 10 years. The largest group of women Veterans using the VA are ages 45-65 and racially diverse. The VA wants them to choose it for all of their health care needs from health and mental health services and supports to women-specific services (e.g., gynecology, mammography). She noted that women Veterans die 6 times the rate of women civilians. Those who use VA services had significantly lower rates of suicide than those women Veterans who didn't use VA health services. Eighteen percent are more likely to use firearms than civilian women. A culture change is underway within the VA to end harassment by male Veterans of fellow female Veterans (22%) and women employees (50%).

Dr. Smith and Ms. Stewart addressed military sexual trauma (MST), which is likely underreported at 1 in 4 women and 1 in 100 men. 100% of homeless women and 40% of homeless men have experienced MST. These numbers are still significant numbers for both men and women and result in the need for support and treatment. Diagnoses associated with sexual trauma may include depression, anxiety, PTSD, SUDs, eating disorders, dissociative disorders, and physical health problems. Other associative issues may include problems with relationships, employment, parenting, and readjustment. However, recovery is possible. The VA conducts mandated screening, which results in referral and evidence-based treatment (www.maketheconnection.net). The Vet Centers also offer services.

Ms. Blanding, Endeavors, noted that they have offices in Fayetteville (main office), Charlotte, and Jacksonville. In 2017, they served 976 Veteran families in 42 counties in NC, including 217 female Veterans (30% involved domestic violence). They offer 6 services: outreach, case management, assistance in obtaining VA benefits, temporary financial assistance, supportive housing program, and assistance in obtaining and coordinating other public benefit services.

Mr. Berry provided an update on NCServes, which is part of AmericaServes. NCServes consists of 4 networks in the State: Metrolina (2nd oldest in the country), Central Carolina, Coastal, and Western. Each network has its own dashboard (see documents at <http://ncgwg.org/february-gwg-meeting/>). The top

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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

priority is housing and shelter. About 40 counties are not currently covered by NCServes, but the networks still partner with them.

The next GWG meeting will be on March 22 in Emergency Management's Situation Room at Joint Force Headquarters in Raleigh. Suicide prevention and reduction will be addressed in the March and April meetings. In addition, 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.

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