



## March 22, 2018 Meeting Minutes

Present: Terry Allebaugh, SGT MAJ Paul Berry, Mark Bilosz, Michael Bishop, Kate Brett, Gina Brimmer, Brenda Brubaker, Jo Camp, Diane Corcoran, Hank Debnam, Katina Dial-Scott, Brooke Dickhart, Paul Dillon, Jeff Doyle, Matt Duffy, Linda Exner, Shelton Faircloth, Dr. Li Fang, Dr. Nicole French, John Freudenberg, Moses Gloria, Metisa Graham, Michael Graham, Chris Hailey, Troy Hershberger, Jeremy Hughes, Douggy Johnson, Meg Jordan, Terri Kane, Sita Kanithi, Kristopher Knowlton, Phil Landis, Curtis Leary, Lisa Loftonberry, Jerome Malloy, Ray Martin, Tarasha McKoy, Anthony McLeod, Corinna McMillon, Brenda Monforti, Jeff Netznik, Captain Newborn, Larry Peterson, Jim Prosser, Kevin Reid, Tara Ricks, Susan Robinson, Shawn Ross, Heather Rossi, Austin Shearer, David Smith, Emily Smith, Jeff Smith, Wayne Smith, Darcie Sootin, Tony Sowards, Flo Stein, Dr. Cindy Swinkels, Mark Teachey, Ted Thomas, Betty Turner, Lucas Vrbsky, Rep. Mark Walker, Alex Watkins, and Susan Watkins

Mr. Smith welcomed all and yielded the floor to the Chairs.

Mr. Bilosz announced two events. The first is the Veterans Experience Action Center (VEAC), 5102 Oleander Drive, Elks Lodge, Wilmington, which is being held from March 22-24. At these events, the VBA tries to move claims to the next stage and also accepts new claims. The VHA is present as is the Department of Commerce through a Stand Down. As of 8:00 am today, 100 folks were waiting. VBA is partnering with Goodwill Industries to sponsor a VEAC on April 26-27 in Winston-Salem.

Ms. Exner reported that all four VAMCs in NC got new directors this month. They include Stephanie Young at Asheville VAMC, Paul Cruz at Durham VAMC, Joseph Vaughn at Salisbury VAMC, and COL James Laterza at Fayetteville VAMC. Patient growth in NC continues and varies from 6-13%, with Fayetteville experiencing the highest growth.

Mr. Prosser provided an update on their budget request to fund Veteran cemeteries and nursing homes. It is possible that NC will be approved for 2 nursing homes this year.

Mr. Smith gave a follow-up of the NCPIC conference on suicide prevention and reduction on November 7. He noted that initiatives are moving ahead and that cooperation, collaboration, and communication are key. As examples, he gave the VEAC/Stand Down partnership, the 4 NC STRIVE conferences, and the Duke University, NC DMVA, and DMHDDSAS collaboration on the Veteran Support Specialist (VSS) program. This program is designed to help VSOs improve their skills and knowledge. Two programs will start on May 10 (Asheville) and May 17 (Benson).

Mr. Doyle is the VISN 6 Network Homeless Coordinator and Network Suicide Prevention Lead. Working with state partners is critical to his work. VA cannot do this alone. He highlighted the fact that for every successful suicide, there are 25 attempts (statistics from the CDC and SAMHSA, which means about 500 attempts every day. We need to identify where the attempts are occurring and develop effective programs for these Veterans. The VA includes the following in their suicide prevention initiative: suicide

prevention coordinator and case managers; Veterans Crisis Line (800/273-TALK); a screening protocol in general MH services; Operation SAVE; the REACH program (algorithm to predict suicidal ideation); and primary care mental health integration. They are also planning to replicate rural faith-based training suicide prevention project.

Ms. Watkins provided an overview of NC STRIVE (Student Transition Resource Initiative for Veteran's Education), an effort aimed at helping our Veterans succeed in higher education. It resulted from realizing that Veterans and their dependents were not using the GI Bill as effectively as they could be. NC STRIVE hosted its first conference in 2015 at the NC National Guard and moved to Central Carolina Community College in Sanford in 2016. After the 2016 conference, it was clear that people wanted the conferences to be held regionally so that more could attend. In 2017, regional conferences were held in the western part of the State, Charlotte, and Raleigh. In April 2018, regional conferences will be held in Morganton, Charlotte, Fayetteville, and Greenville. Each conference has its own planning committee although there is a Statewide Steering Committee, which she and Dr. Fang co-chair. While the conferences often focus on military culture and transition, they also address regional needs. Mr. Thomas has been the chair for the past 2 years and used Charlotte as an example of what the conferences are doing. This year they are offering panels on business leaders, school administrators, and student Veterans and breakout sessions on Green Zone training (military culture), QPR (Question-Persuade-Refer suicide prevention), and Mental Aid First Aid – Veterans.

Mr. Prosser emphasized how the NC Department of Military Affairs works in partnership with other agencies and organizations to prevent and reduce suicides. What they do well is provide outreach through their Veteran Services Officers (VSOs). They are concerned with the Veterans who are not connected to VA services and die by suicide (14 of the 20 suicides per day). He also noted that 65% of suicides are committed by older Veterans who are often retired, experiencing pain, have health-related issues, and are inactive both physically and socially. We need to target this group along with the Veterans who die by suicide within the first 17 days after discharge from service.

Mr. Hughes is a VSO who provides services to Veterans and their families in 12 western counties and Eastern Band of Cherokees. He discussed how VSS training targets VSOs so they can increase their knowledge and skills as they relate to both physical and mental health. In addition, he discussed the format of VSS training and what it addressed. He emphasize that VSOs can help Veterans with their claims.

Mr. Berry said that NCServes Central Carolina covers 17 counties. As an indicator of collaboration, as well as their depth and reach, they sent referrals to 31 different providers in February alone. Of the 31 providers, 12 providers sent referrals to 12 other providers. The 4 NC networks have served over 5300 Veterans, family members, and providers and have provided over 12,000 services since their inception. He, too, emphasized that no one organization does everything. However, NCServes can be the central navigation. He noted that if an agency or organization joins the network, they own the data, not NCServes.

The next GWG meeting will be on April 26 in Emergency Management's Situation Room at Joint Force Headquarters in Raleigh. Conference call number is 919/212-5747 although you can join the live stream by going to <http://facebook.com/govinst> and liking the page. You can also write comments on the page. Suicide prevention and reduction will be addressed in the April meeting while the May to July

**[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*

meetings will focus on Veteran homelessness. 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.

**[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*