PLEASE STAND BY FOR YOUR MEETING TO BEGIN. April 23, 2020
Please stand by for your meeting to begin.?
so Dave, I think the plan is to have crystal share slides through you if that's okay.
>> Pop:
Please stand by for your meeting to begin.
>> I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States state of America. And to the republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible with Liberty and justice for all.?
all right. Good afternoon, everyone. Welcome to our April 23rd, 2020, North Carolina Governor's Working Group on veteran servicemembers and their families. We hope that you've all joined us and have registered for updates at NCGWG.org. To watch captioning during this meeting, there's a link there for and you the meeting agenda and minutes are always on the website. First up today, we have Secretary Larry Hall for our welcome and interduty remarks.
>> Crystal, you may want to try to share your slides again.
>> He's muted.
>> All right.
Let's get started. Good afternoon. Glad to have everybody aboard listening and tuning in. We're getting this thing down so we all understand what's going on. Greetings, as usual, on behalf of the Governor. Thanks to all of you all for the hard work you're doing in understanding what we have to do to persevere and continue to do our jobs during this time of the COVID pandemic and crisis. We all have to stick together, work together and we'll win in the end. Again, I appreciate all of you. I know there's stress and strains in our communities and extra challenges, but this is also a time
where we're learning to work smarter, do distance work as well and bring new people into the network and get veterans involved and be accessible to them. So again, thank you for all the forward thinking you're doing, for having the forward thinking in mind of how you reach more of our military veterans, et cetera, and the change and the difference you'll make in our communities. We've got a lot of things going on here at the Department of Military Veterans Affairs we have interesting information for you. You'll be hearing more. Again, please use our website if you need any updates or additional information and we stand ready to support in whatever way possible. Thank you, again, so much for all of your service.

>> Next, vice chair updates and we will start with Deputy Secretary.

>> Good afternoon. Yes, as my boss likes to call it, we're in the now normal. Every day is a new day and it's a new normal situation. And it's posted up there, April 28th, veterans Roundtable on Facebook and may 12th, the women's summit has been cancelled and rescheduled for August 5th. And there's a lot each vents that have been cancelled because of the COVID-19, but there's still a lot of activity going on in the veterans' world in spite of COVID-19, and our boss here, Secretary Larry Hall, wants to make sure that every veteran is taken care of in the State of North Carolina. I want to over a couple of things of what our department has initiated since the onset of this COVID-19. We've been in contact and much thanks and gratitude and gratefulness to the veterans administration, United States Depart of Rhett vans Administration with the four hospitals that are assisting us in the care of our veterans in our four veterans homes that we have. We've moved forward with that. They've come in, taken tests of the veterans. They helped us with that round. They've also come in and offered any guidance and suggestions that we have, and they're even augmenting the staff. The doctors are even doing rounds with our doctors in the VA hospitals. We're much grateful for that because everyone knows the more help, the better you are. We've had very little COVID-19 in our homes, but we are much thankful for that because the work that we have. We've coordinated with the department of health and human services in the fact that we have the county DHHS Directors there, in the four counties where the
homes are located, that are testing the partners, the employees there. And we do a weekly call in and we're happy with that and today at 2:30, we have a call-in again. Hospitals, we're hand in hand with them. Administrators are talking to the hospitals and so forth. We clean the homes twice a day. We're taking the temperatures of every veteran that we have in the hospital twice per shift. We have shut down, you know, any visitation our homes. We have lots of telecommunication support that we can-- that the loved ones can reach their-- the veterans inside the homes and communicate. Not face to face, but virtually. The Microsoft Teams has been a great thing there. We have -- we created a sterile room in the Salisbury home so far with three air scrubbers and the purpose is to minimize cross-contamination of our isolation wings. The second one is being installed now in the Kinston home, and the other two, the Fayetteville home and the Black Mountain home will have that soon. So we purchased those air scrubbers, and we're working hand in hand with that to get that up and running. We received a lot of praise for that from the Department of Health and Human Services in North Carolina. Plus the United States Department of Veterans Affairs was highly appreciative of the effort that we've done and the early jump we took on that, and we can't-- we can't say enough. We've got to take care of our veterans, everywhere we look. You know, our cemeteries, we're down to-- we've stopped the communal activities in the cemeteries. We're doing grave burials. The funeral home comes in. We do the Burr bal and it's closed down but we are making appointments at a later date to come back and do the full funeral honors, if that's the wishes of the family, so forth. We just want to stop the spread of this virus and keep everyone safe and healthy. It's no disrespect to it, but we're very respectful in what we do in our cemeteries. Our veteran service centers may have the doors locked, but there's a phone number. There's emails, and we're doing that every day on a daily basis. One of our-- we're teleworking to the maximum extent possible, which means our doors are locked, but our employees are on the internet, on the Teams. We're submitting claims. We're on the phones. We're still connected with our veterans, and one case in the Greenville office, I think last week, you know, serviced 74 veterans just that one week. I know in their
canton office they had a claim they submitted and came back and $20,000 backpay, plus we had one that had $103,000 backpay. So we're still working. The VA is still working. We're taking care of our veterans. We're doing everything we can in this abnormal time, we're doing normal business and even greater business to some extent, than we had done before, and we're very appreciative of the understanding that everyone has and we hope we can get back to a more normal situation, but I will tell you. Right now with us still doing business the way we're doing, this is the normal now and this is the way we're going to operate, and I just pray that everyone stays safe, keep your social distancing. Don't let your guard down. And let's keep this virus and knock it out. That's all I have right now, Crystal. Thank you.

>> Thank you, Secretary. Next up is our assistant Secretary, Mr. Terry Westbrook.

>> That's all right. Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. Thank you very much. I want to go over some stuff Secretary Hall specifically asked me to cover about the state nursing home program so that you guys kind of have a good picture of what that looks like once people start asking you these kinds of questions. First off, as you see, we have four homes. Right now, Fayetteville, Kinston, Salisbury, they're all over the state. Each one of those homes, three of 'em are actually located either directly beside or within a 10-minute drive up a Veterans Affairs medical center that provides them their VA support. The fourth one, which is in Kinston, is 40 minutes from their closest VA facility. That's where that relationship Secretary Falls is coming from and they're working closely with the VA because they're close. I want to bring to your attention the second part, the nursing home operations and the big thing to take away from this is North Carolina is pretty unique in the nation. We actually contract with a nursing home management company, which is Pruitt Health care out of Atlanta to provide our full spectrum nursing home management program. They provide the administration, operations, dining facility, clinical, maintenance. They are full spectrum. They have their own supply chain so they do everything inside the doors. We provide them a facility, outfit with the equipment they need. They execute the mission of caring for those veterans in the
skilled nursing home. What you see down there is they primarily get their staffing through the North Carolina education system, so their registered nurses, certified nursing assistants, all of those people that provide that clinical support, they are all people that are graduating from college at Cape Fear Community College, University of North Carolina Asheville, Chapel Hill, NCAP in Greensboro. That's where these people are coming from that they're working their -- they're putting to work in our nursing homes. They're not bringing them in from all over the country. The last thing I want to do on this and you can go onto the next slide, Crystal. So the Centers for Disease Control put out their guidance on the kinds of actions you should take at a nursing home to look after your residents in that home. Now I want to just let you take a look at all of these things now, what you see on there is they talk about they tall about social distancing. They talk about making sure you have plenty of personal protective equipment. They talk about preparedness and taking actions and observing people that are symptomatic and asymptomatic, and they talk about creating areas within the facility where you can isolate people while you're evaluating. That's all the CDC's got. Crystal, next slide. So the reason I bring all that up is, these are the things that Pruitt health care is doing at our nursing facilities and all four of them, these are the policies they have in place, that they've had in place starting about the 13th of March and moving forward. We talked about the homes are secured. We talked about the medical screenings. We talked about the sterile room, the air scrubbers, protective equipment. I want to make everybody aware. They're taking all these actions and they were very proactive to get the supplies in place it took to do this and now we're seeing some of the results of it because although we have some COVID-19 positive cases in our facilities, we are significantly better off than most of the nursing facilities in North Carolina. We only have two homes out of the four that even have reported a positive case. So two of our homes are still 100% clear of COVID-19 today. They've done an outstanding job of looking after the welfare of the veterans in their facility. So that's just a quick overview. I'm available for any questions. If you need to, crystal has my contact information and I can respond.

>> Thank you so much. Next up on behalf VA VISN-6 is Mr.
Stephen Wilkins. Thank you for allowing us this opportunity to update you on information that we think is important for you to share. I would like to start with saying that we do have daily numbers updates on veterans and staff affected by COVID-19 on the VA Public Health website, and we'll make sure that website link is available after the meeting. At this point, curtailment and restriction of services continues and will extend at least through May 8th and possibly longer. At this point, we now have centralized testing through the Durham VA, where all of our facilities are providing samples that are being taken daily from veterans and transporting those samples to Durham to turn the tests around and providing results within 24 to 48 hours. In addition to that, each site also has contractual agreements with laboratories that are taking about two days to turn around results and then if there are urgent or emergent situations requiring a more imminent results and we have some toolkits available at each facility to provide that immediate turnaround. At this point, we're working towards our fourth mission of providing assistance in the community to civilians, and although we haven't been asked at this point, we are standing ready and prepared to do that. As Deputy Secretary Falls mentioned earlier we're already providing support in the community to the state veterans homes. We are also providing and coordinating with community providers to make sure that they have everything that they need as well. Several of our staff members have deployed to New York City and New Orleans to help out in those situations. At this point, we'd like to also point out that there's been a huge increase in virtual care and telehealth to the point where we really expect a lot of or a high level of residual and in terms of veterans who want to continue that type of care after this episode is over. We've had a lot of success with it, and it seems that a lot of veterans and staff are not only happy with it but really confident that's the way they would like to go. So we're very happy that has actually taken place at this point, and we've had the opportunity to do that and to really ramp up with our telehealth services and other virtual care opportunities. I would like to remind you that it's important to call first. If you are not in an emergency situation and need to make an appointment or see someone at a VA, so that they can prepare if you are symptomatic, or if you think you might
have a reason to be tested to come into the VA. It's important that we are ready to and prepared to treat in a way that keeps everybody safe and lastly, I'll simply say that you may have seen last week on the news that the Fayetteville VA has opened up a new CLC residence and has transferred their CLC residents into the new facility. It's amazing, and they're all very happy with it. At this point, I will turn it back over to you, Crystal.

>> Thank you so much, Mr. Wilkins. We appreciate it. Mark, I'm going to go ahead and introduce you and let you get started and I'm going to pause my sharing because I feel like I have something open that keep ding. I apologize. Next up is Mark BiLosz, the Director of veterans benefits administration, Winston-Salem, regional office.

>> Thanks, crystal. Good afternoon, everybody. Hopefully everyone out there is staying safe and being healthy. I really do appreciate what everyone is doing around the state. Give you a few updates on the regional office. First of all, our face-to-face outreach is postponed until further notice. As you know, we have quite a few robust outreach events that we have scheduled throughout the year and we've sort of put all of those on hold at this point. One of the things, though, that we are doing is we are doing virtual outreach events so if any of you have outreach events that you'd like for us to attend in a virtual environment, share information as to what's going on within VBA, we're glad to do that and we actually have an outreach mailbox and I can share that afterwards with Crystal and she can post that on the Governor's Working Group website, so that anybody who has an event coming up that would like us to attend virtually, we would be glad to do. As of this point, we don't have a date when we'll be getting back to normal operations. It will be south sometime down the road. The regional office is also closed to the public at this point. We do not have our employees there seeing veterans, but there are other avenues that if you have a question, if you have a concern, that you can still contact us. A little further down on that slide, you can see eBenefits, the IRIS inquiry and if you go to the VA website, there's an area where you can actually ask a question to us, whether it's about your claim or any other benefit that we offer. We also encourage you to call our 1-800 number, 800-827-1000, and we have all of our staff are working. They're
there to answer your questions about anything that you may have. I can tell you that we have normal claims processing activities, not just in our regional office within North Carolina but all around the country. We are processing claims normally. All our employees are working. I think we have one employee that isn't working because of some connectivity problems. But all of our employees are working and they're there to help veterans and process claims as quickly as they can. We're excited to get those folks up and working from home and making sure that they're there in a safe environment and able to work for you. We often get questions about the new stimulus checks going out. Many of you may be receiving a non-service disability pension, which is an income-based benefit. Quite often, income received will reduce the amount of your pension and I just wanted to point out that the stimulus checks that are going out will not affect that pension. Next thing I have is extension of deadlines. I know this is a very difficult time. Many of us are shuddered in. Many of us are having problems going out. Many of us are not going out for a general compensation examination that may be scheduled. I wanted to let you know that there is a provision put in place so that deadlines to send in that information to report for an examination have been extended. So we're not putting anybody's life in danger to go out for an exam when you should be staying home and staying safe. So again, you can look on our website and the VA.GOV website and you will see the provisions that are outlined that I talked about. I want to mention one event coming up. We're really pleased, my boss, the Under Secretary Paul Lawrence will be doing a live teletown hall on May 27th. It's in another month. He will be doing this for the state of North Carolina and he currently is doing these for every state around the country. We're glad that he is scheduling one. He will be on 4:00 p.m. eastern time on that date. There's the call-in number. Any of you are more than welcome to call in listen to his comments and answer them. This is a great opportunity to talk to one of our senior leaders in Washington, D.C. about any concerns, questions that you may have. I wanted to promote this on the at the Governor's working group this afternoon and make sure all of you that are interested in hearing what our Under Secretary for benefit hases to say listens into that call.
Crystal, that's all I have. I will hand it back to you.

>> Thank you so much. We appreciate you being here today. Next up, Dr. Michelle Laws, assistant Director for consumer policy and community stakeholder engagement, division of mental health, developmental disabilities, and substance abuse services for the department of health and human services. Dr. Laws.

>> Great. Thank you. Again, on behalf of the Secretary for the department of health and human services, Dr. Mandy Cohen, and Deputy Secretary for developmental health and mental health services and substance abuse, it is a privilege to sit at this table and collaborate with the partners on the Governor's working group. We remain focused and steadfast on the frontlines of responding to the COVID-19 pandemic in North Carolina. At 3:00, the Governor will be making an announcement in terms of a phased opening so I hope that some of you are able to get that and I don't want to get ahead of his announcement. To date, we have confirmed that we have 7,608 confirmed COVID-19 cases, 253 deaths, 486 people who are hospitalized, and we have seen the spread in all but seven of our 100 counties so the spread throughout 93 of North Carolina's counties. But we are continuing to work on DHHS' side to stand up policies and to direct resources in areas and in places where we know they are needed the most. Some of you may have heard the announcement in terms of pushing through the additional benefits for children in terms of food, food benefits through EBT. Additional pay recognized-- additional money to cover food for children who are out of school, who qualified for free and reduced lunches and you know there's an extraordinary burden that has been placed on families who rely on free and reduced lunches for their children and so we are very pleased about that. There's some other policies that have come out and for a listing of all of those, you can visit the NCDHHS.GOV/Coronavirus and you will find a list of executive orders that the Governor released and the most recent policy changes as it relates to behavioral health and also other department of health and human services needs. Next slide. We are focused on three priorities to move us ahead of the curve. Ideally, we would like to see the curve flattened, but we know we've got to go to the other side. I like the reference that Secretary Larry Hall says, not claiming it as the new normal but the now
normal. Hopefully this will pass, but we are focusing on three priorities. Those are testing, contact, tracing, and trending and there's more information that will be coming out in terms of testing sites, trying to make sure that testing is available to all who need it and to priority vulnerable populations, and then we want to make sure that we are learning as much as we possibly can about this virus and how it is impacting people and also how it is spreading and so contact tracing and obviously, trending, looking at different populations that may be impacted in different ways. We do know that there are some communities that are-- where we're seeing a disparate impact and so trending, trending also looking at whether or not there are barriers that are preventing people from getting tested. They're looking at what other factors may be influencing or contributing to the exacerbation to the virus. Next slide. Two of the resources that I really wanted to lift up to today are helplines that are in place now. One is the Hope4NC Helpline and that's a helpline that we used during hurricane recovery efforts, where we served over 4,400 people in the state, and so we in the genius thinking or ingenuity of some of our team members led by Matt Hurr, another deputy Director, we decided that this resource could be useful in helping to in realtime get people access to services including crisis intervention as well as some of those services that link directly to the social determinants of health, food, housing, those types of services and we also know that on the frontlines our health care workers, including doctors, medical practitioners, our physicians, nurses, both professional and paraprofessionals, the CNs, home health aides and so forth, we know they, too, needed access to support services to help them deal with some of the stressors and to help build up resiliency and cope during this time, and so hope for healers' hotline or helpline is now live and we are doing this or running this particular hotline in partnership with one of our stakeholders, North Carolina Psychological Association, and hopefully, people will begin to take advantage of this. We are seeing some upticks in behavioral health needs, across the board whether it is patients who are receiving services and their families, or families that are impacted or the health care providers. So these two resources hopefully will help us in some way get access to realtime help. Next slide. And then,
of course there is 211, people can text COVIDNC to 898211, or dial 211, or 888-892-1162 for additional assistance and help, and again, this is across the needs, the social determinants and drivers of health outcomes. Next slide. And our objective remains clear as it always is during an emergency to support the continuation of quality, medically necessary services and supports for consumers and families, stabilize, sustain and adapt our provider networks. We've done that in a huge way. A significant way with our telehealth policies and that has been literally saving lives and to reduce, to the greatest extent as possible, the need for hospitalization and also prepare to transition from self-quarantine back to the public and I will not jump ahead but we will hear an announcement from the Governor later on in a few minutes in about 30 minutes but again, it is a pleasure for to us really be of service. We consider ourselves at DHHS servant leaders. I have been thrilled that we are over the Emergency Operations Center. I have been thrilled seeing our national guard in action. So I want to just salute Mike and his team there and just say that it has been very impressive and very encouraging to see our Guards at work and really, for me, filling assured that they are there and they've got our backs and they're helping us during this difficult time. So thank you.

>> Thank you very much, Dr. Laws, for that wonderful update. Next, on behalf of mark Edmonds is Mr. Victor Glover.

>> It's a pleasure to see everyone again. Hold on. I'm muted. Oh, there we go. Thank you. It's a pleasure to see everyone again. Just a few briefs of what's going on with the Department of Commerce, workforce solutions. We, of course, are promoting virtual employment services. Our career centers are closed, but we have made ourselves available to the public right now. We are also practicing social distancing just as well. Next slide, please. We have 81 career centers throughout the State of North Carolina and we're also still providing services to employers and services to our citizens across the great State of North Carolina, and again, all of this is being done virtually. We are all working from home and working remotely. Businesses can still connect and can still connect with the folks (inaudible) and all of our cell phones and we're still constantly working and providing services. I was telling some of my staff that it feels
like I'm working a lot harder and longer working remotely than I was doing in my office. So an in-person visit to the career center is not necessary at this time. Next slide, please. As we have stated, this is our new normal. We're trying to help and affect those with recent layoffs that need assistance, our career centers have mobilized the resources in the community, working with employers virtually, of course, with job seekers and businesses as well. With our virtual services, they reach us through telephone and inter. I have received quite a few emails of folks that are desperate. They put together like 50 or 60 different email addresses across the state and they're sending out distress emails and we're addressing those and forwarding them the appropriate offices that are providing the services. Next slide, please. Part of the virtual services that we're providing we're able to connect with team members and we're able to assist folks with resumes and fill out applications, virtually and online. And for those still seeking our services, there are positions and relaying that information to the jobseekers that we're interacting with in each one of our career centers. Next slide, please. So we're providing a lot of virtual services like I said and they're working out to us and in turn, they're reaching out to us for employment services and it was difficult in the beginning remotely working with individuals with resumes and applications. We are still connected with our partners throughout the communities with the veterans' homeless programs that we have across the state, still providing them services and connected with services for those who are able to preach out and provide services for veterans that we're working with. One of the things that has happened and one of the things that is we're working on in North Carolina is we went to the ment of Labor and asked to work with the department of employment services and 44 of our veterans staff have been redirected and assisting with taking unemployment insurance claims, resetting pens and being as active as full, full team effort with the department of commerce to solve some of the problems and circumstances that people have. And this particular E mill address will take you to all of our career centers and the contact numbers within the career centers, so you call that center and someone will answer. You leave a message and somebody will return your call. If we receive an email, someone will get back with you. We're
still providing full services with in our career centers. And that being said, that's all I have. Thank you.

>> Thank you so much, Mr. Glover. Next up for updates and initiatives, Mr. Jeff Smith, our military and veterans program liaison.

>> Thank you, Crystal. Good afternoon, everyone. Had a few technical difficulties so you will have to do with the pleasure of my voice this afternoon. I wanted to start out by really giving a shoutout to Victor Glover and Mark Edmonds and the folk who work for Solutions and I think they had in the neighborhood of 600,000 applications in the last three weeks. Whatever the now or getting back to old normal is going to be, they're going to be a big part of it. Let's keep them in our thoughts and prayers. First slide, I want to reiterate the points that Dr. Law made about 211 about being the focal point for information about state government and services throughout North Carolina during this pandemic. All right, ma'am. Okay. As she also mentioned, we've done a decade's worth of work in the last month with regard to telehealth. Here is some important information about transformation of telehealth under NC Medicaid, and these slides are posted for everyone to see. But you make a phone call and you call your doctor and they should be able to help you set it up from there. Next slide, please, ma'am. All right. Here is some wonderful information from the folks at the Steven A. Cohen clin Nick Fayetteville. They're doing statewide telehealth, video therapy and you can reach them at 910-615-3737 or military.capefearvalley.com. Wonderful gift to the state of North Carolina and the men and women who serve here. So please take advantage of that if you need it. Next slide. And Crystal is going to share a little bit more about this in a few minutes. I wanted to make sure that we kept everybody in the loop about our Governor's Challenge to prevent veteran suicide and that's a preview of the page that we're submitting through the North Carolina Governor's Veterans Resource Guide so that we can share this project with more folks. NC STRIVE, our student transition resource initiative for veterans education. The three previously scheduled regional conferences have obviously been cancelled. We have reformulated them into what will be a virtual conference and that is going to be at 1:00 p.m. on Thursday May 7th. That's two weeks from today, 1:00 p.m., Secretary
Hall has graciously agreed to help us out, kicking it off, and we'll have representatives from each of the university systems, North Carolina, Jeff Smith from UNC-TV, is going to moderate and we're going to put together the best virtual conference we can to provide student veterans across the State of North Carolina with resources they need in this time of crisis. All right. This is something that we've been talking about for many months and it's getting closer closer. So also included in our resource guide submissions to ask the question and 100,000 conversations started right here, and you can look forward to a more expansive toolkit as we go through the year. Thank you, ma'am. All right. Resources for veterans and their families. We have a subpage for the Governor's working group that we've been doing our very best to put references to all of your programs and quick and easy way for military families to get a hold of the help they need as quickly and as easily as possible. Next slide, sir. Ma'am. Hey, Governors Working Group outreach! Folks returning to the Governors Working Group to find the answers they need. We're delighted with that. That shows that our work is not in vein, and folks really do want to know the answers to these questions. I thank leadership for showing up month in and month out, and helping to us achieve this. Thank you all. And if you have any questions this is how you get a hold of me and I won't take any more time. Thank you very, very much for everyone. Oh, one last picture. Sorry.

This is a preview of the meditation garden at the Veterans Life Center in BUTNER that will be opening once we get out of this crisis. A nice serene place for veterans.

>> Next up, we have the Governor's Challenge update. So the 2020 Governors Challenge to prevent suicide among veterans and their families, update through 2020. It's only after you step outside your comfort zone that you begin to change, grow, and transform. And I think we can all agree that we're doing a lot of changing, a lot of growing and a lot of transforming here during this time, which is good. This is all good stuff. And just to review for those who have not seen us before. The United States department of veterans affairs, VHA, and SAMHSA, VA technical assistance center are working with the state of North Carolina to help us strengthen our behavioral health systems. It's more than that. We're working with all of our veterans services, all of
our services across the state. If you provide a service to the public, we are going to help strengthen your system. This is just from the pre-academy site visit that took place back in January at Goodwill Industries of northwest Carolina in Winston-Salem. We had approximately 30 of our partners come out and help to us do some initial planning for our program. Pre-policy academy activities and partners. We completed environmental stand.

we did our SWOT analysis and introduced teams to three priorities areas that we talk I talk about and established priorities and strategies and preliminary logic models ahead of the February policy academy. You will see on this slide that we had a great amount of partners. Working with us on the this program. We're so happy for everyone who has reached out. I can't tell you how much I appreciate those of you who have reached out in the past week, who want to be a part of our post-policy academy site visit. During our policy academy, in February, Washington, D.C., we were able to talk about the objectives here which are to form an interagency military and civilian team of state leaders, policymake percent health care providers. We didn't begin. Crystal came in late on this. In 2006, a group of people got together and began collaborating on the resources available to veterans in North Carolina and it has grown into what you are seeing right now with the Governor's working group. So we have our interagency providers put together right now and we are going to work on defining and measuring success, including defining assignments, deadlines and measurable outcomes to be reported. That part will come at our post policy academy site visit. May. The three priority area we are working on, identify SMVF veterans, members of their family and screen for suicide risks. Promote connectiveness and safety and safety planning. So again, my heart didn't format exactly right. Have you or someone you loved served in the armed services? I just want to reiterate this. Because this is how we're going to-- the strategy we will use to fulfill our first priority, which is to identify SMVF. We hope to reach as many people in the State of North Carolina that served the public to help them understand why it's so important to ask this question. Here is just a little information about why that is so important. There's several states that we are able to model after, New Hampshire, Virginia, several states that
are doing this as the question campaign. We have a lot of support from subject matter experts, who we met at the policy academy in Washington, and why is it important? Because not all 700,000 veterans in North Carolina are eligible for VA health care nor did they want to. Some of them just do not want to seek health care there. So if we can get our private-public servants to ask this question so we can identify those veterans, we can then move into the next part and do a suicide risk assessment with those folks. It is likely we'll use this as a standard assessment across the state.

It's going to take some training, but one of our presenters at the policy academy said if you screen all of them and they all-- 99 out of 100 say no, but one says yes to one of these first two questions, then we may be able to provide intervention that saves a life. And the next thing just to show you to help you understand what a safety plan is, this is something that a veteran can use to help identify what's happening in their body and to them when they are in crisis to help them identify some of their best coping strategies, people in social settings that provide a distraction. Hopefully those are healthy people in social settings that provide a distraction. People that they can ask for help, professionals that they've worked with, making their environment safe which would go along the lines of lethal means safety education and then at the bottom, the one thing that is most important to me and worth living for is, and everybody needs to have that thing. I have about ten of those things in the form of dogs and grandkids and children. So it's worth helping people do this just to make them aware of what's worth living for. So our action planning, some of the things that we have-- some of the strategies under some of our priorities are engage veteran service organizations to encourage their members to identify themselves as veterans to their primary care physicians, so we like American Legion, Military order of the Purple Heart, VFW, DMV, all of them to impress upon their member how important it is to identify themselves to their physicians as veterans. Hey, doc, I'm a veteran. I'm a veteran of the Vietnam War and I have Diabetes and ischemic heart disease and we hope to train that fish together automatically understand that those conditions are related to service and that they can then refer them to a
place where they can get help, they they can get the benefits they deserve. And communicate community partnerships to bridge gaps. We know our rural communities struggle with gaps and resources and we want to help them to link the resources that they have so that we can benefit most from what's available. That last point there, utilizing engaged faith-based resources, service organizations and community partners to assist in lethal means safety education. Any of you from the Durham area who know Gary KUNA, who is the suicide prevention coordinator in the Durham medical center, knows he has a very strong lethal means safety education plan for that community. He has given out 100,000 lots in 1 gun locks and I can't speak. He has given out a lot of gun locks. He's working really hard on educating the community on lethal means safety. So just a snapshot at how we are determining what we're going to do, how we're going to evaluate that and how we're going to measure that is just a little message here from RAND, and RAND is a nonprofit institution that helps make policies and decisions for us. Community partners know where to refer, SMVF for services and that's the doctor I just spoke of. He's gonna know where to send that veteran once that veteran has identified himself as such. We're going to try to provide community trainings and better integration of informal partners. We will continue to count how many trainings are provided and number of community organizations contacted, et cetera, and find out if people have more knowledge after we're done. So we'll measure, what was your knowledge before this training, what was your knowledge after? Coming up on May 12th and 13th, we will have our post-site visit. It will be a virtual site visit and send out some information on that today. If you are interested in being a part of this group, or you want to be a part of that meeting, my email address is at the end of this slide show and please reach out to me. We welcome your input. Action plans will be developed at the academy. That's where we will determine who is going to do what and in what timeframe. That is all that I have for this presentation. Again, there's my email address, crystal.miller at MILvets.NC.GOV. Reach out to me at anytime. We welcome your input. Next up, our NCServes updates >> good afternoon. I hope everyone is staying safe and doing the right thing and being good to your neighbors.
Real quick, doubling down on the ask the question campaign that Crystal just mentioned, this is superimportant because we can't understand what we can't measure. You know, please, please get behind this campaign. If you'll go to the next slide, please. Perfect. Thank you. NCServes data to share with you today. The big headline is that we've surpassed 13,000 individual clients just here in North Carolina and 81% of those were resolved. You know, of course, because we're better than the rest of the country, that's north of the American national average of 86%. To the NCServes providers and coordination centers, thank you for what you are doing and keep up the stellar work. Next slide, please, Crystal. Specifically with regard to education as a service type, we're seeing about 2% of our clients seeking educational services and that's really held steady over the past few years at that rate. Of course, maybe the most telling data point here is the least surprising and that's how closely education request track with employment services. I think that we've spent a lot of time in this group and individually and will continue to do so talking about veteran unemployment and underemployment, and the incredibly vital role that our education providers have on moving that needle. Next slide, please. There we go. So all four NCServes centers are still running. Across the board, care coordinators and intake specialists have really risen to meet this challenge. We've been working closely with the coordination centers to monitor the impact of the social distancing impacts and the Governor's guidelines on our provider impact. The biggest impact is to our coastal network. We have almost a quarter of the coastal providers suspending operations and another quarter operating in some kind of reduced or limited capacity. To benchmark for that for you, we have, I think, two providers closed in Charlotte. You know, finally, like everybody else, we're closely tracking the trends associated with COVID-19 crisis. We've seen a marked rise in requests for food assistance and income support across the state, and as veterans are being laid off, furloughed or otherwise financially impacted, we expect to see this trend continue. Actually I took a little time last week to look through some of the historical data, the NCServes data from the last two major hurricanes and found kind of an interesting phenomenon where we can
almost divide post-crisis periods into two six-month phases and there's an initial response period where clients are seeking basic, immediate needs and in that area we see a lull in network activity across NCServes, but later, there's that second half or that six-month kind of recovery phase, and this latter phase is where we see the NCServes network activity and service requests and new clients typically spike, and so I'll be very interested, as I know that all of you will to see what the trend lines look like through the current crisis but the message here is that we likely have not seen the Zenith of the need for human services just yet. Otherwise, a quick shoutout to the USO of North Carolina and Tommy Walker. Tommy is our new central-- NC Central Director. We're excited about Tommy coming on, and I think that you're all really going to love him. Though I do ask that you look past his naval affiliation. He's still a good man in spite of that. That's it for meish withing you guys all clean hands and full freezers. Thank you very much.

>> Sorry about that. All right. Next up, we have miss Siobhan Norris of the UNC system. Siobhan, you may start sharing your screen now.

>> Okay. Wonderful. One second. . Okay. Can everyone see the screen?

>> Yes, ma'am.

>> Wonderful. Well, good afternoon, everyone. My name is Siobhan Norris and I'm the program manager for military veteran education for the University of North Carolina system office. I'll be providing you a brief overview of who we are, our approach to supporting our military connected students as well as our systemwide response to COVID-19. So the UNC sirs testimony is one of the strongest and oldest higher public education system. We have 17 campuses of which 16 are institutions of higher learning and six of those are historically minority serving institutions. Our 17th campus, the School for Science and mathematics is the first residential high school for gifted children. We currently have 240,000 students enrolled and 17,000 of those are military connected. And we are proud to share that about half of our universities have made the 2020 best for vets list ranked by military times. So we have four key areas in which we provide support to our state. One, providing educational opportunities for military communities. Two, engaging with our defense industries. Three, supporting the missions of
the military commands and then, four, growing our State's economy. Broadly, we evaluate the success of our military students by making sure we enroll them in the right programs, that we are able to retain them and ensuring that they're prepared for graduation and beyond and through to employment. We are guided by our board of Governors special committee on military veterans affairs chaired by Governor Leo doubtry and this board has six actionable steps to support the goals. One, increase enrollment. Two, increasing retention, graduation, and employment success. Three, growing our strategic partnerships because we all know that collaboration is the key to success for any organization. Building the military credit database that supports the compliance of Senate bill 761 to award academic credit for military experience in a uniform and consistent manner in partnership with our North Carolina Community Colleges. Five, providing flexible programs and pathways through articulation agreements as well as online and distance education. Finally, ensuring that we are consistently evaluating our internal processes to ensure that we are having the best supportive policies for our military students and making adjustments when necessary. So on this slide, you can see how the moving parts and pieces work together through our board of Governors to our military working group and this group meets monthly and consists of campus leaders that work closely with our military students. Additionally we we have a military credit advisory council that develops policies for awarding academic credit for military training and we work closely with our Community College friends to convene faculty and staff to -- faculty to award academic credit. Okay. Sorry. This isn't the most updated. So we get a lot of questions about what are our top degree programs that our military students pursue? What you'll see is the data that we have nears the national data that we would see from veterans of America. Top degrees are business, health professionals, as well as education and stem. We also have quite a few partnerships to include organizations that support entrepreneurship, like the one that we have with Bunker Labs. Also to support our employment initiatives for our military students so we have a partnership with hiring our heroes through the U.S. chamber of commerce foundation as well as NC for me. Along with our defense industries to
support research and along with military family programs and then military cultural competency education through our partnerships. I'm sure a lot of you are probably wondering how we are supporting our military students during COVID. Proud to say that we were one of first university systems in the nation to sign a letter of support for the protection of VA benefits, Bill 3503 that came into effect. This actually gives the VA the opportunity to-- during a time of crisis to classify any programs that have been moved online during an emergency to classify them that they were seeded and therefore, protecting the military payments that the VA would pay to the military student. We moved all of our classes online and we are ensuring that our universities are in continual contact with our military students, whether that's through phone calls, emails or other digital platforms we have a lot of great things happening within our student health and counseling centers. We are using HIPAA-compliant platforms for health concerns and student Blue Health minutes can pay the same amount of money for their prescription offcampus as they would prescription obtained on campus. Health centers are still open and seeing patients, but students have to call ahead to determine if they can come inside during operating hours and we offer shared services through NC State, NC State and ECU. For instance, if a student is based in Chapel Hill but is taking classes through ECU online, they are still able to go and utilize Chapel Hill’s health services. We are finding that most of our students are really enjoying the telehealth options and are taking full advantage of it. They find it very convenient and they actually love the technology portion. Additionally our mental health counseling services are being offered the same way as our health services through the telehealth options and then our system has been awarded emergency mini Grant to help support our health clinicians to provide better services. For example, we've had some clinician that have needed new laptops or they can be in compliance or needed additional technical training to provide those resources. That mini grant supports that. I want to make it clear, though, that the mini grant isn't technically geared toward the military student population. It is open to help all of our students in UNC. That being said, our military students are definitely accessing and benefits
from these services. So with that that does conclude my presentation. If anyone would like to know more information about the mental health services that we're offering, feel free to contact me. My email is down here, SRnorris@NC.EDU.

>> Thank you so much. We really appreciate you being with us today. Next up, President Hope Williams presenting with NCICU. Dr. Williams, you may start sharing your screen.

>> Thank you I'm muted and I became muted again. So thank you for that. We're delighted to be here today and I want to thank my colleague, Rebecca and our Director of programs, who also works with our veterans and NC STRIVEs group and she's part of this presentation today. First of all, I would like to tell you about our independent Coles and universities. We have 36 independent colleges and universities across North Carolina. We have 90,000 students and combined, 66,000 employees which would make us the largest private employer in the state. We also have a $14.2 billion economic impact on North Carolina. So our impact on the state is one that we value and one that we think is a wonderful partnership with the State of North Carolina. We also award 1 in 3 baccalaureate degrees and 1 in 3 professional and graduate degrees. We have important economic and educational impact on North Carolina, and among those degrees, that includes more than 50% of pharmacy and master's in nursing degrees, more than 59% of medical degrees and 88% of the degrees that are for physician assistants. I single those out because we know during this crisis, our health sciences graduates are so critical to helping overcome the challenges we face right now in North Carolina. I will show you also North Carolina because as you see, we are all across the state. I have to say I'm delighted to be able to make this presentation today because I grew up in Fayetteville. Of course in addition to having a father who was a veteran, my friends and colleagues and most of the people I knew are military families, either active duty or military or veterans. So this is very close to my heart personally as well. And today, I'm going to talk a little bit about how our campuses provide critical services to our veterans to ease that transition to college and to be able to remain in and complete college. The fact that a number of our campuses are in close proximity to military bases and provide enhanced services
there for veterans and also that we do have staff among our institutions who are dedicated to helping veterans navigate the VA benefit options and other help that they need. From an academic point of view, we do have and we have had programs certainly that our veterans are enrolled all across our colleges and universities, about 36, and among those, by the way, we have five historically black colleges and universities. We have three colleges for women and one two-year institution. In fact, the oldest one that we have is Salem college started back in 1772 and we've been embedded in North Carolina a very long time. For the programs that we have that are near our bases, I wanted to mention a few of those specifically. As you'll see on the slide, you will see the University of Mount Olive. It has a variety of ways of having services for veterans, including readmission to previous curriculum for those who may be called to active service. They have a variety of flexible policies. They have programs that include accelerated support and formats. Methodist University is another university that has long-standing programs for active duty and veterans and that is at Ft. Bragg with the training and education center. That offers eight-week programs, and I will talk a little bit more about some of the formats that we have with our programs designed for military and active duty military and veterans, specifically for their needs. But I don't want to say that first because I want to talk a little bit about Campbell University. Campbell has extended campuses in several places across the state and certainly on our military bases, and then North Carolina Wesleyan College has campus locations near bases and they provide flexible scheduling as well. For all of these campuses, generally they provide support for our students to be able to take courses during the semester and in many cases, divide the semesters to to mini semesters and we have students who may have be able to finish the last two courtses and take others remotely and it keeps students from having to be disrupted in the middle of their studies which we think is so important and in addition, we have a number that have online programs throughout the year and that's another important piece. Before I finish that about the academic piece, I wanted to mention that our articulation agreements that are critical for our colleges, particularly for the ones that we have as transfers and we
know that a lot of our military personnel and veterans come in with coursework from other places and they need that aility to transfer in. We work very closely with them and we were very pleased in the midst of this crisis, the state approving agency already approved our colleges and universities to be online so they would have a smooth transition for our veterans as they are taking those courses and would not have any disruption due to going remote. In terms of financial resources for our veterans, most campuses offer reduced tuition for our adult and military and veteran students and that's an important piece because in addition to having the reduced tuition, we have courses that are online, in person, normally, actually all are remote now, but normally online or in person so students have a choice. They have courses, as I mentioned, for the semester divided into parts all year round and in addition to that, they have ways to be able to have weekend courses and other kinds of evening courses to meet whatever schedule the veterans may have in terms of the other parts of their life, family or work or whatever they may be doing. We want to be able to provide the kind of flexibility that our students need and so this is a big part of that. Veterans and active duty military also may apply for our North Carolina needs-based scholarship and this has been true for the residents of North Carolina but we know that many come to North Carolina and stay but they may retain their residency in other states. We just worked with the North Carolina general assembly in the last couple of years to seek approval for those veterans and active duty military to be able to apply and be eligible to receive the North Carolina need-based scholarship which is the state financial aid program for students attending our 36 independent colleges and universities across the state, and we're so pleased that did pass and that eligibility is now in place. It is a need-based program, and so if they qualify, they're able to receive those benefits and we also in the budget that was approved and then is not in place yet, we did have the inclusion also of dependents of those active duty veterans who are claiming residency in other states also to be considered and qualify for the North Carolina need-based scholarship. We believe the next opportunity that presents itself we'll certainly try to get that approved and become active in legislation. I also wanted to mention the North
Carolina scholarship for children wartime veterans because that's another important option for our students from families of veterans and we want to be sure that we help serve those needs and are so pleased to have that additional support. In addition, one of the last things I want to mention is about our active involvement in the yellow ribbon campaign and the yellow ribbon ability to help serve our veteran students, and then also to know that we do have a number of our campuses with staff dedicated just to serving veterans and to try to help them navigate our system because we do have a lot of students on our campuses and we want to make sure that they get the specific and any additional help that they need. The next thing I want to talk about NC STRIVEs and Rebecca is involved very actively. To note, all of our NCICU campuses are involved in this partnership. We believe in it. We're activity in the programs that have come to be in terms of career fairs and things like that and college fairs that have been presented by NC STRIVE, and we want to continue to do that. Two great examples of that are that Johnson C. Smith in Charlotte hosted a 2017 regional conference and Methodist university and North Carolina Wesleyan were going to host two of the regional conferences this year which will be held but will be held now virtually. In addition to that, I just wanted to mention as Methodist, I was on the phone with Methodist University president, Stan Morgan, as I became to be part of this it mooing and I told him I was going to be speaking to you and I would be mentioning Methodist, of course, because the colleges that we have that have programs on military bases had them there generally since the 1970s. I promised him that I would make sure that you know how committed Methodist and our other institutions are to serving our veterans. I wanted to give them a shoutout. I wanted to mention briefly some other activities that we have going on. There's an example from Queens University of Charlotte, a green zone training where they actually have programs for all of their faculty and staff to help education the campus about the needs of our veterans, and they have a number of veterans on their campus as well. In addition, we have other additional benefits for veterans. We mentioned here that Queens University of Charlotte provides some veterans to attend the national student veterans conference every year so it's
not just programs on the academic side. We want them to be able to be a part of broader national groups. Meredith College, for example, organizes good will missions and veteran events during the year and Johnson C. Smith, as you see here, they established a veteran support hub, but they also established a chapter of the student veterans of America association and so as you can see, when we say that we are independent, we say that for a reason. Not everything we do is just a like. Each campus has a variety of approaches to helping our veterans and we're just able to give you examples of a few of those today. In addition, a few other examples, I mentioned Wesleyan earlier. They have an associationian Dean of veteran services and they also have an office for veteran services on their main campus. You can see here that a wall of resources greets veterans so they can have information available that might be able to assist them in other ways, too, and they also have and veterans advisory committee. Those work to conduct wellness checks on their veteran students for military connected students to be sure that the needs that they have are being met. I know my time today is short and I want to start there. In closing, I want to say how committed our NCICU campuses are, all 36 to supporting our veterans, how supportive we want to be of them in every way we can both academically and whatever kinds of other needs that they have, we work very hard to do that. As I mentioned, we've been doing it since around the 1970s, if not before, and that we want you to know that we are continuing to find additional ways just as we did with expanding that eligibility for dependents and we hope dependents but from veterans and active duty military who claim residency in other states but are here in North Carolina so they can be eligible for the state financial aid program to help them afford these programs and we certainly have a commitment to continue these adult programs for our veterans at a reduced prices, and each of our campuses would be happy to talk with any of our veterans who might be interested in pursuing those courses. So thank you very much. I have enjoyed being with you.
I'm happy to answer any questions.

>> Thank you so much, Dr. Will crams. We appreciate you. I graduated from a program here in Wilkes County from Gardner Webb university. I was able to take advantage of
That's great. They're all over the state over there in that part of the state. That's great.

I loved it. Next up, we have our Community College systems by J.K. JW Kelley

I serve as vice president of services in the systems office. First of all, we veterans graciously accept appreciation when people give it, and we also generously give it to other people. So I wanted to take a minute at the beginning of my presentation to say thank you to all of the health care providers and all of the people that are serving our veterans and citizens during this time of COVID-19. On behalf of all our presenters, we've discussed it before in other meetings that we are impressed with the respiratory care therapists, with law enforcement, with fire, EMS, 911, the list goes on and on, and we are very grateful and appreciate all the work that people are doing to keep us safe and to keep us healthy. So thank you to all those people doing that. North Carolina Community College System, we have 700 how thousand students across the state in 58 different Coles and if you add all of the external sites and satellite campuses, we easily go over 100 different locations where students and veteran students can find education and training for them. We know that we had at least 15,000 veterans that attend our institutions, but my guess is that is much higher than the 15,000. Community Colleges in North Carolina are unique to Community Colleges in other states in that we provide comprehensive education is what we call it so there are opportuniess in workforce and that would be short-term training to help you get the training and the education that you need to get into a job or into the workforce as quickly as possible. So that is a very exciting opportunity for veterans and students. Then our college credit opportunities, you can see those actually split into two different buckets. The first bucket I would highlight is the career and technical educational area. So those would be the areas, such as allied health education, mechatronics, machining, those types of college degrees and diplomas and certificates that you need to earn a credential to go into the workforce as soon as possible. The other opportunity that you have in the college credit, the other bucket for college credit, we could call that the college transfer bucket, and that is based upon our great partnership with our
cousins here in North Carolina, the university system and the independent colleges and universities with articulation agreements with them. So there's the applied or the associate in arts degree, there's the associate in science. We're grateful that we have also an associate and engineering degree that's college transfer and also several degrees in fine arts that are college transfer. Our newest degree is teacher education, which is which is an excellent opportunity to begin your preparation to become a public school teacher in the Community College system and go on and continue at the University of your choice. So we're excited about that newest transfer degree that is coming out. A couple of other opportunities that sometimes are overlooked when you think about Community Colleges and that is the area of apprenticeship and work db based learning. At the Raleigh is actually stationed in a part of the Community College system. So your opportunities for hands-on work-based learning and apprenticeship is closely partnered with the Community College system. And so you should seek and ask about opportunities for apprenticeship and for work-based learning. Another area that is often overlooked is many of our veterans want to start their own business. So there are small business centers at each of the 5 Community Colleges and most of their services are free. They will help you design that business plan. They will help you come up with your budgeting. They will help you strategize to find the funding that you may need. All kinds of opportunities for to you start your own small business in North Carolina is at the 58 Community Colleges, small business centers many of our colleges are designated as military friendly and many of our faculty and staff are veterans like myself and so we have an understanding of the needs and expectations that veterans have when they come to our institutions. However, that's not the case with everybody and I was glad to see that Hope mentioned the green zone training. We also participate in that training to help staff and faculty understand the of the life of a veteran. And also many of our colleges have veteran centers that provide locations to go and hang out and relax and engage with other veterans and sometimes just get away and be alone and those veteran centers are helpful for many veteran centers beside the veteran benefits office on our campuses and there's lots of resources and availabilities
through the counseling centers and also the coaches that can assist our veterans to be successful in their career goals and one major project that we've been working on that are with the university system has been with the courage to credit project. We understand that and one thing a veteran doesn't want to do is something you have already been trained on, something you are an expert on. So we have set up minimum college credit at the Community College system in partnership with the university system that there are minimum amounts of college credit courses that will be applied to your college transcript based upon your MOS, based upon your training that you've gone through the military and each Community College provides that minimum amount of college credit. So when you provide that military transcript to your institution, be sure to ask for it to be evaluated for the military credit that may count toward graduation in your degree program. The last thing that I want to do is give some thanks to a couple of people. First, I want to thank the department-- U.S. Department of Education and the veterans benefits offices for the regulatory relief that they have provided for our veterans. Both title IV financial aid area and the veteran benefits area. Listening to both the veterans associations and organizations and to it all the educational institutions as we requested for help and assistance to get some relief from the regulations so that way, vet raps don't lose their benefits, we really are grateful and appreciate their listening to us and then taking action on those items as well. Also, I want to thank our current students and veterans and otherwise that this has been a time of unique experiences of having to move online unexpectedly and so as we say in my unit, you have to adapt, overcome, and improvise. Many of the students have done that and we appreciate it, and we appreciate your patience with us as our faculty and staff have learned how to quo online when they did not expect to do so. We do expect guidance to come out probably by may 1st in how courses of education will be provided coming this summer. We expect guidance to come from the systems office, from the President's office, probably by May 1st to let us know what coursework can be face to face and what coursework can be online. We expect that guidance to come out very soon. I know faculty, staff, and students are looking forward to receiving that guidance to summer courses and
services. And so again, thank you for the opportunity to share with everybody on this day and if there's anything I can do to assist you, you can find my email address and my phone number on the North Carolina Community College and system office website directory. Thank you for the time and I'll turn the mic over to crystal.

>> Thank you so much, Mr. Kelley. We appreciate you being with us today. Next up, we have miss Susan Watkins with the NC STRIVE presentation thank you so much, Crystal. I'm waiting for technical assistants to get me live so you can see my slides. First of all, I want to thank everybody. If you think about my presentation, what has happened today is everybody was telling you about NC STRIVE, and so I came along later and now you get to learn what NC STRIVE is, we're a bunch of very passionate individuals that have the gotten together with ideas out of the Durham VA and the Governor's working group and we began partnering six years ago to help serve our student veterans and their families. It was an original thought of, how can we help our veterans succeed? Then we began working across our state pick Maaing sure that we developed the stakeholders. So you've heard many of our partners on these presentations today. The goal was to spread the concept, the knowledge, the focus of getting our campuses help our veteran population succeed, and we also wanted to make sure that we always included behavioral health because our focus can't just look at academia.

It has to look at the whole veteran and making sure we're taking good care of them as well. So I want to thank all my partners that have presented before me and gave you an idea of how successful NC STRIVE is now because it was just a concept six years ago. As you can see here, this is Dr. FENG and she's the co-chair of NC STRIVE. We've been together all these years and I can't thank her enough. She always stays behind the scenes. But she's been instrumental in bringing people together, helping share the vision for what we're doing and help us bring the key leadership that is at all of our schools, universities, and Community Colleges, and share best practices. So as you know, the Governor's working group is has been around also since 2006, but what I would like to say is it's blossomed and grown and it touches everyone across our state. It really has has always had a good vision but it has
really been able to foster with technology and expand and bring multiple people to the table monthly and I think that's how we're spreading the word about a lot of the initiatives and I think the State of North Carolina really is passionate about taking good care of our veterans. The department of health and human services, as you know, right now, they're very busy and as you drive along your interstate, you're going to see signs that tell you the website, but without all of that, they are also behind this initiative. So I think it's important to know that your key players across the state and in the presentations today have all been supporting veterans in higher education. My involvement came because I'm a clinical social worker. I work at the Durham VA and I take care of combat veterans every day, and one of the key partnerships is the VA because our veterans have earned the health care. They have served. They get five years of combat-related health care, and bringing that to the table as well with higher education. There's a concept that we thought was a good marriage, making sure veterans get an education, their families, and they can succeed but we also wanted to take very good care of them. So as I said, the dother and myself have been co-chairs of this since the inception of 2014 and I am really proud to say that it has blossomed and taken over the state. This is some pictures of last year, and we do track our data, and we have done a lot of other things to survey our population, to make sure we're meeting the needs of our veterans and our colleges and universities so again, this is just a visual. As you can see, we have started out in 2015, we recorded 00 people and last year, we went up to 531, but I think that an important part is we began seeing that having regional conferences, which was very important for culture, as we move forward, we began to see, looking at technology, which that is not my area of expertise, we began looking at it last year which really plays an important role this year. So we partnered with Jeff Smith. And we have two Jeff Smiths in the State of North Carolina that are famous and this one is the one from UNC and Jeff Smith, the other one, talked about NC STRIVE, and we've been partnering to help spread the word and with Jeff Smith's technical knowledge and TV knowledge, he really did a great job last year of moderating a student panel and all of that is still available, and that's the link in our slides. So we want you to be able to know that we
are keeping the education and information for prosperity and we also had key speakers and they are visible on those websites as well. So with learning to live stream and take on technology and making sure we're more inclusive, we really were able to top out last year with over 2,290 individuals participating, watching, and being a part of NC STRIVE. So that really led the way for this year. Which I am thankful for because today's opportunity to talk to you is saying that we were going forward for regional conferences but we're now moving to a virtual world. What we have done is also go back to our population and our stakeholders and say, what do you need? What is important to you? How can we help you and the we in that is higher education. Many of our veterans were very responsive to a survey that we sent out and I think that really says they are invested in getting what they can from their higher education and it also shows that you are-- our schools are really partnering with our students and making sure that they do get the help they need. But notice, 204 out of 396 students said they needed transitional assistance. I think that is very important; and notice also 178 said they needed some support with mental health concerns. Now not all veterans have health insurance. Again, a good partner for them is the VA health care system and the Vet centers because they provide therapy. So again, we're always looking at how we can learn more about what we're doing, make sure we're effective, and make sure our conferences are hitting the mark. We were already to go with three conferences. In fact, the first conference in Asheville got cancelled at the beginning of this pandemic. But we always do focus on health and well being. So moving forward, we didn't despair. We began regrouping because a lot of the people on our statewide steering committee, you heard them speak and you know they're very passionate. So why is this important to our schools? I think we've got that message out. I don't think I could have said it any better than some of your other speakers. It is important that where our veterans spend their money, they get embraced and have a safety net under them and I think our schools have got that message and they really are taking this home. Veterans need our focus because any transition and we do know this from research is a difficult time for our veterans. They do want transitional support and assistance. They may struggle a
little bit with asking but again, the green zone and other opportunities to talk about how to relate to our veterans and their families has really made made a very meaningful success. Accommodations has been talked about already today. So we really pushed for our veterans to be embraced and help the focus beyond their success. So our leadership in the world of education today really are struggling with a lot of issues. Not only in pandemic but how do they motivate our students and a diverse population, and now we move from face-to-face to virtual, so I want to say getting leadership participation at the table is not only about sustaining the product, which is veteran success, it's also how money gets allocated on campuses. You heard veteran centers and other items being developed and other ways to support our population. The goal is for our veteran-centric campus, and we can't stress that enough. It does not have to be bricks and mortar. It has to be a constant feeling of compassion and modality of interacting. So we encourage everybody to come. It's free. It always has been. We have multiple people across the state focusing on this initiative every year, and as you can see, there is a lot of money coming into North Carolina for higher education with the G.I. bill and so we are also partnering with the DBA, making sure that we're setting the standard high and using all of the resources to educate not only our academia leadership ship faculty and also our students.
This year, the news that already shared, we are moving to virtual. It is now May 2nd. We're going to have keynotes that you have been made aware of, but we're also going to talk about emotional well being in this time of difficulty. I think that we are focusing on our veterans solely this year and try to make sure we have everything in this tool box. I'm going to call NC STRIVE a toolbox to help them succeed during this difficult time. Those that are good at isolating have struggled as well. Because too much isolation brings difficulty as well. So we're taking into consideration all of these issues, as well as the higher education but we're also focusing on the well being and we also have Kevin rumly who is a UNC Asheville graduate who is also an excellent speaker, combat veteran speaking from his heart to help veterans succeed. I want to thank you today, and I appreciate your opportunity. I thank everybody for helping with NC STRIVE. It's a concept that has taken hold. It's a
mission in my heart. Thank you.  
>> Thank you so much, Susan and if you have never been to an NC STRIVE conference, you definitely should plan on going and this will be your year because it's virtual and you won't have to travel. You don't want to miss the good information. Next up, the Skills Bridge Program with Secretary-- deputy Secretary aerial APONTE.  
>> Veteran service officers from anson, Richland, Stanley and Montgomery and Moore who participated in the first virtual multicounty roundtable that we did focused on those Counties to ensuring that we're discussing COVID-19 and in the resources that each of the counties are providing. Again, Crystal, thank you for you and your team in pushing that and leading that for us. Additionally, before going into providing a quick overview of what DoD skills bridge, I want to inform the population that April 30th, there will be a month of the military. The Month of April is the Month of the military child. It's a significant event every day in the Month of April. we want to make sure we honor our children here in the state of North Carolina. If you can on April 30th, please join us. The event will be live streamed on our Facebook as well as wear purple. So April 30th, please wear your purple shirts, purple up with us. Again, this afternoon I will briefly discuss the department of defense, DoD Skills Bridge Program. The DoD Skills Bridge Program is a program for transitioning officers to highlight Susan Watkins effort. To learn more, look up the 132.2 dated January 24th, 2019 and AR600-18 chapter 88, May 17, 2016, as well as more information can be found on the DoD skills bridge on www.DoDskillbridge.USAlearning.GOV. For a point of clarification, the DoD skills program is a DoD program. However, the department of military veterans affairs was able to explore that. We did have two interns that are transitioning from the North Carolina national guard and we have them currently in the program so it's a program that we would like to see different organizations There is no slide up there posted but I'll give you from my nights. The DoD Skills Bridge Program is an excellent opportunity for servicemembers who planned their life after the military. Skills bridge matches civilian opportunities to their jobs training and work experience at the end of their military duty. In addition to our opportunities, such as
tuition assistance and the G.I. Bill program, you can enhance their transitioning servicemembers and their marketability and post-separation of skills by participating in the DoD Skills Bridge Program. The DoD Skills Bridge Program allows for transitioning servicemembers to gain valuable civilian job training from employers, including apprenticeship, internship, beginning up to six months before they transition out of the military. Skills Bridge Program is developed by major cooperations and labor union in what is other nonprofit, trainings and providers. Almost all of the servicemembers who participate receive jobs in the private sector through their participation. This are many industry partners and opportunities for a variety of fields, such as energy, information technology, manufacturing, retail, transportation, civil service, and more. These industry partners developed skill bridge programs for separating servicemembers because their value, expertise and dedication to service. Again, DoD Skills Bridge Program is a great opportunity for both, for DoD, that skills bridge, that transitioning servicemember, or spouse, as well as the receiving entity. So how do I qualify? So the service member must be at least 180 days continuous on active duty. Any ranked enlisted officer may apply to the DoD Skills Bridge Program. The skill program allows you to use 180 days of service to work and learn with an industry partner. During the skills bridge participation, you continue to receive military compensation and you are covered by your military benefits. Release from the skills brim program is always mission dependent and the unit commander must authorize participation prior to entering with the industry and employment participation. So again, it's a give and take. There's no cost to the organization. The servicemember ams place of duty is that organization and it allows him to learn a new skill and the servicemember must attend a training, some ethics training to be part of this program and again, it allows him to navigate as he transitions into the work market. Next slide. Organizations must be authorized by the office of the deputy assistant Secretary of defense during official memorandum by understanding to work with each of the applicant's branches and each of the military services and respective insulation installation commanders to develop a Skills Bridge Program for their personnel. There's agreement that
is filled out between the internship entity that is sent to your installation, career skills program and that agreement is then allowing you as an organization to become part of the DOD skills bridge. More information can be found on the skills bridge website. Next slide. Again, just for situational awareness, servicemembers are not eligible to receive training, wages, stipends. Again, their place of duty for these 180 days prior to transitioning is that location. For us, that servicemember, the two servicemembers from the North Carolina National Guard are just learning how to become leaders, learning the critical thinking, critical writing, verbal communication skills and allows them to become prepared into the work market and I challenge organizations, nonprofit and our veteran businesses to look into this program to see how can we help our transitioning servicemembers here in the state of North Carolina and make them feel part of the community not apart. We can do that through the DoD skills bridge program. Next slide. Here are the resources. These help you as an organization or veteran to know more about the DoD Skills Bridge Program. It will be the directive, 1322.29 is the job skills that allow me to understand what's the agreement. Additionally, you'll see the memorandum for record that is made between internation and you are wondering how do I get? If I'm an organization and I'm interested, first thing you have to do is contact that installations career skills program coordinator. Seymour, camp Lejeune, NCI east, has a skills coordinator. Contact them. Let them know that you are interested. Once the and once the organization informs the commander skills program that they're informed, you have to identify that servicemember, it's a bottom-up approach to identify an employer who is willing to support him. Once that mutual agreement is done by that servicemember that's transitioning and that organization that is inquiring about an internship, the employer has to fill out an internship agreement and that gets sent to the career skills program coordinator on Ft. Bragg, camp he will Jean and coordinate the services, not the DMVA but the program on the installations. They will have to gather their supporting documentation and the process is not hard. That is what I want to highlight on that. It can be done for universities, similar to the VA work studies program that's out there. This DoD Skills Bridge Program, it goes in the supportive line of
effort. The individual has to get the supporting documentation, such as a career skills program, individual program request packet and memorandum of participation for transitioning soldier in the career skills program, memorandum of understanding from the organization detailing the organization's profile and the transition servicemember's role. And lastly, the training calendar and the internships being received by that candidate. Again, feel free to reach out to my department if you're frommed in that and I can guide you into the correct path on that. Next slide. Lastly what I want to highlight is the point of contact. You are seeing in the resource guide that we provide here for the department of military of veterans affairs on that page, we have all the transition service Directors for each of the bases. This is a great start. That point of contact is directly straight to the Directors on there so they can provide some more assistance. I want to take this opportunity to thank miss Susan Watkins from NC STRIVE and participating in the department of veteran affairs, we enjoy developing initiatives and being the first time on a lot of things and appreciate would allow us to do that. We did the first transition roundtable where we brought in the transition Director from all the bases. We brought in community college, NC STRIVE, Dr. Kelley and we discussed issues and opportunities that present themselves and I want to challenge you all to maintain that. Our office will be looking into that. Mrs. Watkins on the transition you brought up with those numbers. We're interested. I will reach out to my staff to see how can we support you. Again, last slide, I want to thank everyone for what they're doing here for our servicemembers as they transition, as we look at our military spouses. There are a lot of opportunities out there for spouse certification and there's a lot of opportunity Foss our children, veterans for scholarships and depart. Of military affairs are here for you for transitioning servicemembers and again, on behalf of Secretary hall, thank you for everything you are doing. Jeff, thank you for your team at DHHS thank you for pushing the military and veteran missions. Crystal, the floor is yours. Thank you. Thank you. Yes, but absolutely certainly not least, is Mr. Doug Taggart

>> Thank you very much. The schools because of everything going on with the the COVID-19 response and schools being
out and hopefully we will pick that up after things kind of return to a little bit more of a normal for students and the state. So I'm going to talk about Troops to Teachers. It's a grant program that the department of defense operates. 20 different states have the program right now. It covers 30 states in terms of representatives in the state. It's a national program nearly. It's expanding a little bit as a grant program, as it shifted to a grant program in 2017. So the first thing I would like to talk about is the fact that we have a lot of military folks that are getting out and they have a lot of interest. Tributes that are positive for becoming a school teacher. One is adaptability. Some of you have seen slides before and I will burn through these fairly quickly. Adaptability is a huge factor. You can have different kids several times a day in different groups, interacting with each other. They will have issues like the COVID come up and they have to adapt to how that will be responded to by a school system. Like many professions, adaptability will be a key thing especially in teaching and working with kids.

Leadership is a huge attribute when you are talking about working with a classroom of kids and being that classroom leader for the kids. So if you have the ability to work with young people through your experiences working with groups of young adults in the military, that's going to be a great attribute to have when you look at teaching as a next career. Team and mission oriented. It's the same thing that aligns with the school system and their mission. They're team and mission oriented to serve students and school. You have that alignment of experience that you have from the military going into a school environment. One of my favorite slides here is this is not what we expect our teacher toes do with their kids once they make the transition. The competency-based trainers are certainly something that a lot of military people are experienced with. They have that instructional background in a lot of cases, teaching tasks to standards and if they can transition that to working with young people and they will be fantastic teachers for K through 12. Global exposure. How many kids get the opportunity to learn from those who traveled through the world and have positive experience from the military experience serving other countries, pop layings, great cultural experiences they might have had. I know it's not
always positive but oftentimes, there will be a positive experience throughout a person's military career, that they can bring back to kids who may not have had a chance to kids may not have traveled outside their own country. Service and patriotism, and that's a positive serving in a school and a community. Working with diverse groups of other servicemembers. You know, one of the big strengths we have in our country is our military is a very diverse organization and that diversity of working with people from everywhere translates right into schoolwork again, where you are dealing with kids if all kinds of heritages and backgrounds and the parents may becoming a citizen here into our country and it translates into being a school teacher working with a variety of people with different backgrounds when you work with students. One of the updates made to this slide is look at the societal challenges that we have with teaching in the state. One is, we don't have enough male teachers and I'm happy to report this is up 6% from the '17-"18 data and we have more male teachers in North Carolina over that year of recruiting that we had previously, too. We made a little bit of a dent in the diversity challenge we have for our teachers across the state looking at the population.
It's still not quite on par with what the population is in the state, but we definitely made a little bit of an improvement over this last year statewide. It's still a challenge for us to look at diversity of males and education and diversity racially in our state for school staff teachers. Some things in North Carolina, we have the second of a five-year grant is what we're in right now. Teacher pay is still $35,000 for ten-month salary schedule. One K steps for each year of experience. The state really does have a great benefit and looking at teaching which is the put rainy brass to class act. It's a military experience that gives pay for leadership and instructor roles for military service. So for example, if you have ten years of military leadership experience, you get five years of credit on the salary schedule. If you have that same instructor in the military, you get to the same 2-to-1 credit and if you have four years you can get an additional two years of credit for that specific role, too.

>> Ten-month Salvi schedule for teacher pay, 35,000 and if you get ten years of experience credit for a 20-year career but maybe ten years of leadership experience out of 20 plus
years of experience and you can start out at 45,000 for your salary and whatever that local supplement is in the school system that can range from zero to 8,000 in the best-paying school system and it varies by the school system's supplement. After three years of teaching experience, you can get national board certification if you go through that year-long process you can get a bum bump in pay once you have a board certification and you have to renew that every renewal cycle which, I believe is about five years right now. I talked about that already. That's the actual law that we had that went into effect in 2014 that gives the credit for pay when you become a teacher from being a veteran. So what does troops to teacher does, we do counseling on how to PC become a teacher, we do coverletter assistance, what jobs they're eligible for in the certain geographical part of the state that they're targeting. The program also offers financial assistance. The main one that is used effectively is our bonus which is a $10,000 bonus for teaching in high needs schools for three years. What's a high need school? It's one that has a pretty large percentage of kids that are eligible for free or reduced cost lunch programs we do Adirondack vote Casey for our participants with one quick example, we have the first career skills program submitted through the Ft. Bragg folks and let's look with one of our program participants that wanted to go in the school and as he finishes his career and he's a major in Ft. Bragg.

I'm excited about getting that to happen for him. Fortunately with the schools closing, I don't think we're going to get them that for him in time for his retirement at the end of this year. Volunteer mentors, we've got about 52 statewide and we've got a two-day shadowing experience program, both in Cumberland County schools and we had one sign in Hope County and with the schools closing, we will have to put off doing placements for people for both school systems until we have an opportunity to actually put people in classrooms to get experience working with the kids and this remote learning is going to take up all the kinds of efforts of the agency right now to prepare school systems to do remote learning and once we're past that a little bit, we will have the shadowing experience pick up again. It's a great way for a veteran to spend a few minutes-- excuse me, two days in a school environment to see if it's
really a good fit for their demeanor
that's really what that is about. All right. So most in demand
subjects, math, science, Special Education are the top three.
There's certainly interest in career technical educational
opportunities. A huge chunk of our hires are are in CTE
areas and if you have a foreign Lange background that will
be popular in the areas where we teach which is just about
everything today. Our numbers are down a little bit. This
year, 20 new first-time hires for this year. Between the
hurricane and COVID-19, it's been more challenging for us
this year. We're hoping to get a few more hires before the
second grade year. They're sprinkled all over the state
where they get hired. CCS hires more folks than anybody
else. Cumberland County schools, 25 were down in
Cumberland County schools. Few things related to the fact
that I'm at the Department of Public Instruction is that we
support military connected students and I want to highlight
that, too. This is data from that we received from the end of
2019. It's current data and we received this report from the
state liaison office at DOD in February and it gives you the
counts and numbers from military active duty and reserve
children. The numbers are higher if you look at the military
student identifiers but I wanted to show what it shows from
the actual DMVC data from the schools who have the most
military connected students and you can see that-- you
might be surprised to see how many Wake has which is a lot
of active duty and reserve kids that you may not expect. DPI
also has a military support website. That's a URL redirect
right there that will take you to the military support
resources that we have at DPI. And the identifier is
something that we manage here and then we have Angie
that is in charge of Purple Star and that will go out at the
end of April is when it was supposed to be announced.
That's been postponed and I don't have a date. Cynthia
Floyd, school counseling consultant and myself and we have
EC dispute resolution staff that actually help out. Partners
and support for military lie yaizen counselors and the
school systems funded by the state and Moore County who
actually supports their own military liaison count sellers and
installations to support the families. If you have any issues
with the transition into a state, the school liaison officers are
the stop in that process. With NC National Guard, family and
child youth support, military one source is a good
organization to get resources from the military child education coalition does some training that we actually recently sent out some information to our DPI or rather staff across the state with the military child coalition. Matt cannon is the man in the shop while I'm out on leave supporting my child while he's out of school. I have an Autistic child that needs support. I will be out a little longerment I will be back in May and Matt will handle all of the counseling. Thank you for your time. I appreciate what you do. Real quick shoutout to farmers and dproashers everywhere helping us out. If there's anybody in the audience involved in farming or grocery supply for the rest of us, really appreciate the work you're doing and all the health care workers and everyone else as well. Thank you very much for your time.

>> Thank you so much, Doug. We appreciate you being with us today. I would just like to say on behalf of DMVA Secretary Larry Hall and the leadership, we want to thank our valued partners in the County veterans service offices. They do not get enough recognition for what they do and they are really where the rubber meets the road working hard to keep our veterans serviced and help them to identify the resources that they need. Our next meeting will be May 28th, maybe at joint force headquarters. Maybe we will be back here. We hope that that you are able to join us. Anyway, we appreciate you all being with us today and hope you have a wonderful rest of your April. Thank you!