



October 23, 2014 Minutes  
North Carolina National Guard Headquarters

Present: Terry Allebaugh, Wesley Alston, Archie Barrow, Michael Bishop, Blake Bourne, Van Brinson, Brenda Brubaker, Pat Bryant, La'Monica Coleman, Will Collins, Dr. Eric Crawford, Bill Cruz, Gary Cunha, Hank Debnam, Paul Dillon, Jeff Doyle, Lane Dyer, Ken Edminster, Dr. Wei Li Fang, Moses Gloria, Victor Glover, Emily Godfrey, Karen Goetz, Bob Goodale, James Gorham, Kate Green, Daniel Hackley, Kathryn Hare, Charlotte Harmon, Judy Harmon, Angela Harper, George Hausen, Troy Hershberger, Stephanie Hester, Jim Hoffman, Victoria Johanningsmeier, Robert Immormino, Charles Jones, Wilson Lester, Katherine McGuire, Sandy Moonert, Henry Moore, Patty Muehlberger, Denise Neunaber, Vince Newton, COL Paul O'Toole, Ilario Pantano, Will Parry-Hill, Toni Pinkston, Cheryl Rawls, David Roddenberry, Betty Jo Shephard, Rob Sherwood, Anne Showalter, Tony Sowards, Flo Stein, Cindy Swinkels, Matt Thewes, Gary Tillman, John Turner, Lucas Vrbsky, John Warman, Susan Watkins, Kyle Winder, Alisha Wood, and Diane Yelverton

Mr. Collins noted that a 2.5-day conference sponsored by the Department of Commerce last week had about 900 attendees across the state. Attendees were enthusiastic about spreading the word on how to serve military personnel effectively. Introductions by all present followed. Mr. Pantano noted that the Chair and Vice Chairs were meeting to develop a strategic plan and asked for suggestions.

Brief introductions were made. Mr. Doyle, is the VISN 6 Network Homeless Coordinator for the states of NC, VA, and part of WV. He got his start in the field when he worked in shelters and saw the large number of veterans who were involved. Mr. Edminster is the housing administrator for the Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities, and Substance Abuse Services. He has been in the field for the past 25 years, 3 of which have been in NC. Ms. Neunaber is director of the statewide nonprofit, NC Coalition to End Homelessness. She first got interested in working on the homelessness issue in college. She would like to return to a time where there is not pervasive homelessness and wants to make a difference in this country. Mr. Sowards: is an outreach worker for Oxford Housing Inc. Mr. Turner is the executive director of VLC-Cares.

Mr. Doyle stated that in 2009, Secretary Shinseki set a goal of eliminating veteran homelessness by 2015. This goal came out of the work of the Interagency Council on Homelessness. The US Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) offers three types of programs: (1) rapid rehousing and financial assistance (e.g., Support Services for Veterans and their Families or SSVF program); (2) residential treatment programs (e.g., Grant and Per Diem program and contracted emergency beds); and (3) long-term supported housing (e.g., HUD/VASH program). Both the SSVF program and HUD-VASH are fairly recent initiatives that provide support not only to veterans but also to family members. North Carolina also benefits from having 12 Continuum of Care programs funded by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). It is critical to coordinate at all levels in order to implement effective housing plan. The VA and HUD have worked closely together; the VA has used the HUD Point-in-Time count to identify 1164 veterans in NC. The question is, how do we best serve them using the existing resources? Success calls for local, state, and federal agencies and organizations to collaborate. The Homeless Program within the VA fully understands that collaboration and engagement is critical to success. Two national initiatives—the mayoral challenge (from Michelle Obama) and Zero 2016—are targeting the end of homelessness and are dependent on collaboration at multiple levels. Each VAMC has a homeless program and coordinator (call 877/424-3838 in NC).

Mr. Edminster stated that the Division (<http://www.ncdhhs.gov/mhddsas/services/housing/index.htm>) doesn't have housing but does have housing supportive services and works with local providers to ensure that the providers have the services that they need or the funding needed to provide the services. Programs include the Shelter Plus Care (HUD), targeted units (deferment), Transitions (supported by the Department of Health and Human Services

and the Department of Justice to get 3000 adults into housing), Oxford Houses, and 5600 Homes. Currently, the State is divided into 9 geographic areas assisted by a local management entity/managed care organization (LME/MCO). Each LME/MCO has a dedicated Housing Specialist to assist with housing needs; the Housing Specialist can access a bed availability database. Since 2003, NC has participated in the Projects for Assistance in Transition from Homelessness (PATH) Program funded by SAMHSA. There are currently 5 teams across NC; two additional teams will be established next year. To be eligible for PATH, severe mental illness must be the primary diagnosis (Mr. Edminster is checking with SAMHSA as to whether PTSD is included in that category). SAMHSA wants PATH to target veterans. The Division has already identified veterans as a special population and has been linking PATH with VA facilities. PATH services include intensive outreach, case management services (focus on linking them with their benefits, primary health and mental health services, substance use disorders services, and housing), and referral services to attain housing. The Division is coordinating efforts with PATH and the Housing Specialists at the MCOs. Debbie Webster heads the PATH Program.

Ms. Neunaber's nonprofit advocates for policy and funding and ensures adequate housing and support services for the homeless. The focus is on the individual and on permanent supportive housing (PSH). Families need affordable housing, appropriate services, and adequate income in order to get out of homelessness. What has been a key factor for individuals not getting out of homelessness is the lack of an adequate support system. For example, when kids age out of system, they may end up homeless. When service members are discharged, their support system falls away. What does ending homelessness mean? It means getting to zero. The Coalition has been aligning with the HEARTH Act that was passed in 2009, where the goal is to "return to permanent housing within 30 days". She used the analogy of changing the system from a sticky net to a trampoline, where the homeless are bounced back into permanent housing. No one wants to be homeless if given a choice, and people want and need options on their own terms. The strategy is to prevent people from going into homelessness in the first place, and if they do become homeless, they need the assistance to get back into housing as soon as possible. She noted that 7 mayors in NC that have signed on to the zero homelessness pledge—Chapel Hill, Durham, Fayetteville, Greensboro, New Bern, Wilson, and Winston-Salem. In terms of veterans, the January 2014 point of contact count showed 11,440 veterans, a 6% decrease. HUD and VA are focused on prevention/diversion, rapid re-housing, and PSH, where both housing and supportive services are offered. They are finding that rapid re-housing is more cost effective than transitional housing and shelters.

Mr. Sowards asked a resident, Gary Tillman of Oxford House Shirley Street, to accompany him to the meeting. NC has 1390 beds in the 185 houses (1750 houses nationwide) ([www.oxfordhouse.org](http://www.oxfordhouse.org)). The houses are for those individuals recovering from alcohol and drug addiction; many have co-occurring mental illness. Oxford House only rents property and places no time limits on residency. Each house runs itself, by collecting weekly rents, which go toward monthly rents and utilities. An applicant needs to be accepted by 80% of the residents in order to live there. Oxford House is listed on SAMHSA's National Registry of Evidence-based Programs and Practices. Of the 185 houses, there are 133 houses for men, 49 for women, and 3 for women and children. Oxford House receives funding from the State. There are also 10 outreach workers throughout State. The peer recovery model is used. About 15% of their population is veterans. They have attained good outcomes, with people in recovery and reconnecting with their families. Mr. Tillman said he is a veteran, living in an 11-man Oxford House. Each member is accountable to each other; they help and nurture each other.

Mr. Turner is an Iraq veteran and head of the Veterans Life Center. He is in the process of creating a housing facility and reintegration program for veterans where they can build a veteran-to-veteran bond. It is currently under development at Butner, with a 25-year lease on 8 buildings. HUD, NC DOC, and NC DHHS are providing funds and the NC DVA is offering support during phase 1. They are working with the Alcohol and Drug Addiction Treatment Center (ADATC) for treatment services for substance use disorders. The facility will have 150 beds. They have identified three steps to self-reliance: Restore, Re-educate, and Reintegrate. In addition to working with federal and state agencies, they are collaborating with three community colleges, the University of North Carolina, and North Carolina State University. They plan to open during the fall 2015. To be eligible, applicants must be a veteran and a NC resident. They can be referred from a variety of different sources.

Ms. Rawls noted that the VA has two homeless outreach coordinators that work with the Housing Specialist. They also have a special lane for processing claims for homeless veterans and sometimes can process the claim within a week.

Ms. Stein praised the providers working with veterans experiencing homelessness. She thought the efforts in NC were laudable in that the speakers already know each other and work together. She also mentioned that the Division of MHDDSAS has started conducting focus groups in collaboration with the NC National Guard and the Governor's Institute on Substance Abuse. She noted that families have identified children with special needs. They also love the new resource guide as many have experienced difficulty navigating the various systems and finding the services they need.

Mr. Bishop said that he received help when he was facing homelessness in 2003. He is closing on his first home next month and currently works with veterans.

Mr. Pantano handed out the resource guide, which his office developed in collaboration with federal, state, and local agencies and organizations. The guide will be launched on Veterans Day, with a high resolution copy for readers to download from either the NC DVA or GWG websites. They have had a first run of 50,000 and are looking for corporate sponsors to print additional copies. If people see gaps, please let Daniel Hackley at the NC DVA know.

Ms. Rawls announced that they are partnering with Goodwill Industry for veterans to get their claims done or to get items cleared with the VA Medical Center or cemetery. The first one will be held on Saturday, November 8, from 9 am to 4 pm, in Winston-Salem.

A number of Veterans Day events were announced:

- November 14 (9:00-10:00 am, Veteran Memorial and 10:00 am to 1:00 pm, College Fair): Veteran College Fair and Veterans Day Memorial, sponsored by Bojangles and multiple educational institutions at the Dennis A. Wicker Center Civic Center, 1801 Nash Street, Sanford. For more information, call Wilson Lester, Veterans Upward Bound Outreach Coordinator at 919/718-7487 or [wlester@cccc.edu](mailto:wlester@cccc.edu).
- NCWorks Career Centers are sponsoring numerous job fairs from November 7-14. Check online at <https://www.ncworks.gov/qsipub/index.asp?pu=1&docid=472> for the job fair in your area.
- Enable America ([www.enableamerica.org](http://www.enableamerica.org)) is hosting a series of career mentoring days for wounded warriors and disabled veterans from November 10-20 (see November 6 biweekly news for a list of events).
- Vietnam Veterans of America is hosting two town hall meetings via Internet ([www.ncvvi.org](http://www.ncvvi.org)) on *Agent Orange and its Deadly Legacy*. Part I will air on November 12 from 8:00-9:00 pm; Part II will air on November 26, from 8:00 to 9:00 pm. Participants may also Skype at computers2kvoice or call 919/518-9773.
- Mr. Pantano announced that the NC Division of Veterans Affairs will be publishing a NC4VETS newsletter soon. Please contact Mr. Hackley if you have events to include.
- The Durham VAMC has a paid internship for nurse practitioners to obtain a specialty for working with veterans with mental health issues.
- The Durham VAMC is hosting the 2015 National Veterans Creative Arts Festival (the 2014 Festival is being held in Milwaukee, WI on October 27-November 2) on October 12-19, 2015. Recreation specialists will be

running the event, but they will need sponsors and worker bees. Each VAMC has its own art show, and the winners go to the national competition.

- Two ceremonies are occurring in Camp Lejeune. One is the anniversary of the Beirut bombing. November 10 makes the birthday for marines.

The next meeting on January 14, 2015 from 2:00 to 4:00 pm will feature the VA leadership and be in the Emergency Management Situation Room.