



September 24, 2015 GWG Meeting Minutes

Present: John Albertson, Terry Allebaugh, Wesley Alston, Saskia Barnard, Archie Barrow, Dr. Beth Barton, Sue Bennett, Michael Bishop, Blake Bourne, Chris Brandenburg, Regina Burch, Eric Burgos, Ray Cerda, Nancy Chastain, Kelli Davis, Hank Debnam, Scott Dorney, Jeff Doyle, Wei Li Fang, Ph.D., Pat Fitzgerald, Regina Ford, Shaina Gaines, Betty Gardner, Miriam Gray, Judy Harmon, Aaron Harper, Lorie Johnson-Henry, Troy Hershberger, Dan Hoffmann, Katrina Holley, Charlene Irvin, Victoria Johanningsmeier, Sandy Jolley, Terri Kane, Brad Lienhart, Kathleen Lennard, Kimberly Lindsay, Ursula Mannix, Alice McCall, Enrique McClymont, Sandy Moonert, Henry Moore, Patrick Murtha, Denise Neunaber, Linda Vettrus-Nichols, Terry Nichols, Joshua Palmer, Ilario Pantano, Melanie Piedra, Johnnie Puckett, Cheryl Rawls, Dr. Lisa Sacco, Kristy Schwartz, Austen Shearer, Anne Showalter, Jeff Smith, Kevin Smith, Bruce Sprecher, Richard Stancel, Flo Stein, Annette Stevenson, Jim Swain, Brenda Swartz, Dr. Cindy Swinkels, Robert Tabares, Kathleen Vollandt, James Warner, Dr. Joe Wescott, Jan White, Stephen Wilkins, Brian Williams, Dwight Williams, GEN Cornell Wilson, Laressa Witt, Bobby Wolmack, and Diane Yelverton

Ms. Rawls welcomed everyone to the meeting. She noted that last month's survey respondents had requested some formal time for networking, which is included in this meeting's agenda. Introductions then occurred. Ms. Rawls encouraged folks to visit the website, <http://ncveteransworkinggroup.org>, for PowerPoint presentations and minutes. Ms. Stein gave a special welcome to Mr. Hoffmann and representatives from congressional offices.

Ms. Rawls introduced Mr. Hoffmann, who is the Network Director for VISN 6 (see bio on the GWG website). He provided a quick update about the growth of the VISN, wait times, and strategies. In FY 2015, VISN 6 saw 359,096 unique patients with 4,237,837 outpatient visits. In FY 2015, it will be closer to 380,000 unique patients. The number of women Veterans is growing and is now 18.6%. VISN 6 is the fastest growing VISN in the next ten years. The benchmark for VISN 6 for wait times is 30 days. The VA Medical Centers in Durham and Fayetteville are heartening in that they are seeing many new patients. Each new patient generates 4 to 6 specialty care appointments, which is reflected in the wait times. Ribbon cutting ceremonies will be held for the three new outpatient Health Care Centers in Charlotte, Fayetteville, and Winston-Salem/ Kernersville. HCCs are proposed for Fredericksburg, Raleigh, and Virginia Beach. The VA is also extending their hours in all facilities. While the use of CHOICE is expanding, more providers need to opt in.

Mr. Williams asked for the reason underlying the disparity in wait times for Fayetteville VAMC. Mr. Hoffmann responded that this is partly due to lack of space and the reason for building a HCC there. Mr. Hoffmann said that VISN 6 ranks in the top 5 for the number of Veterans served.

Mr. Pantano expressed his appreciation for Mr. Hoffmann facilitating office space for Veteran Service Officers of the NC Department of Military and Veteran Affairs (NCDMVA), given space issues in VAMCs. Office space at the VAMCs has meant the expansion of services that the NCDMVA can provide.

GEN Wilson thanked Mr. Hoffmann and asked him what he recommend for improving services. Mr. Hoffmann said that what is needed is a fully electronic transparent medical record between VA, DoD, and private sector.

GEN Wilson said that the General Assembly has passed the budget, and the Governor has signed off. The Department of Military and Veterans Affairs has also been announced, with new headquarters across from Department of Public Safety.

Ms. Stein noted that the Governor has been very supportive of military and Veterans. His Executive Order forming the Governor's Working Group and NCDMVA indicates to the rest of the country how Veterans are viewed in the State.

Ms. Stein introduced Mr. Swain who is a Program Specialist with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services, NC Department of Health and Human Services. He noted that the year 1918 marked the end of World War I and when Congress created the Department of Veterans Administration, to assist Veterans returning from war, mainly for lost limbs. The NC Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) is one of the many divisions within the NC Department of Health and Human Services. Its funding is 80% federal, which means that it is primarily overseen by the US Department of Education and the US Rehabilitation Services Administration. The State has a 20% match so NCDVR answers to the State as well. DVR has statewide coverage with 34 offices, including two regional training facilities in Goldsboro and Wilmington; many have satellite offices and coverage in Joblink Career Centers. Each county is covered. Mr. Swain reviewed eligibility criteria as well as the process for applying for VR services. Individual finances, including VA benefits, play a role. Once eligibility is determined, each person receives an individual plan of employment (IPE). Examples of services that VR provides include the following: rehabilitation engineering; assistive technology; home and vehicle modifications; small business development assistance; tools and equipment; work clothes and uniforms; vocational/college training; brain injury support services in Raleigh, Greenville, Winston-Salem, Charlotte, and Wilmington; supported employment; and job placement and supports. About 1,147 new veterans apply annually, with about 2,285 active veterans cases annually and about 280 veterans' cases closed successfully annually. In 2014, the industries with the highest percentage of veterans placed were transportation and material moving and production; building grounds and maintenance; food preparation and serving related; installation, maintenance and repair; and office and administrative. Veterans represent about 5% of the individuals that they serve. Mr. Swain would like for the NCDVR to have more Veteran applicants and to serve more Veterans. He hopes that a recent MOA will assist in this endeavor.

Ms. Moonert is the North Carolina Program Director for Enable America, which has its headquarters in Tampa. This year marks the 25th year anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act. About 57 million Americans have a disability. Ms. Moonert noted that Enable America has been in North Carolina for seven years. She works with 40+ corporate partners and 20+ agency partners. They have had 550+ job seekers and 50+ hires and would like to increase these numbers. She credited the military with advancing medical care and assistive technology. Enable America offers action-based, front-line outreach programs; serves both veterans and individuals with disabilities; customizes programs to meet specific employer goals; and connects job seekers-employers-the military-veteran and social service agencies to solve employment issues. Enable America offers Job Seekers Workshops for Transitioning Military and Veterans, which are funded through Duke Energy and EDM Americas. A schedule of workshops is included in her PowerPoint. They also host Career Mentoring Days and is working with corporations across the State. Enable America also hosts quarterly Business Connection meetings, which feature presenters, including military. Ms. Moonert made the following recommendations:

- High touch - one wounded warrior/disabled veteran at a time, provide a support team.
- Continue military skills translation – educating employers while also instructing military members how to communicate capabilities.
- Consider “reverse boot camp” – better prepare exiting military for today’s corporate culture of networking, consensus building, matrix organizations, and self-promotion.
- Encourage collaboration between military and employers to:
 - Modify current job requirements, provide training or create new positions for transitioning military, assign mentor(s)/ support team.
 - Align non-combat military service skills development, education and management methodologies parallel to corporate allowing for smoother transition.

Ms. Rawls asked for the help of attendees to identify those Veterans who are homeless or about to lose their homes. Too often they hear about a Veteran losing his/her home when it is too late to reverse the process. VBA is working hard to decrease the amount of time it takes to address backlog claims. They are considering hosting virtual claim reviews due to the cost associated with traveling claims clinics. MyVA is focusing on five areas of improvement: improving the Veteran experience; improving the employee experience so they can better serve Veterans; improving internal support services; establishing a culture of continuous improvement; and enhancing

strategic partnerships. She credited the GWG in being ahead of other States where strategic partnerships are concerned. The VA is now forming districts, and NC is aligned with the North Atlantic District. In addition, they are trying to develop MyVA communities in which community leaders drive the initiative. It is hoped that the communities will improve Veterans' outcomes at the local level because that's where Veterans live, work, and interact with front-line service professionals and organizations and will improve the connections between Veteran service providers and organizations, leverage their collective networks and knowledge to meet Veterans' needs and work to improve community-specific issues. Winston-Salem/Salisbury has been targeted for developing a community. Yvonne McJetters and Don Timmons have volunteered to coordinate this effort.

Ms. Stein noted that the next meeting of the Governor's Working Group will be on October 22, from 2:00 to 4:00 pm in the Situation Room of Emergency Management at the NC National Guard Joint Force Headquarters. The topic will be *Employment for Veterans*.

Ms. Fitzgerald put out a final call for sponsors or folks who can transport Veterans to a Job Fair on October 13 in Fayetteville.

Ms. White announced *Preparing for a New Normal: TBI Continuity of Care*, which is the annual TBI Conference 2015 at Carolina Medical Center Northeast, on October 16, from 8:45 am to 4:30 pm. This year the Brain Injury Association of North Carolina and the Charlotte AHEC are partnering to conduct the conference. For more info, visit <http://www.bianc.net/events/annual-tbi-conference-2015>.

Jeff Smith said that the NC4VETS website and manual has much information on services and supports. Anyone can enter their services and events on their website.

Ms. Jolley announced that Operation GoodJobs is sponsoring a Women Veterans Employment and Empowerment Symposium in Winston-Salem on October 22.