



July 28, 2016 Minutes

Present: William Abb, Amber Alexander, Jennifer Askey, Dale Badgett, David Bailey, Fred Baker, Jacqueline Baker, Randy Baker, Ruby Bassett, Nicole Bauer, Paul Berry, Michael Bishop, Josh Bledsoe, Worth Bolton, Joshua Cain, Jacqueline Cavadi, Jennifer Chauncey, Kevin Clowdis, Will Collins, Cajun Comeau, Lauren Costello, Josh Dadolf, Kelli Davis, Lillian Davis, Hank Debnam, Tera Duthie, Morgan Edwards, Victoria Eichorn, Lisa Faisant, John Falkenbury, Wei Li Fang, Reginna Ford, Bryan Fox, Alan Freitag, Meagan Gibbs, Moses Gloria, Emily Godfrey, Jamie Godfrey, Karen Goetz, Bob Goodale, Penny Greer-Link, Judy Harmon, Angela Harper King, Kimberly Harrell, John Harris, Colleen Herbert, Troy Hershberger, Genean Hill, Dan Hoffmann, Katrina Holley, Andy Jackson, Matt Jenkins, Sandy Jolley, Joe Kelly, Matthew Killoran, Suzanne LaFollette-Black, Mary Jo Littlewood, Tonia McDougald, Larry McMillen, Brenda McMurray, Jeff Mobley, Brenda Monforti, Jasmine Moore, Connie Ness, Amanda Parkstone, Sandy Pendergraft, Toni Pinkston, Shannon Pointer, Jim Prosser, Cheryl Rawls, Robin Reif, Mark Robshaw, Chas Sampson, Austen Shearer, Betty Jo Sheppard, Anne Showalter, Jeff Smith, Jeff Smith, Wayne Smith, Richard Stancel, Flo Stein, Annette Stevenson, Charlotte Stewart, Doug Taggart, Don Timmons, Jason Vogler, Kathleen Vollandt, Jan White, Steve Wilkins, Secretary Cornell Wilson, and Bobby Womack

After an initial introduction of all present, Flo started off the meeting as she was the one who proposed the topic—*Caregiver Support Programs for Veterans*. She had read an AARP article about caregivers and noted that Veterans and their families need help with navigating the various systems. She also said that families are part of the focus of VA.

Jasmine Moore and Josh Dadolf presented on behalf of the VA. She began with the rationale as to why the topic of caregiving is so important. For Veterans, caregivers provide an average of 20.4 hours per week of care. The 2014 Rand Study, *Hidden Heroes: America's Military Caregivers*, stated that 9% of all US adults are caregivers, representing 16.9M civilian caregivers, 4.4M pre-9/11 caregivers, and 1.1M post-9/11 caregivers. A look at the military caregivers showed that pre and post 9/11 caregivers differed in terms of the types of care provided. Pre-9/11 Veterans tended to be elderly with needs related to aging, although 30% have disabilities related to deployment injury. Post 9/11 Veterans are younger, and the caregivers are juggling multiple responsibilities—working, raising children, taking care of aging parents. Post-9/11 Veterans are more likely to suffer from the invisible wounds of war. There are costs to caregiving—feeling overwhelmed, loss of income/ jobs, and the emotional and physical toll. Caregivers also have an elevated risk of depression. The VA does recognize the importance of caregivers since they play a central role in the well-being of the Veteran. However, caregivers need support as well.

Josh talked about the Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act of 2010 and how it provides services and benefits for Veterans of all eras. Caregivers can also take free web-based workshops to prepare them for the role. Fisher House Foundation offers a Hero

Miles Program for caregivers to travel to their Veteran. In addition, the VA offers a peer support mentoring program where trained mentors provide personal support to mentees, assist with navigating VA system, and serve as role models. Caregiver support coordinators are clinical experts on caregiver issues including VA and non-VA resources; assist caregivers with navigating the VA system; conduct assessments on caregiver's physical, mental, spiritual, emotional and social needs, including assessing for caregiver burden and burnout; respond to VA Caregiver Support Line referrals; and provide education on tools for coping, stress management techniques, self care, and effective communication skills.

Suzanne LaFollette-Black gave an overview of the AARP program, *Prepare to Care*. As one of the developers, she is proud to see it offered nationally. She identified 5 steps of a caregiving plan: (1) start the conversation, (2) form a team, (3) make a plan, (4) find support, and (5) care for yourself. What they have found that caregivers need is time, money, emotional support, and access and navigation to resources. Resources are critical to family's well-being, and Suzanne singled out a few including the AARP Family Caregiving Guide—the 16 Area Agencies on Aging in the State and Quicklink resources. She noted that NC is the 3rd state in the nation in terms of the number of people moving here over the age of 50.

Brenda Monforti works for Easter Seals, which is one of the sites that offers Operation Family Caregiver to civilian caregivers. It is a free one-on-one coaching program for individuals for up to 6 months. They have found that people prefer to meet face-to-face as opposed to Skype or Face time. Brenda is a coach and travels throughout the State, supporting participating caregivers. While it is not a clinical program, OFC partners with VA, Easter Seals, and USO of NC. She helps caregivers come up with their own solutions through coaching and FOCUS worksheets. The evidence-based program has a 13-year history. A study will be published later this year about military caregivers. NC was recently the three-year grant this year; Brenda is trying to make it sustainable by the time funding ends.

Lisa Collela of Healing Household 6 (HH6) is the first graduate of the OFC program. She was unable to attend the meeting since her son is ill. Brenda presented the program in her stead. HH6 offers a national program to assist caregivers with the resources that they need as they strive to develop a healthy family. Specific services include Widows of the 22 Fund, Life After Caregiving, HH6 Closet, and Operation Housekeeping. All Caregiver Case Managers are caregivers themselves and have been trained to provide services to caregivers. Peer support services are also offered. HH6 is currently in dire need of volunteers.

An audience member asked how OFC connects with the VA-accredited training program offered by Easter Seals. Only persons who go through the training are qualified as caregivers for the VA program. For more on the Easter Seals training program, go to: <http://www.easterseals.com/our-programs/military-veterans/veterans-caregiver-training.html?referrer=http://us.yhs4.search.yahoo.com/>

Another audience member brought up the issue of Veterans not being eligible for VA benefits and therefore ineligible for caregiver support programs. He asked state agencies to set

aside resources for those not qualifying for pre or post 9/11 benefits. Since NC is one of those states where folks retire, the Governor should be aside resources for Veterans and their caregivers. Flo noted that Veterans are one of the target populations for the block grant and can receive crisis services. Each LME/MCO has a Veteran Point of Contact to assist Veterans in navigating the disability system.

Community Investment Engagement Boards are now operating in several areas of NC and is under the MyVA umbrella. They will be the topic of next month's GWG meeting.

Kevin Clowdis stated that he is trying to help people not fall in the cracks by providing them with necessary skills.

Don Timmons stated that there are now 9 Veteran coffees in the Triad area. At the most recent coffee in King, 51 Veterans showed up. The counties of Alamance and Caswell are starting coffees in their areas. UNC-TV will be airing a program on the coffees on October 1.

Don also mentioned that when they first started, they noticed that a number of the Veterans attending the coffees were WWII Veterans. Last year this observation resulted in a dinner in Greensborough with over 100 attending. A second dinner, *Spirit of '45*, will be held at Embassy Suites in Concord on August 28. To date, they have about 70 registered but want to fill the house with other Veterans and civilians.

Kelli Davis and Randy Baker said that the USO of NC serves active duty and reserve components with services related to resiliency, financial support, caregiving, and transition assistance. The USO is also the coordination center for NC Serves in the Triangle. NC Serves will start in Fayetteville in August. NC Serves is based on a network of service providers, and the coordination center makes smart referrals in the areas of employment, education, benefits, legal, housing, etc. NC Serves designed for all Veterans and family members

Josh Cain said that the Red Cross will host a prescreening of the movie, *Thank You for your Service* at Mission Valley Theater near NC State University on 8/29 at 7p. All those working with Veterans are invited to attend the free event.

Troy Hershberger said that Housing Works is hosting a conference on affordable housing on October 12-13 at the Raleigh Convention. One session will be held on Veterans and housing. For more info, go to <http://www.nchousingconference.com/>.

A program, *Light Up the Darkness*, will highlight a world class musician, comedian, and magician. Free for Veterans, it will take place at the Clayton Center. All profits will go to the USO of NC for their Warrior Reset programs and NC Serves.

The SE Council is holding its annual conference in Savannah, GA on October 25-27. Issues confronting student Veterans such as transition and employment will be addressed.

Charlotte Stewart said that the NC Bar Association will formally launch its military and families initiative on September 20. It is a continuing education program for JAGs at military installations. Lawyers provide mentorships. They are currently trying to raise money for 100 attorneys to attend for free (\$500 for 4 attorneys). She also noted that people can join the bar association as a non-lawyer.

Will Collins said that the Assistant Secretary of the US Department of Labor recognized NC for improving employment services for Veterans through the VETS program. In a single year, the percentage of Veterans being served jumped from 44% to 85% of the population. NC was one of 5 states to make that a significant jump in a year.

Cheryl Rawls said that the VBA has continued to make improvements in claims processing. She encouraged folks to continue to reach out. A new director will replace her and start on September 6. She has been promoted to headquarters in Washington DC. At the end of the meeting, Secretary Wilson recognized all that she has done for Veterans in the State by giving her the Governor's highest civilian award, the Order of the Long Leaf Pine.