



October 27, 2016 Minutes

The Classroom in The Frontier, Research Triangle Park

Present: William Abb, Terry Allebaugh, Rom Alphin, J'Metria Anderson, Lindsey Arledge, Dale Badgett, David Bailey, Fred Baker, Archie Barrow, Rhett Batanides, Michelle Bates, Dwayne Beason, Mark Bilosz, Michelle Blanding, Worth Bolton, Anthony Britt, Brenda Brubaker, Jay Bryant, Jennifer Chauncey, Renee Cordero, Lillian Davis, Hank Debnam, Paul Dillon, Jeff Doyle, Dee Drake, Lane Dyer, Joe Edger, Tori Eichorn, Li Fang, Ph.D., Precious Feely, Pat Fitzgerald, Clark Frederick, Moses Gloria, Emily Godfrey, Jamie Godfrey, Bob Goodale, JR Gorham, Diana Graham, Brian Hahne, Judy Harmon, Angela Harper King, Lynn Hauka, Katrina Holley, Troy Holowiti, Dr. Kyle Horton, Teresa Johnson, Joe Kelly, Alyce Knaflich, Nana Knowles, Mary Jo Littlewood, Jerome Malloy, Ursula Mannix, Ralph Markwood, Noel McCall, Brenda McMurray, Garry Merritt, Megan Miller, JV Miller, Dr. Elisabeth Montague, Lynn Newsom, Joshua Palmer, Ilario Pantano, Sandy Pendergraft, Jim Prosser, Robert Ramos, Jean Reaves, Tamesha Robertson, Michael Robinson, Scott Rogers, Shawn Ross, Vickie Santner, Betty Jo Shepherd, Robert Sherwood, Jeff Smith, Jeff Smith, Tenita Solanto, Flo Stein, Debras Stokes, Lea Strickland, Dr. Sam Strickland, Tiana Terry, Ellecia Thompson, Lucas Vrbsky, Kathleen Vollandt, Susan Watkins, Albert Welcher, Lane Wharton, Dr. Stephen Williams, and Secretary Cornell Wilson

Secretary Wilson welcomed everyone and introduced Mark Bilosz, Director of the VBA Regional Office of the US Department of Veterans Affairs. All attendees then introduced themselves. Megan Miller, Assistant Veterans Service Center Manager at the VBA in Winston-Salem then introduced each of the presenters.

Terry Allebaugh, Ending Veteran Homelessness Coordinator, North Carolina Department of Military and Veteran Affairs, emphasized the State's commitment to end Veteran homelessness. From January 2015 to January 2016, Veteran homelessness decreased by 19% and chronic Veteran homelessness decreased by 45%. In addition, federal resources increased, strong leadership from the Secretary and mayors was demonstrated, and coordination among stakeholders grew. Operation Home will continue to work statewide. Veterans living in rural areas represent 18% of the total number of Veterans experiencing homelessness. These underserved areas present a special challenge, which requires coordinated services so that Veterans receive appropriate referrals when they seek help. The need is to increase capacity to serve Veterans where they are. Currently, Veterans have to be referred to where the beds are, and they are not located in every county.

Reverend Scott Rogers, Executive Director, Asheville-Buncombe Community Christian Ministry, is the director of a Grant and Per Diem program funded by the VA. They provide transitional housing through the grant. Women Veterans are the fastest growing segment of homeless Veterans, and they are trying to increase the number of housing units for women Veterans and their children. They are currently in the process of building a Transformation Village, which will include a community center and access to workforce development. Many of the Veterans that have deployed are in the Reserve component and are of low income and at risk for homelessness. Case management and supportive services are needed for these Veterans and their families. He made the plea for the State to put more money into NC Serves and for supportive services and resources for Service Members, Veterans, and their families.

John Turner, Executive Director, Veterans Life Center (VLC), was scheduled to speak but was unable to return from PA in time. Instead Jay Bryant, VLC Communications Director, spoke about breaking ground soon for the VLC at Butner. He noted that the Center will be collaborating with Central Regional Hospital, RJ Blackley Alcohol and Drug Abuse Treatment Center, Step Up Ministries (life skills training), the Vance-Granville Community College, and NCWorks to provide services.

Jeff Doyle, VISN 6 Network Homeless Coordinator, US Department of Veterans Affairs, also emphasized the commitment of the VA to ending Veteran homelessness in NC. He spoke of how NC is trying to adhere to the benchmarks that the US Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) has issued. While NC has experienced successes in Durham, Fayetteville, and Winston-Salem in ending Veteran homelessness, the State still faces challenges in meeting statewide needs, especially in rural areas where there is a lack of affordable housing. Jeff mentioned a Veteran Housing Preference Project in Asheville, where they are trying to identify Veterans' county of origin so that they can return to their home county and receive housing.

Denise Neunaber, Executive Director, NC Coalition to End Homelessness caught the flu so Terry and Jeff stepped in for her. Her presentation also emphasized the adherence to USICH strategies, with a focus on collaboration, using data to monitor performance and determine resource allocation, housing first, increasing permanent supportive housing opportunities, and leveraging federal, state, and community resources. The VA grant program, Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) was also noted since the funding is the most abundant and most flexible at this time. The northeast corner of NC has no SSVF provider and is currently the target for an expansion of services.

Joe Edger noted that the VA collaborated with numerous partners in the aftermath of Hurricane Matthew to provide mobile medical units, health and social services, food, housing, pharmaceutical services (e.g., medication for diabetes), and first aid. Partners included the Veteran Services Officers, American Red Cross, and Walmart.

Mark Bilosz stated that the VBA is developing an outreach plan that will include northeast NC. While many Veterans are eligible to file disability compensation and vocational rehabilitation claims, not everyone is receiving benefits. Jean Reaves requested a VBA claims clinic in the northeast.

Dr. Li Fang gave a brief summary of technical assistance (TA) that the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration provided to the leadership and staff of the NC DHHS, VA, NC DMVA, NC National Guard, and NC DOC. During the TA, four priorities in behavioral health services were named: identify Veterans receiving behavioral health services from federal, state, and local agencies; ensure that Veterans are being connected to appropriate services (e.g., through NC Serves, DHHS toll-free line, Access Line of LME/MCOs, and DMVA call center); continue to identify existing community services and resources; and identify training opportunities for providers and community members. Flo Stein also mentioned that the Access to Recovery program provides services to those experiencing homelessness or crisis.

Lynn Newsom reminded attendees that many Veterans who struggle have less than honorable discharges due to effects of PTSD. Many are now getting upgrades, and Quaker House Military Counseling Center can help in this process as can Veteran Services Officers, NC Services, and law clinics/schools.

Ilario Pantano talked about the State's participation in America Serves out of Syracuse University. NC Serves will overlap with initiatives in VA and SC. NC is leading the nation in markets and profile, with the GWG a tremendous asset. NC Serves Metrolina was the first to be stood up and is undergoing its fifth review of key performance indicators. It is continuing to grow and evolve. They will host a ribbon cutting event at Queens University on November 7. The second site is Raleigh/Durham/Fayetteville; they will have their first progress review in December. Coastal, which covers the southeastern part of the State, will have a launch and learn on November 9. Asheville will begin in February 2017. In VA, Norfolk/Southampton will open on Veterans Day and will cover parts of eastern NC. Charleston, SC overlaps with southeastern NC (e.g., counties of Brunswick and New Hanover). Other states in America Serves includes NY, PA, FL, WA, and TX.

Jean reminded folks that the CBOC in Emporia, VA, which Veterans in northern NC sometimes use, goes to the McGuire VAMC in Richmond.

Alyce Knaflich said that her organization tracks homeless women Veterans and that there are an estimated 6500 in NC.

Dr. Sam Strickland said that Wake Tech will have a grand opening of its Veterans Resource Center on its northern campus next month. Secretary Wilson will serve as the keynote speaker.

The Vet Center, VHA, and VBA will hold a Veterans claims center in Morrisville on November 7-9.

Katrina Holley spoke of a Transition Workshop that Dress for Success, USO-NC, and Hire Heroes USA are hosting for women Veterans and military spouses in Raleigh on November 7-8.