

# GOVERNOR'S WORKING GROUP

## ON VETERANS, SERVICE MEMBERS, AND THEIR FAMILIES



### MAKING NORTH CAROLINA THE STATE OF CHOICE FOR VETERANS

Chair: Secretary Larry Hall

Co-Chairs: Dr. Jason Vogler, NC DMHDDSAS, Jim Prosser, NCDVA,  
Will Collins, DOC, Joseph Edger, VA, Mark Bilosz, VBA

September 28, 2017 Minutes

Present: Lora Alexander, Terry Allebaugh, Crystal Anderson, Fred Baker, Archie Barrow, Mark Bilosz, Michael Bishop, Michelle Blanding, James Boger, Kindra Bradley, Gina Bremner, SFC Burnie Brodie, Tony Brown, Brenda Brubaker, Ken Castille, Jennifer Chauncey, Margaret Clevenger, Maisha Collier, Cajun Comeau, Meredith Comer, Bridget Cronin, John Dale, Hank Debnam, Jeff Doyle, Nick Drake, Angela Dunston, Lane Dyer, Julie Emmons, Dr. Li Fang, Rebecca Ferren, Dr. Nicole French, John Freudenberg, Katie Gales, Crenicia Gaunt, Moses Gloria, Diana Graham, Metisa Graham, Michael Graham, Daniel Hackley, Christopher Hailey, Kristian Hall, Secretary Larry Hall, Troy Hershberger, Andy Jackson, Janel Johnson, Terri Kane, Wes Kyatt, Curtis Leary, Bryce Mahoney, Ron Mangum, Ray Martin, Anthony McLeod, Jeff Mobley, Brenda Monforti, Terry Morris, Tara Myers, Jeff Netznik, Gail Orrin-Arias, Ilario Pantano, Vincent Penn, Larry Peterson, Toni Pinkston, Dr. Sarah Potter, Jim Prosser, Reka Reyna, Tara Ricks, Dale Robbins, Susan Robinson, Emily Smith, Jeff Smith, Jeff Smith, Tony Sowards, Richard Spyrison, Flo Stein, Annette Stevenson, Lea Strickland, Doug Taggart, Dean Marilyn Terrill, Kathleen Volandt, Dr. Jason Vogler, Lucas Vrbsky, CAPT Lindsey Weston, Jan White, Steve Wilkins, Robyn Winneberger, and Martin Woodard

Susan Robinson, NC Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities, and Substance Abuse Service started her presentation with a video from Veterans Crisis Line as a part of the VA *Be There* campaign (<http://spreadtheword.veteranscrisisline.net/suicide-prevention-month/#>). She discussed effective of strategies that are sustained over time: prevention, intervention, treatment, and postvention and recovery, emphasizing that immediate and sustained follow-up is prevention. In North Carolina, REAL Crisis offers 24/7 phone assistance to those in crisis. Veterans represent about 9% callers. Ms. Robinson also gave examples of a continuum of crisis services that the State provides and noted that NC is one of the leading states with a suicide prevention plan that is aligned to the national plan.

SFC Burnie Brodie, NC Army National Guard, stressed the importance of connection and community. Leadership is key in normalizing the subject of suicide; encouraging help-seeking behaviors; and promoting the whole soldier. As State Coordinator, he is working to reduce risk through training and leadership so that soldiers understand the importance of mental health and seek help.

Rebecca Ferren, LCSW and CAPT Lindsey Weston, NC Air National Guard, emphasized the role of community, for teaching bystanders how to prevent suicides by recognizing early warning signs and knowing what to do. Through a 2-day training, Air Guard learns how to be there for each and are given the skills to intervene and to provide warm handoffs to community resources.

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Gary Cunha reiterated the importance of people to be fully present and to listen to each other in order to be successful in suicide prevention. The Veterans Crisis Line offers this service and has been in place for 10 years and has received 2.5M calls, 308,000 chats, and 60,000 texts. These contacts have resulted in 66,000 rescues. Suicide prevention is everybody's business, and through training, participants learn that individuals considering suicide often see it as a solution to a problem. The problem needs to be seen as solvable, with the individual being referred appropriately and receiving the help that is needed. Anyone can make the difference in a person's life.

Upcoming meeting in the Situation Room of Emergency Management, from 2:00-4:00 pm:

- October 26: Community-based Services for Veterans