

VETERANS SERVICE-MEMBERS & FAMILIES COORDINATION COUNCIL

MEETING MINUTES

Monday, November 9, 2015

In Attendance:

David Brasuell, Chairman, Idaho Division of Veterans Services,
Joshua Callihan, Boise VAMC (VHA rep) USMC Representative
Kathy Malin, Director, Boise VARO (VBA rep)
James Earp, Director, Boise Veterans Cemetery (NCA rep)
Representative James Holtzclaw, Idaho State House of Representatives
Ross Edmunds, Idaho Department of Health & Welfare
Alicia Hardy, Idaho Department of Health & Welfare, Behavioral Health
Pamela Langley, U.S. Dept of Labor, Veterans Employment & Training
Chris Ramos, Veterans Program Coordinator, Idaho Department of Labor
Dr. Bill Goesling, Idaho State Board of Education (via teleconference)
Dana Kelly, Idaho State Board of Education
Tom Byrns, Idaho Division of Veterans Services, Retired Army Representative
Phil Wickliff, Retired Navy Representative
Daniel McQuesten, Air Force Reserve Representative
Karan Tucker, Director, JANNUS
Scott Ronan, Idaho Supreme Court, Veterans Treatment Courts
Terry Tippery, Director, Vets Center
Tracy Schaner, Deputy, Idaho Division of Veterans Services

Next meeting: April 2016

Meeting called to order at 9:30 AM

I. WELCOME – INTRODUCTIONS – ANNOUNCEMENTS

- One by one, all attendees identified themselves and their organizations.
- David Brasuell, Chairman, explained that this meeting meets both the Governor's intent under his executive order as well as meets the MyVA initiative to improve the Veterans Experience.
 - The purpose of MyVA is for organizations serving veterans to coordinate and cooperate to improve the entirety of the Veterans experience.

II. BRIEFINGS

Josh Callihan – MyVA initiative

- The Secretary of the VA wants to develop, across the country, a transformation that improves the Veterans Experience. The MyVA Community; this is a formalization of a partnership between the VA and community stakeholders who work with veterans. Since Idaho was already very effective at communicating between the different stakeholders and regularly meeting the Boise VARO and VAMC leaders, our current, long standing relationship is formalized with the MyVA initiative. Today's meeting (VSMF) meets the intent of the relationship established by the MyVA initiative.
- Scope of membership: inclusive of everybody and anybody that serves veterans and veterans interests.
- Boise VAMC MyVA geographic territory is the same as the Boise VAMC geographic territory. Spokane VAMC will have their own MyVA initiative that covers northern Idaho. Walla Walla VAMC will have a MyVA initiative that covers the Lewiston area of Idaho, and Salt Lake City VAMC MyVA initiative will cover southeastern Idaho. These boundaries are not hard boundaries.

Kathy Malin – VARO

- Continue to work to decrease the average time it takes to process veterans compensation claims. Goal is to work claims within 125 days. The national average is 95 days. This is significant progress. 76 percent of their staff are veterans. Boise VARO have been active in the community and have been successful in building relationships with local stakeholders.

David Brasuell – NASDVA (National Association of State Directors of Veterans Affairs)

- NASDVA are partners with the VA in serving veterans. Where the VA is strong the states are weak, and where the states are strong the VA is weak. The VA has a Pillars of Excellence award that novel and effective veterans programs can be nominated for the VASEC award. Nomination packets are submitted in November. Please think about any deserving programs throughout the next year that you may want to nominate.

Tom Byrns – Choice Act

- This act was signed into law in 2014. It went into effect in July 2015. Mandates all public schools receiving funds from the VA for GI Bill purposes must be compliant with the Choice Act. Veterans discharged within three years that served at least 90 days active duty must be considered for in-state tuition. Idaho was initially very close to compliance. Idaho Board of Education voted to make changes to come into compliance. All public schools in Idaho now meet the requirement of the Choice Act.
- VA has made a big push to make apprenticeships and OJT programs more available to veterans. This fits in line with the President's initiative to emphasize OJT and apprenticeships programs. There are 112 OJT programs approved in Idaho and 109 approved apprenticeships programs. Boise State University was awarded \$495,000 grant over three years from the Department of Education to make Boise State University a Center of Excellence for Veteran Success on Campus. BSU plans on hiring a Veterans academic counselor to ensure Veterans have the best chance at success.
- The Idaho Department of Education partnered with Microsoft for the Microsoft Certification Program. It provides free training and resources for individuals to get certified in Microsoft Office programs.
- There is currently no Transition Assistance Program (TAP) for Idaho Guard and Reserve. Tom has been working with John Spurny from the Family Assistance Center at Gowen Field about creating a TAP directed towards the needs of the Guard and Reserve.

Ross Edmunds - Idaho Health & Welfare

- Idaho Falls Crisis Center has been open for nearly a year now. It is a facility that allows individual to obtain 24 hours to de-stress, calm down and be connected to resources during a crisis (defined as a behavioral health crisis: refers to either mental health disorders, substance abuse disorders or both co-occurring together). If they aren't ready to leave after 24 hours they can walk out to the parking lot and turn around and come back for another 24 hours course of care. A Coeur d'Alene Center will open in December and Health & Welfare is seeking funding and approval to open a center in southwestern Idaho.

- Idaho Health & Welfare received a model test grant, a sim grant, through the Center of Medicaid and Medicare (CMS). In Idaho it is called the Statewide Healthcare Innovation Plan (SHIP) and it is essentially moving the system from a volume based healthcare system to a value based healthcare system. The purpose is to build in a systemic incentive to encourage providers to keep people healthy. It was a \$40 million grant.

Karan Tucker - JANNUS

- Last year, 23% of callers into the Idaho Suicide Prevention Hotline were veterans/military. This information is collected after the call is de-escalated. Demographic information is collected if the caller wishes to provide information. David Brasuell asked how the question is framed whether it is presented as "have you served in the military?" as opposed to "are you a veteran." He explained that there are a number of veterans who don't self-identify as veterans for whatever reason, but when asked if they served in the military will respond in the affirmative.
- JANNUS is a forty year old non-profit providing health and human services. Operate the state suicide prevention hotline in partnership with Idaho Health & Welfare, IDVS, and many other community partners. The advisory board for the hotline has representation from the veteran community and the VA.
- Legacy Corps follows the Ameri-Corp model but focuses on serving veteran and military families in a caregiver role. The volunteers provide 10-12 hours a week of respite or family caregiver support. Last year, 114 military and veteran families benefited from over 6000 hours of volunteer time and support. Currently recruiting volunteers to participate.
- PATH, Project for Assistance for Transition from Homelessness have enrolled and housed over 46 veterans through outreach. Most of the peer support counselors have similar backgrounds to those they are helping. One of the PATH peer support specialists is a veteran and has helped the program achieve success with other homeless veterans.
- JANNUS has an economic opportunity program that, while not currently veteran focused, has a lot of potential to help veterans. It is a financial literacy, credit building and small business/microenterprise

training and technical assistance as well as access to micro-lending. This could be of assistance to veterans seeking to start their own business. This will require a little more study and research on the best way to target veterans to utilize this program.

Scott Ronan - Veterans Courts

- Approved two more Veterans Treatment Courts that embrace the problem solving court model but also focus on the population that has served our country: 5th Judicial District in Twin Falls and 7th Judicial District in Idaho Falls. The only jurisdiction that has not started a Veterans Treatment Court is Coeur d'Alene. They are still actively having conversations about starting one, but are looking for a way to serve veterans that are high risk and high need. Veterans Treatment Courts have had considerable success, and have long reaching positive effects for veterans that participate in the Veterans Treatment Court.

David Brasuell – IDVS

- Administrator-in-Training (AIT) Vocational Rehab Program – veteran participates in a one year program to become licensed as a nursing home administrator. It is relatively new program started in Idaho that hopefully will become a nationwide program.
- Land has been located in Post Falls for a proposed fourth Idaho State Veterans Home. There is a lot of interest and support in the Post Falls community for a fourth state veteran's home.
- Tracy Schaner is the new IDVS Deputy Administrator
- IDVS has reorganized to better serve Veterans going forward as we grow as an agency.

Chris Ramos – Labor

- Unemployment rate for veterans and the general population has decreased in Idaho. STEM jobs in Idaho are going unfilled. Looking to fill those jobs with veterans. Choose Idaho is one of the initiatives being utilized. Idaho's low wages are a significant obstacle to attracting veterans to Idaho.
- David Brasuell mentioned that military retirees are a good fit for filling unfilled STEM positions if the state can incentivize them to

retire to Idaho. Taxing of military retired pay is a detriment to military retirees returning to Idaho. These retirees are in their prime earning years and bring a great deal of experience, leadership and skills to any workforce development conversation.

Representative Holtzclaw – Idaho Legislature

- Representative Holtzclaw mentioned that he hopes to present legislation in the future to provide veterans credit under PERSI as an incentive to return to the state of Idaho after their service. Tax reduction and making military retirement tax free are two issues that may be presented in the legislature.

James Earp – Idaho State Veterans Cemetery

- There is a lot of interest in establishing a 2nd State Veterans Cemetery in eastern Idaho. Currently exploring options along the I-15 corridor between Pocatello and Idaho Falls. A proposal was recently discussed and disregarded due to the prospective lot's proximity to the regional airport's runway. The noise risk was deemed inappropriate for the dignity and solemnity of the Veterans Cemetery mission. James Earp the State Veterans Cemetery Director has looked at 25 different options so far. The state is hoping for a charitable donation of land for the purpose of a cemetery. The state's application for approval is in the VA National Cemetery Administration's queue. The state intends to be very selective to ensure the integrity of the mission is ensured.

Suggestions for the Council to consider moving forward

- Would it be possible to create subcommittee within the Legislature dedicated to veterans?
- Is there a way to create a Vet Tracker for the state of Idaho?

The next meeting will be in April 2016.