

# VETERANS SERVICE-MEMBERS & FAMILIES COORDINATION COUNCIL/MYVA COMMUNITY

## *MEETING MINUTES*

*Thursday, April 6, 2016*

### In Attendance:

David Brasuell, Co-Chairman, Idaho Division of Veterans Services  
Representative James Holtzclaw, Idaho State Legislature  
Stan Moran, Field Consultant Oregon/Idaho Veterans Experience Office  
Kathy Malin, Director, Boise VARO (VBA rep)  
Rachel Schmillen, Vocational Rehabilitation Office Boise VARO  
Joshua Callihan, Boise VAMC (VHA rep) & USMC Representative  
Nate Stewart, Boise VAMC  
Christina Iverson, Idaho Supreme Court Veterans Treatment Courts  
Pamela Langley, US Department of Labor VETS  
Brent Ferro, US Department of Labor VETS  
Bill Reed, Idaho Department of Labor  
Karan Tucker, JANNUS  
John Reusser, Idaho Suicide Prevention Hotline  
Alison Garrow, J.A. and Kathryn Albertson Family Foundation Mission 43 Guild Education  
Dana Kelly, Idaho State Board of Education  
Randall Brumfield, Idaho State Board of Education  
Bill Goesling, (via conference call)  
Daniel McQuesten, Air Force Reserve Representative  
Tracy Schaner, Deputy Administrator, Idaho Division of Veterans Services  
Kevin Wallior, Idaho Division of Veterans Services, Exec Assistant

*Next meeting: TBD/Fall 2017*

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Meeting called to order at 9:30 AM

### ***I. WELCOME – INTRODUCTIONS – ANNOUNCEMENTS***

- David Brasuell welcomed Stan Moran a VA Field Consultant for Oregon and Idaho from the Veterans Experience Office.
- One by one, all attendees identified themselves and their organizations.
- David Brasuell, Co-Chairman, announced that Idaho received plaudits from VA leadership during the National Association of State Directors of Veterans

Affairs (NASDVA) Mid-Winter Conference for the MyVA Rural Veterans Community Forum held in Moscow, ID on June 13, 2016 IDVS.

- Due to the success of the event, IDVS is planning to host a similar event in eastern/southeastern Idaho later this year.

## **II. BRIEFINGS**

David Brasuell – IDVS

- Effective February 13, 2017, the Idaho Commission on Aging has a new Administrator, Judy Taylor.
  - There is much overlap between the interests and missions of the Idaho Commission of Aging and the Idaho Division of Veterans Services.
- Update on the State Veterans Cemetery to be located in eastern Idaho.
  - Both the Governor and the Legislature approved funding this past legislative session.
  - The VA National Cemetery Administration Veterans Cemetery Grants Program confirmed IDVS pre-application requirements are current for FY18. This puts IDVS in a good position to have a grant awarded in October 2017.
  - The first Draft for the Cemetery design was completed..
  - This Eastern Idaho Cemetery is separate from the new National Veterans Cemetery announced in Buhl, Idaho.
    - The Buhl Cemetery is part of the VA's National Rural Cemetery Initiative.
  - The VA National Cemetery Administration (NCA) has four different Cemetery Initiatives beyond VA National Veterans Cemeteries:
    - State Veterans Cemeteries, of which the existing Idaho State Veterans Cemetery and the proposed eastern Idaho State Veterans Cemetery fall under.
    - VA NCA Rural Initiative, of which the National Veterans Cemetery announced in Buhl, ID will be.

- VA NCA Urban Initiative
- Tribal Veterans Cemeteries
- IDVS received funding approval in the last budget to place a full-time Veteran Service Officer in Caldwell.
- IDVS has committed to ongoing funding for the Suicide Prevention Hotline. IDVS will provide one-time funding in FY18 for the Veterans Treatment Courts.
  - Both programs provide significant support to veterans throughout the state.
- VA announced regulations to establish presumptions for service connection of eight diseases associated with water contamination at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina effective March 14, 2017.
  - The presumption of service connection applies to active duty, Reserve and National Guard members who served at Camp Lejeune and MCAS New River (including satellite camps and housing areas) for a minimum of 30 days (cumulative) between August 1, 1953 and December 31, 1987, and are diagnosed with any of the following conditions:
    - adult leukemia
    - aplastic anemia and other myelodysplastic syndromes
    - bladder cancer
    - kidney cancer
    - liver cancer
    - multiple myeloma
    - non-Hodgkin's lymphoma
    - Parkinson's disease
  - This presumption complements the health care already provided for 15 illnesses or conditions as part of the [Honoring America's Veterans and Caring for Camp Lejeune Families Act of 2012](#). The Camp Lejeune Act requires VA to provide health care to Veterans who served at

Camp Lejeune, and to reimburse family members, or pay providers, for medical expenses for those who resided there for not fewer than 30 days between Aug. 1, 1953 and Dec. 31, 1987.

- The Veterans Service Organization State Conventions/Conferences are upcoming:
  - Disabled American Veterans State Convention May 4-6 Idaho Falls, ID
  - Marine Corps League State Convention May 4-6 Coeur d'Alene, ID
  - Veterans of Foreign Wars State Convention June 8-11 Boise, ID
  - American Legion State Convention July 13-16 Pocatello, ID
- Sixty Vietnam Veterans and their families were honored at a recent Vietnam Commemoration ceremony in Mountain Home, ID.
- Rear Admiral Dumont will be visiting the Boise area on April 24-26 to meet with leadership among the Military and Veteran community.

#### Christina Iverson – Idaho Supreme Court Veterans Treatment Courts

- The Idaho Supreme Court has begun to develop a performance evaluation metric for the Veterans Treatment Courts.
  - This will be a five to seven year process.
  - The preliminary plan should be completed by the end of the year.
  - The original Veterans Treatment Courts were modeled off Drug Treatment Courts. As such, as the Veterans Treatment Courts become more established and more data is accrued, the model is evolving to better meet the unique circumstances of Veterans.
  - Research on best practices is limited regarding Veterans Treatment Courts across the country. Idaho Supreme Court is looking to further and develop best practices to improve Veterans Treatment Court program in Idaho.
- There is a focus on trauma informed care – not a punitive approach but how can the veteran be made whole and healthy again.
  - There is a push to promote engagement specifically family engagement with an emphasis on children.

- Idaho is the first state to implement statewide standards and guidelines on how Veterans Treatment courts operate. Includes:
  - Eligibility criteria;
    - Eligibility restrictions have been loosened to allow access to veterans involved in aggravated crimes (excepting cases involving sexual violence).
  - Case Management;
  - Coordination services; and
  - Evaluation
  - <http://www.isc.idaho.gov/solve-court/home>
  - [http://www.isc.idaho.gov/psc/VTC Standards Guidelines 4.2.15.pdf](http://www.isc.idaho.gov/psc/VTC_Standards_Guidelines_4.2.15.pdf)

#### Bill Goesling – Idaho Supreme Court District Two Veterans Treatment Court Briefing

- Overview of Veteran Treatment Courts
  - As mentioned by Christina, VTC modeled after Drug Treatment Courts.
  - There are approximately 500 VTC in US
  - Admissions requirements for VTC:
    - one or more legal charges (felony and misdemeanor)
    - Pre-sentence; Post plea
    - No sex offenders
    - Violent charges—case by case
    - Offense is part or whole contributed to behavioral health issue
  - VTC program requires 18-24 months to complete.
  - Partnerships with VA and community are an integral component.
  - After successful completion, charges either dismissed or reduced.
  - Goal is to reduce recidivism

- Ancillary benefit is major cost savings
  - VTC costs approximately \$6,000 per year
  - Incarceration costs approximately \$22,000 per year.
- District Two Treatment Court
  - Covers Clearwater, Latah, and Nez Perce Counties
    - Approximately 2400 veterans in the three counties
  - Began in August 2008
    - 15 veteran capacity at any given time
    - Currently 8 veterans participating in program
    - 30 veterans have participated since inception
      - 14 veterans have graduated
      - Only 2 veterans have reoffended
    - 86% success rate
  - Participant requirements:
    - Court Status Hearings (2 times per month)
    - Treatment attendance (group and one-on-ones)
    - Probation (supervision and house visits)
    - Community Support Group Attendance (e.g. AA 7 meetings per week)
  - Sanctions:
    - Extension of lost driving privileges
    - Community service hours
    - Writing and presenting papers
    - House arrest
    - Incarceration

- Incentives:
  - Certificates on completion of phases
  - Gift cards
  - Recognition
- VA and Community Partnerships:
  - Counseling:
    - Substance abuse (6-8 hours/week)
    - PTSD
    - Domestic Violence
    - Individual
    - Mental Health (3 Levels)
  - Classes:
    - Stress management
    - Pain management
    - Sleep disorders
    - Others
  - Medical Treatment:
    - CBOC/VAMC/Choice Program
  - Other:
    - Housing
    - Job placement and support
    - Education

Representative Holtzclaw inquired about the age range of participants and statewide participation in the program.

Christina Iverson of the Idaho State Supreme Court responded.

- There is no age limit to participate in VTC; participants have ranged from 18 to 67 years old.
- Rather than age as a determining factor, the Level of Service Inventory-Revised (LSI-R) methodology is utilized to determine high risk, high need and can influence participation in VTC.
- Approximately 72 veterans on average participate in VTC across the state per year.
- Idaho unlike some states does not utilize a Veteran's discharge status to determine eligibility for VTC. The state also accepts all offenses except sexual crimes. Many states will not accept any violent offenders in their programs.

#### Tracy Schaner – Wheelchair Transportation Program

- The Legislature approved Senate Bill 1031 to amend existing law to provide for the Veterans Transportation Fund Grant Program and to remove reference to a voucher system.
- In the process of submitting temporary and proposed (permanent) rulemaking to put in place the revised IDAPA Rules supporting the amendment along with the details to run the fund grant program.
- The temporary rules proposed to be effective 7/1/2017 or soon thereafter.
- Permanent administrative rules will be submitted during the 2018 legislative session for final approval.
- Currently participating in active discussions with ITD to enter into agreement for ITD to administer the Transportation Program
  - ITD can leverage the program and administer the funds with less burden since they already have expertise in this area.
  - ITD has competitive process- issuing several grants (some in 6-7 figure \$ amounts) to 14 transit companies covering the entire state.

#### Representative Holtzclaw – Legislative Update

- The Idaho Legislature approved \$300 million in Grant Anticipation Revenue Vehicle bonds (GARVEE) for improvements to major transportation arteries.



- The legislature increased the public school budget, including \$62 million to fully fund the third year of the teacher "career ladder" pay improvement program.
- The legislature passed a bill to repeal the grocery sales tax. (Note: Governor Otter vetoed the bill on April 11, 2017)
- There are not enough votes yet to successfully pass legislation regarding taxation on military retirement pay.
- Representative Holtzclaw is researching possible legislation to allow veterans who do not retire from the military who work for the state to receive credit for their military service toward their Public Employee Retirement System of Idaho (PERSI) plan
  - Going forward this may not be necessary as the DoD is shifting to a Blended Retirement Plan that will provide non-retiree veterans with retirement compensation. Details about this retirement plan can be found at <http://militarypay.defense.gov/BlendedRetirement/>

#### Kathy Malin – VARO

- Voc Rehab Program
  - Approximately 400 veterans utilizing it throughout the state
  - Program territory includes eastern Oregon, eastern Idaho, and as far north as Idaho County.
  - To be eligible must have at least a service connected rating of 10% or greater, that also significantly affects employment.
  - The goal of the Voc Rehab program is suitable employment and/or development of a new skillset.
  - Target last year was sixty-four veterans with positive outcomes. Boise Voc Rehab office far exceeded that goal; ninety-four veterans achieved positive outcomes. This year's target is eighty veterans.
- Boise VARO will be posting a job announcement for 5-10 VSR positions in the near future.

#### Josh Callihan – VA Medical Center

- The Parking Garage project was put out to bid, and a firm was selected.

- Unfortunately, one of the losing bidders filed a protest regarding the winning bid. As such, the project cannot move forward until the protest is resolved.
- The new MRI suite was completed.
- The step-down unit remodel was also completed.
- The in-patient psychiatric unit was completed.
  - Key access.
  - Complete lockdown
  - It is not an involuntary unit, and, thus, cannot place veterans on mental hold.
- The cardiac cath lab was put out for bid.
- The VA is planning to install a round robin door at the main entrance.
- The Boise VAMC Optical Fabrication Production Laboratory is having issues producing eyeglasses in a timely fashion.
  - Until the fabrication issues are sorted, Boise VAMC is exploring options to contract this function out to ensure veterans obtain their eyeglasses in a more appropriate timeframe.
- The Twin Falls CBOC is slated for renovations in June.
- The new secretary of the VA has put an emphasis on expanding Veterans choice for care.
  - The VA Veterans Choice Program will be extended until funds run out.
- In response to nationwide controversy regarding President Trump's photo not being hung in VA facilities (despite it not yet being available through the Government Printing Office) the Secretary of the VA has instructed that a temporary photo be hung in all VA facilities until such time that an official photo is available.
- Dr. Bondeson, the Chief of the Boise VAMC Behavioral Health Clinic has accepted a promotion to become the Chief of Mental Health and Homeless Operations, VISN 20.

- VA has a caregiver support program for severely combat wounded post-9/11 Veterans [https://www.caregiver.va.gov/support/support\\_benefits.asp](https://www.caregiver.va.gov/support/support_benefits.asp).
  - It is a three-tier program.
  - There is a stipend for caregivers to provide care to the veteran.
  - Recently, VA has started to focus on errors regarding evaluations for this program.
    - Re-evaluations has stripped some veterans of this stipend who were determined to be ineligible for this benefit.
    - These re-evaluations have led to negative press and strong reactions.
  - In light of controversy, VA announced an internal review of this program.  
<https://www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=2889>
- VA is focusing on suicide prevention.
  - Boise VAMC identified twenty-nine veterans as high risk. Each of these veterans was assigned a suicide prevention coordinator.

Suggestions were made for coordination between the Idaho Suicide Prevention Hotline (ISPH) and the Boise VAMC. Pursue possible information sharing between organizations to better prevent suicide amongst at risk veterans. Determined that Boise VAMC and ISPH will have a sit down meeting to discuss potential partnerships.

Tracy Schaner spoke about developing an internal guideline for handling suicide threats from the public and staff. IDVS shared that policy with DHR and the Governor's office who has shared it with other state agencies as a model.

Karan Tucker – JANNUS

- JANNUS is a forty-year-old non-profit providing health and human services. <http://www.jannus.org/>
- 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. Approximately 500 hours a

month of respite care to veterans and families.

<http://www.jannus.org/program/legacy-corps/>

- There may be opportunities for collaboration between this program and the VA's caregiver support program. Josh Callihan from Boise VAMC and Karan Tucker will meet to discuss.
- PATH, Project for Assistance for Transition from Homelessness have enrolled and housed 60 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.  
<http://www.jannus.org/program/path-project-for-assistance-in-transition-from-homelessness/>
- Economic Opportunity through JANNUS  
<http://www.jannus.org/program/microenterprise-training-and-assistance-meta/>
  - Provides tools and resources necessary for financial resilience to socially and economically disadvantaged individuals. Provides the knowledge to change, the support to grow and the confidence to succeed from asset development and credit building to financing and business planning.

John Reusser – Idaho Suicide Prevention Hotline

- JANNUS operates the 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.
- The Hotline has 175 trained responders
- 2016 was a growth year. Nine hundred and fifty two contacts were military, veterans or their families out of 6000 callers, approximately 16%. This information is collected after the call is de-escalated. Demographic information is collected if the caller wishes to provide information.  
<https://www.idahosuicideprevention.org/>
- The Idaho Suicide Prevention Hotline has a crisis text response system at 208-398-HELP (208-398-4357). This system is operable from Monday through Friday 3PM until Midnight.

- ISPH now has a crisis chat portal to provide one more method of contact for individuals in crisis.

Dana Kelly – Idaho State Board of Education

- All of Idaho's public institutions are compliant with Section 702 of the Veterans Access, Choice and Accountability Act of 2014. Section 702 required the VA to disapprove programs of education for payment of benefits under the GI Bill if schools charged qualifying veterans and their dependents in excess of the rate for resident students.
- All of Idaho's public institutions are in a position to add veteran preference to their admissions process if future legislation mandates it.
- Dr. Leslie Webb is developing a rubric to assess the quality of veteran education programs.
  - Still in the early stages of development.

Pamela Langley and Brent Ferro – US Department of Labor VETS

- VETS receives its funding via a continuing resolution. This provides significant challenges in planning and operations due to the uncertain future of funding.
- VETS is actively pursuing an increase in apprenticeship opportunities for veterans.
- Liaising with local businesses to create partnerships between education institutions and those businesses.
  - Goal is to create opportunities for veterans combining previous experience with new skills to best prepare them for employment.
- Applied for a grant, Incarcerated Veterans Transition Program to provide training/apprenticeships/OJT opportunities to formerly incarcerated veterans to encourage employment and stability and reduce risk of recidivism.  
<https://www.dol.gov/vets/Education%20and%20Outreach/Program%20Brochures/Production%20PDFs/INCARCERATED%20WEB.pdf>
- US Department of Labor has a Homeless Veterans' Reintegration Program  
<https://www.dol.gov/vets/programs/hvrp/>

- The Idaho State Department of Transportation, Department of Labor, and Associated General Contractors of America have collaborated to provide a three-week intensive heavy equipment operator school June 8-30.
  - This program will provide attendees the opportunity to become certified heavy equipment operators through Kootenai Technical Education Campus (KTEC) in Rathdrum, ID.
  - Program targeted towards Veterans, Women, Minorities, and Native Americans.
  - 20-25 spots in the program are available.
  - Housing provided
  - Trainees can expect \$25-\$30 per hour jobs upon completion of training and certification.

Alison Garrow –Mission 43

- Team Rubicon provides veterans and first responders the opportunity to continue to serve through deployment/missions to disaster areas.
  - Allows veterans to use their military skills to continue serving their community and country.
  - Assisted with flood mitigation during Operation Pay it Forward.
- Education: Guild Education <http://www.mission43.org/education/>
  - Guild Education works with veterans, service-members, & spouses to help them accomplish the academic requirements for the careers they wish to pursue.
  - Approximately 6% of people connected through Mission 43 are interested in education. Educational opportunities provided through one of the Guild Education partner institutions or via a local institution.