**ND Cares Coalition Virtual Meeting Minutes
July 9, 2020**

Chair Connie Sprynczynatyk opened the meeting with a welcome, a roll call of the attending coalition members. She then introduced Michelle Panos, the new ND Cares executive director.

Michelle spoke about her background in with the state of Wyoming in communications and healthcare, and about her work with veterans and the military while working for a U.S. Congressman and Senator.

Kora Docktor from the North Dakota Suicide Prevention Coalition updated the group on her organizations activities since they formed. After speaking about her son’s life and suicide Kora explained the highest rate of suicide is 24 hrs after discharge and 24 hrs before entering treatment – this should be an area of focus for everyone. In 2018 the rate in ND was higher than the national average. Over the last three years they established a non-profit, encouraged the use of the Zero Suicide program, assisted partners apply for Zero Suicide and grants from other sources, and provided “post-vention” and survivor support. Educational presentations are also available through their coalition. Connie thanked Kora and reminded everyone that one aspect of ND Cares Coalition’s strategic plan is to reduce stigma of getting mental health assistance. Kora suggested a PSA program focusing on males.

Rebecca Quinn of the Brain Injury Network gave an overview of their work. She talked about how their support groups have been virtual lately, which is allowing more people, especially in rural areas, to participate. They have partnered with the Heart Association to provide a Brain Injury Resource Guide for stroke coordinators to give patients who leave the hospital. The Mind Matter Conference will be next March and the Concussion Symposium will be virtual and is scheduled for September 18 (World Concussion Day) – registration is now open. The Network also helped to revise a sports concussion manual for student athletes utilizing the REAP model (Reduce, Educate, Accommodate and PACE). It is model in which schools, families, students and medical providers coordinate and collaborate to help young people recover safely from concussion. Webinar Wednesdays have been well attended since going virtual. Brain injury and criminal justice will the topic of the next webinar. Finally, the Network and the state of Colorado are working on developing online screening against a brain injury symptom inventory through online portal. A warm follow-up and handoff to services is given if needed. The portal should be ready sometime in the fall.

Michelle Panos provided a brief staff update. Concerning the budget, ND Care has incurred fewer expenses since COVID-19. The Broadcasters Association contract was renewed for another year as the Coalition seems to be getting exceptional value for the money spent. Michelle mentioned possible doing a PSA on reducing the stigma of getting mental health help. ND Cares business and communities are holding steady at 19 and 48. Before COVID-19 ND Cares reconnected with 10 of the 48 communities to offer any assistance necessary. She also discussed the next version of the ND Military Data Book for distribution to the Legislature this session. Lastly, Michelle reviewed the new protocol for requesting the expenditure of ND Cares donations currently in the National Guard Foundation account.

Coalition members then gave updates beginning with Marlys Morganstern from US Department of Labor, Veterans Employment Training Services. Marlys went over some situations concerning ERSRA employment situations when National Guardsmen return from Active Duty related to COVID-19. The employee should be reemployed promptly and into the position the employee maintained, or would have, maintained prior to active duty.

Jerome Billups of the North Dakota Job Service reported putting a new DVOP person in Grand Forks, Kendra Henry, who will assist transitioning service members or spouses with employment services.

Community Engagement and Partnership Coordinator, Sara Kemp of the VA Medical Center reported, the newest numbers indicate 17 veterans per day are dying by suicide and only 6 of those are enrolled in the VA healthcare system. The VA is responding with clinical interventions, suicide prevention program, high risk flag program, and public awareness campaigns. She can work with existing coalitions and provide technical assistance around suicide prevention. Example, one county will be mobilized into a team to preform suicide behavior autopsies to identify red flags such as giving pets away to shelters (resulted in a shelter awareness training). Sara sent out a community questionnaire about suicide and again every 6 months to establish a baseline with which to gauge efforts. Data will be shared.

Summer Hansonfrom the VA Post-911 Transition in Care program reported the program has been doing outreach by phone concerning any COVID-19 related needs, assessing veterans’ psycho-social and financial health, and providing referrals as needed.

Pam Sagness from the ND Department of Behavioral Health reported on several COVID-19 and other mental health resources and as an Employer Toolkit, First Responder stress management, Parents Leads materials, and new crisis counseling. The Dept. of Human Services is partnering with Lutheran Social Services to provide support through the Renew Project. Behavioral Health also received a $2M emergency grant to increase treatment and recovery services for individual with mental illness and substance use disorders and for healthcare practitioners with a mental illness. Behavioral Health also applied for a grant to COVID related suicide prevention program in partnership with FirstLink focusing on domestic violence.

Pam also discussed programs concerning the full continuum of care, increased community based services and the prevention of criminal justice involvement for people with a behavioral health problem. The 1915i Medicaid State Plan Amendment allows Medicaid to pay for additional mental health services. The Peer Support Specialist Certification Program when live on July 1. The Free Through Recovery Program provides care coordination for those that are in the criminal justice system, which is experiencing stable participation. Later data will provide those serviced who are military or veterans. Providers in this program receive incentive pay beyond their flat monthly rate, for helping clients achieve 3 of 4 beneficial outcomes.

Lastly Pam talked about Legislation going into effect or being implemented about statewide behavioral health crisis services, opioid medication units, public intoxication now meaning those until the influence of alcoholic beverages, drugs, or controlled substances, or a beverages, drugs, or controlled substances, or a combination of alcoholic beverages, drugs, and combination of alcoholic beverages, drugs, and controlled substances and removes the term “habitual drunkard”. People can now be referred for treatment instead of being incarcerated.

Joyal Meyer of the ND Department of Health who reported Dr. Andrew Stall is the new interim State Health Officer and helping with some reorganization of the department. Working hard on COVID-19 contact tracing.

General Jackie Huber from the National Guard thanked Joe Faller for helping with the transition with a new director. She also reported that the NDNG is heavily involved with COVID-19 activities – about 320. General Huber is the chair of the new (Commander’s Readiness and Resilience Council) CR2C whose purpose is to focus on community health: physical, psychological, social, spiritual and family. Strategic plan meeting this month. Meeting the needs of service members looking for shortcomings to address.

Maj. Flemmer, of the Service Member Family Support program, reported that they are 50% completed the transition of its Family Assistance Center staff from contractors to Title VI employees. They are looking still to hire Fargo, Devils Lake and Minot. Citizen Soldier for Life Contract is up in June so the program with end. He is also working on the Sept. 11 Brats for the Braves hosted by the Bismarck Chamber of Commerce.

Kelli Weiand of Military Outreach Office reported that she and Nikki Frohlich are getting back to business as usual and rescheduling events previously postponed. She reported on a Korean War Celebration, DAV picnic in August, ND Cares event in Berthold Sept. 10, Minot Stand Down Oct 22.

Amy Ruff, National Guard Resilience &Risk Reduction Suicide Prevention Manager reported that the Guard is focusing more on suicide prevention instead of crisis management. She reiterated that community collaboration with the CR2C working groups is critical to make sure service members are living in health communities.

Pam Mack of ND Protection and Advocacy reported they have been busy looking out for people who may have been displaced due to COVID19 or having difficulty getting needed special education services. They are doing more outreach and veterans and service family members are part of the focus areas. On-call services have been busy (middle of the night and weekends) and they are seeing an uptick in mental health related issues. Most of their staff is still working from home. She also reminded the Coalition that legislative committee are meeting virtually and must be accessed via link. Comments about agenda items must be submitted a few days before the meeting. We must still be vigilant about what going on in the legislature and continue advocacy activities.

Carlotta McCleary of Mental Health America/ND reported on a SMASHA grant for peer support certification 80-hour training online – 80 hours training. They also facilitated virtual Consumer and Family Network training for those with serious mental illness. The two recovery centers they operate are connecting members with supports (sometimes several times a day) and making sure they have access to food. The North Dakota Federation of Families for Children’s Mental Health is providing parent peer support especially in the area of special education services. A summer virtual conference for families is in the works. Lastly, the Photo Voice Project will continue. Children provide messaging about mental health and foster care via photos.

Joe Faller made final remarks and thanked General Huber and the Coalition letting him stay on in the transition to a new director.

Michelle Panos reported that all the Human Service Centers, the State Hospital and the Life Skills Center are now TRICARE providers.

She also reported that the Hero’s Park Dedication in August is part a new neighborhood dedicated to fallen Guardsman. The streets will be named after them.

Connie closed the meeting at 3:00 pm.