 **ND Cares Executive Committee Meeting**

**July 14, 2021**

**Attendees** Connie Sprynczynatyk (virtual), Cindy Whitesell (Virtual), Lonnie Wangen (Virtual), Dale DeKrey (virtual), Joyal Myer (Virtual), BG Jackie Huber, Shawn Flemmer (Virtual), Michelle Panos.

**Absent** Dr. Weintraub, Pam Sagness, Brian Watters Davina French, David Becker.

**1. Opening.** Connie briefly opened the meeting.

**2. Minutes.** Minutes from the May 6, 2021 meeting where accepted as written.

**3. Presentation**

* Kristi Clifton, Wing Director of Psychological Health, 119 WG, discussed the Air National Guard’s suicide prevention program and about what it means to be cleared for deployment. Prior treatment for a mental health issue is not necessarily an impediment to deployment. In fact, as long as any medication or other treatment is readily available, deployment is authorized on a case-by-case basis. Current observable trends in mental health issues are depression and anxiety, and alcohol use with DUIs.

**4. Old Business:**

* Regarding the ND Cares Budget, Michelle reviewed the final expenses for the biennia and commented that due to the downturn in activity during COVID, only two thirds of the budget was expended. Michelle also reviewed the budget for 21-23 and noted that the ND Broadcasters Association contract had increased 20%, however there is a three-year option to renew at the current price. She also presented data about the number of TV and Radio spots and the number of radio stations and TV markets where ads are running. Although ND Cares paid $48,000 over the biennium, the value of that airtime totaled $303,811.
* Michelle reported that no one fitting the Protection and Advocacy criteria has volunteered for their board, likely because ND Cares Coalition membership consists of mostly entities that provide services. Connie suggested we wait until the new Civilian Aide to the Secretary of the Army is appointed then approach that person about the P&A board. Davina will continue to serve on the P&A board until a replacement is found.

**5. New Business**

* Michelle reported that recently the NDNG psychological staff has experience difficulty referring guardsmen to the DHS Human Service Centers. Staff are told the Centers are only accepting acute patients (which may or may not be something new); however, guardsmen rarely need acute care. Michelle will discuss the situation with Pam Sagness. In a related issue, NDNG psychological staff has heard anecdotally from local providers that TRICARE may be limiting the number of providers in a given state. Michelle has a call into TRICARE to learn more about this. If the Human Service Centers are taking up in-network provider positions but not accepting guardsman, then perhaps we should ask TRICARE to lift the cap on the number of providers.
* As an update to ND Cares Strategic Plan Michelle discussed the opportunity to work with the new American Legion Department Commander for North Dakota, Steve Anderson. Steve, a suicide survivor, has made awareness his signature issue. He is interested in collaborating with ND Cares for anti-stigma radio or TV spots utilizing the ND Cares Broadcasters Association contract. He can also promote peer support.
* **Executive Committee Updates**
  + **ND Dept. of Veterans Affairs –** Lonnie reported the next ACOVA meeting is Sept 23-24 at the Quality Inn in Bismarck. 75% of the $8M pledged donations for the Fisher House has been secured. The Veteran’s Court is currently looking for a court coordinator and the Committee to End Homelessness is still in need of a chairperson. His department is currently working on Policy Manuals and a new website.
  + **VA Fargo –** The VA is still working on Fisher House land acquisition approval and site prep. North Fargo is prime space so land may be limited. If the site is more than a 10 minute walk a shuttle may be needed. Del DeKrey reported that any veteran, their caregivers or close family members are eligible for a COVID-19 vaccine. There is no word on whether or not a booster is needed. Masks and patient screening is ongoing at the VA and Community Bases Outpatients Clinics (CBOC).
  + **ND Dept. of Health –** Joyal reported. DOH and DHS will officially merge Sept.1 of 2022. Leadership has let a RFP for a consultant to assist with the merger. Joyal posed the question of whether someone from DOH and DHS will continue on the Executive Committee. Connie recommended we wait until the process is finished before we consider who is on the Committee. She also reported on a CDC data that surveyed of 20K public health workers during COVID-19. The data showed 53% reported symptoms of at least mental health condition within two weeks of the survey – especially among those who could not take time off or worked overtime.
  + **NDNG –** BG Huber reported that the NDNG is gradually winding down support of COVID efforts and is continuing to support fire suppression efforts in and out of state. In October, guardsmen will be deployed to the southern border for a quick assignment. Air Defense Artillery in Grand Forks will deploy as a group in June and another hundred individual deployments across the force. Youth events were back in full swing. Upcoming is the ND Women’s Summit to inform the force about diversity and inclusion. LTCOL Flemmer reported on a Yellow Ribbon event for those coming off COVID-19 duty to make sure they are aware of all resources available to them. The Resiliency Council will have an upcoming quarterly meeting.

**6. Upcoming Events**

1. **ND Brain Injury Network Concussion Symposium:** Sept. 17th
2. **Veterans Stand Down:** Oct. 21, Minot
3. **ND Behavioral Health & Children and Family Services Conference:** Oct. 26-28
4. **911 Memorial (20 yrs):** Sept. 11, 10am, GWOT Memorial, Fraine Barracks
5. **Survivor Outreach Event: July 30**
6. **Behavioral Health Peer Support In-Person Training:** Sept. 13-17, Fargo

* **NEXT MEETING DATEs**

1. ND Cares Coalition Meeting, Sept. 16, 2021
2. ND Cares Executive Committee Meeting, August 18, 2021.