 **ND Cares Executive Committee Meeting Minutes**

**December 8, 2022**

Attendees, Cindy Whitesell, Pam Sagness, Dr. Weintraub, BG Jackie Huber, Joyal Meyer, Brian Watters, Michelle Panos. (All virtual)

Absent, LTC Ann Willoughby, David Becker, Shelly Sizer, Lonnie Wangen

**1. Opening.** Chairman Cindy Whitesell briefly opened the meeting.

**2. Minutes.** Minutes from the July 7, 2022 meeting were accepted as written.

**3. New Business**

* **Executive Committee Updates**
  + **Behavioral Health:** Pam Sagness updated us on two bills. One is for the sustainable funding the 988 system through fees. If the bill fails, the legislators could also add funding to the HHS appropriation. The second is the potential for a suicide mortality review panel similar to the maternal and opioid review panels. There will be other behavioral health issues discuss such as continuing to expand community-based services and what a new state hospital would look.
  + **NDNG: BG** Huber started by stating that the official welcome home for the 957th that is a Bismarck based unit of about 125 soldiers that came back from the southwest border is scheduled for January 8. The ADA Battalion in Grand Forks come back or 835th Engineer Detachment come back earlier this summer. The 191 MP Company based out of Fargo are currently deployed to the Kuwait region and the 112th Aviation Battalion out of Bismarck is currently on the southwest border. The Maneuver Enhancement Brigade out of Fargo just participated in a huge warfighter exercise in Indiana. Right now, all branches of the military are struggling with recruitment as there A lot of negative perception that's out there with military service. Of the recruitable population (17-27 yrs.), 60% believe that they would be hurt either emotionally, psychologically, or physically from military service. There is an ongoing effort to change those perceptions.
  + **Fargo VA**: Dr. Weintraub stated the VA is experiencing the typical amount of turnover of staff unfortunately the onboarding process has been difficult so the VA had a national stand down or onboarding surge events where they moved those with a tentative employment offer through the paperwork to get a final offer. Recruiting mental health professionals remains a challenge. The VA continues to prepare for the electronic health record change, with the purchase of Cerner Millennium that should go live in September of 2024. The backlog of consultations in our community are program was not a bad as we thought, and they are getting help form the Black Hill VA. The Dickinson and Williston clinics ran into some staffing difficulty that is it appears to be stabilizing.

**4. Old Business**

* + Michelle reported that ND Cares will have 22 business partnerships ND Cares communities will grew to 56 with the additions of the City of Streeter at their presentation in January. For the strategic plan update Michelle reported that she is working with the County VSO Association to use our ND Broadcasters Association contract for PACT ACT and Blue Water Act information, encouraging veterans to contact the local VSO to file a claim. Bryan Watters stated that attorneys are advertising to represent veterans for toxic exposures at Camp Lejeune and veterans could end up owing more money than they can get out of a settlement as the VA will offset benefits. Michelle will send the script to Brian for his thoughts on the wording. For the Bridges for Fallen efforts Michelle had a conversation with Jim Nelson who is on the ND Veterans Legislative Council. He is excited to have a bill enacted and has several bridges and names picked out. I reminded him that the project was brought to our attention in effort to support Survivors and that any decisions should include them. Jim plans for a committee to make decisions and will make sure there is Survivor representation. Governor Challenge efforts are also ongoing, and we are farther along on our planning the other states in our cohort. There may be legislation that assists our efforts regarding vital records access, mortality review and requiring providers to ask the question “Have your ever served”. A ‘yes’ answer opens up new dialog about coordinating with the VA benefits and healthcare systems. The care coordination toolkit that is currently in draft form would help providers connect more smoothly with the VA system. Concerning peer support, the state’s program would be happy to provide add-on training for military culture so now it’s just a question of which training to use. Perhaps PsychArmor can create a specialized training to meet our needs. For lethal mean safety, the VA has conducted three CALM (Counseling on Access to Lethal Means) trainings and there are more planned. In our efforts to advertise the program we received permission for Behavioral Health to use provider contact information from the new provider directory. Lastly, UND (a Gov’s Challenge member) has received a 5-year, $5M grant for suicide reduction targeting children, veterans and the LGBT community in western North Dakota. Areas of priority overlap with the Governor’s Challenge are developing prevention toolkits and coroner training to improve vital records data. Lonnie and Michelle will be meeting with SAMHSA in February to talk choosing a line of effort that may require extra technical assistance from them.

**5. Upcoming Events** Michelle discusses some of the following:

1. [**ND 2023 Legislative Calendar of Deadlines**](https://www.ndlegis.gov/files/resource/68-2023/legislative-deadlines/23.9036.02000.pdf)
2. **Grand Forks Military Affairs Committee:** Dec 21
3. **Fargo/Moorhead Military Affairs Committee:** 11 a.m. Feb 9
4. **Devils Lake Military Affairs Committee:** Dec 18
5. [**AFSP Talk Saves Lives Virtual Event: Dec. 12, 7:00 pm**](https://tslnd1214.attendease.com/)
6. **Wreaths Across America Ceremony:** Dec 17, 11 am, Vets Cemetery, Mandan
7. **Wreaths Across America Ceremony:** Dec 17, 11 am, National Vets Cemetery, Fargo
8. **VA PACT Act Town Hall**: Dec 12, 9-10 am, FargoVA Medical Center
9. **Minot Military Affairs Committee:** Jan 5
10. **Williston Military Affairs Committee:** Jan 6
11. [**TAPS Alaska Iditarod Survivor Experience Applications Due: Dec 30**](https://www.taps.org/survivor-experience/2023/alaska/?fbclid=IwAR3M8Dhb-MRniCoq4BsLpZZUDYo6OCJDwH6hTZLc2VHpgYl5FohCVyHSI-8)
12. **First Link ASIST Training:** January 24-25 9:00 am 5:00 pm, Fargo $240
13. **ACOVA Meeting:** Feb 16-17 Comfort Inn, Bismarck
14. **NEXT MEETING DATES**

* The next ND Cares Coalition meeting was proposed for Feb 9, however perhaps it is better we move it to the first week in March when we have a better idea of the legislation that is actually going forward. The ND Cares Executive Committee Meeting will be January 12, 2023, 10:30 am-Noon.