 **ND Cares Executive Committee Meeting Minutes**

**May 4, 2023**

Attendees: Shelly Sizer, Dr. Weintraub, BG Jackie Huber, Pam Sagness, Lonnie Wangen, David Becker, Michelle Panos (All virtual)

Absent: Joyal Meyer, Cindy Whitesell, LTC Ann Willoughby

**1. Opening.** Chairman Shelly Sizer briefly opened the meeting.

**2. Minutes.** Minutes from the April 6, 2023 meeting were accepted as written with one correction.

**3. New Business**

* **Executive Committee Updates**
  + **Chairman:** Shelly reported on an Army program that will pay for medical training for enlistees. She toured the Brooke Army Medical Center and the new state of the art center there for service members who have lost limbs. This is a wonderful opportunity for young people interested in the medical field and she is happy to talk with anyone who is interested in the program. She and David Becker have identified ways to partner. She will attend the CASA conference at Fort Leonard Wood and the Women’s Leadership Summit in Fargo in August.
  + **NDNG:** BG Huber reported that the legislative session was largely successful for the Guard. They received a $20M line of credit for the construction of a military museum on the Capitol grounds in conjunction with the current Historical Society buildings. In addition, there will be improvements to Camp Grafton to upgrade equipment due to changes in the Army Combat Fitness Test.
  + **NDHHS, Behavioral Health**: Pam Sagness explained that the legislature decided they would keep Medicaid expansion rates as is until the last six months of the biennium, at which point in time the rates will be decreased to 145% of Medicare; however, Behavioral Health will not be reduced in that last six months. A task force will study the issue in the interim. The legislature also provided funding to start the planning for a new state hospital that will be shovel ready by the next session. 12.5 million specifically to create a therapeutic environment with about 125 beds. They also received funding to convert one human service center into a community certified community behavioral health center with permission to use rollover dollars to convert possibly two more. Behavioral Health will partner with law enforcement to install tele-mental health in law enforcement vehicles that will connect to 24/7 triage services for those in a mental health crisis.
  + **NDDVA**: Lonnie talked about the new veteran intern from NDSU who is working on his masters on data and suicide prevention. He will accompany Michelle to the next Governors Challenge meeting in D.C. Lonnie also talked about coordinating all veteran’s transportation programs (DOT, DAV, VA and AV). Right now, he’s trying to buy a handicapped accessible van. The legislature granted him access to death records so he will have to work on a process for assessing those records for trends. Lastly, he mentioned that while attending a conference in Alaska, he ran into two vets who raved about the Fargo VA Mental Center as compared to their own.
  + **Regional VA, Fargo**: Dr. Weintraub stated that national people are coming at the end of May to look at parcels of land for the Fisher House. They are still on track for construction in fiscal year 25. He also reported that suicide rates among veterans decreased by 9.7%, for 2019 to 2020. The COMPACT Act is now in effect. It allows the VA to pay for emergency mental health services whether they are enrolled in the VA healthcare system or not. The VA has also established a “postvention” team that offers assistance to VA staff members who cared for a veteran you died by suicide. Dr. Weintraub will attend the opening of the veterans’ treatment court this month and explained to the committee how it works differently than regular court. Lastly, he mentioned that masks are still mandatory at the hospital but hopefully that should ease someone soon.
  + **Army Reserve Ambassador**: David stated that he will be in Fargo tomorrow afternoon for a presentation to the Army Reserve. He will talk about ND Cares and the Governors Challenge priorities. Michelle will provide him with talking points. He is also still working on the Minuteman Scholarship for kids that want go to college and ROTC for free for four years.

**4. Old Business**

* Michelle reported that the number of ND Cares communities remained the same, but there will be the addition of Dakota Home Care in Mandan and Fargo as an ND Cares Business Partner. The presentation is yet to be scheduled. For the Hidden Wounds bridge we are still waiting for Sen. Santrum to respond with his thoughts for an initial meeting of agencies and non-profits who want to provide information at any dedication we set up. Michelle also gave an update on activities with the Governor Challenge. According to SAMHSA/VA, our North Dakota team is farther along than other states within our cohort – so much so that our planning is mostly done and we are on the verge of implementation for some initiatives. Tammy Monsebroten from the VA, Kora Dockter from the NDSPC and Michelle met with the ND Hospital Association (NDHS) to enlist their help with Governors Challenge initiatives. They discussed how the COMPACT Act would be beneficial to hospitals as well as veterans. The NDHA is pleased to be of assistance and will not only help distribute information but also allow us to present at their upcoming conference in October. Concerning peer support, Michelle and the state’s Peer Support Coordinator Kristy Johnson met with Together with Veterans in Minot. They are interested in free state training. Michelle will also meet with Team Red, White and Blue later this month. To train the current peer support specialists, PsychArmor has a series of videos that could be used for a Military Culture endorsement. After the Innovation Conference in DC, several of ND Team members will attend the June Implementation Academy in Virginia. Lastly Michelle mentioned the Assistant Secretary for Defense Health Agency, Doctor Martinez-Lopez was scheduled to be in the state soon, but due to the threat of snow, he decided to reschedule. This is an important meeting, as we plan to discuss the TRICARE problem in North Dakota and ask for his assistance in finding solutions.

**5. UPCOMING EVENTS** Michelle highligted some of the following events:

1. [**FirstLink Various Trainings**: **March-June**](https://myfirstlink.org/events/)
2. **DAV State Convention:** May 5-7, Baymont Mandan
3. **ND Reserve Officers Assoc. Conv.:** May 6, Hilton Garden Inn, Fargo
4. **Heroes Park Ribbon Cutting:** May 10, 10:30AM, Lunch at AMVETS, Bismarck.
5. **ACOVA:** May 11-12, Camp Grafton
6. **AMVETS State Conv.:** May-12-13, AMVETS Club, Steel
7. **Veterans Treatment Court Opening Ceremony:** May 15
8. **VA Veterans Baby Shower:** May 22, American Red Cross, Fargo
9. **Memorial Day/Columbarium Dedication:** May 29,Veterans Cemetery, Mandan
10. **Memorial Day:** May 29, 3:00 PM, National Cemetery Fargo
11. **Tribal Veterans Stand Down:** June 7-8, Spirit Lake
12. **VFW State Conv.**: June 8-11, Bismarck
13. **Governor’s Challenge Implementation Acad.**: Jun 13-15, Washington DC
14. **Summit on Behavioral Health in Energy Country:** Jun 21-22, Dickinson
15. [**American Legion State Conv.:** June 22-25, Bismarck](https://ndlegion.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/2023-Convention-Schedule-Website.pdf)
16. **NEXT MEETING DATES**

The next Coalition meeting date is June 1 and the next Executive Committee meeting date is  
 July 6.