ND Cares Coalition Meeting Minutes

March 3, 2021

Connie opened the meeting with a roll call of coalition members. There were 23 people on the call.

John Jerzorske, Community Programs Specialist at Minot AFB discussed the Culture and Community Program focusing on community collaboration that break down helping-agency silos. Activities include the formation of interest clubs (chess, video gaming, Dungeons and Dragons, etc.), attending professional military education as a group or panel of helping-agencies, and answering questions. They are also talking about monthly spousal events the helps build resilience. Hopefully they can resume ASIST training for the prevention of violence. John also reported on two task forces created to address domestic violence and DUIs.

Lonnie Wangen gave an update on the status of veteran-related bills during the current legislative session. Topics included guardianship, resident student tuition, hunting, student patriot projects, asbestos lawsuits, NDDVA investments, use of gaming funds, NDDVA and Veterans Home appropriations, insulin co-payments, veterans property tax credit, tuition waiver for disabled vets, and a veterans court. He also reported that the VA has approved the construction of a 16-suite Fisher House in Fargo, for veterans’ families to stay in while a veteran is in the hospital. Once constructed the VA will operate it. The construction cost is approximately $8M all from donated funds. To donate go to www.SupportOurVeterans Fund/FisherHouse.

MAJ Jay Sheldon, Policy Officer for the North Dakota National Guard reported on military-related legislation. Topics included funding for Camp Grafton range expansion, state tuition assistance, funding for a ND Military Museum, funding for a new facility in Dickinson, reactivating a trust fund, Code of Military Justice duty status changes, the use of deadly force to protect property, $10K death gratuity while on state active duty, unemployment benefits for military spouses, and occupation licensing for military members and spouses.

Pam Mack from Protection and Advocacy reported on disability-related bills that could pertain to service members and veterans. Topics included time limits for opioid treatment, telehealth insurance coverage and reimbursement, fitness to proceed of evaluation/assessments, medical marijuana, mini horses as service animals, income housing tax credits, electronic voting practices, guardianships, substance abuse treatment voucher system continuation, disability income tax credit for employers, brain injury advisory council expansion, Medicaid Expansion, Dept. of Health and DHS merger, implementation of the 1915i Medicaid plan amendments.

Dale DeKrey reported more details on the Fisher House and veterans COVID-19 shots. Michelle also mentioned the Dr. Weintraub told her the over 8000 veterans have been vaccinated so far and any veteran that wants a vaccination can call the VA at 800-410-9723 to schedule a time and date.

Both Marlys and Pam Mack both received their shots from one of the VA events and commented on how well the events operated.

Kora Dockter reported that over 3600 people were on the latest ND Suicide Prevention Coalition and talked about the presenters and training. All trainings will be posted on the website eventually.

Nicole Frohlich reported that Military Outreach would continue to support the VA vaccinations events occurring all over the state. Not only is Outreach assisting with events set-ups, it is also providing benefits information.

Summer Hanson reported that the VA plans to provide outreach at the Red River Valley Sportsmen’s Show in March and Minot the end of April. Generally, they have seen an influx of people into the VA healthcare system directly related to the COVID vaccine clinics.

Pam Mack reported that Protection and Advocacy has seen an increase in COVID related calls in terms of education and mental health needs. Teresa Larson will retire at the end of April and they will look for a replacement. They also have a new director of policy and operations as well.

Sen. Dever reported that they getting ready to work on the DHS budget. His bill for property tax relief for disabled veterans is still moving through the legislature. The Senate has not debated the bill merging the Dept. of Health and the DHS yet, but the House provided interesting points. It appears that DHS can easily absorb Health. Most other states do not have two separate departments.

Carlota McCleary of Mental Health America (MHA) discussed their new peer support program via a SAMHA grant and their hope to expand it when the 1915i services come online. They are also working on CIT (Crisis Intervention Team) training with local law enforcement. The trainers themselves have severe mental illness, which gives participants an opportunity for conservation that fosters deeper understanding. MHA is also training school resources officers regarding special education law to help them determine what is the school’s responsibility and the resources officer’s responsibility. MHA are doing person-centered planning. ND Disability Advocacy Coalition has been looking to make sure that those with disabilities have a warm hand to assist them get the COVID vaccine. As an example, those with dementia may need extra help.

Yvette from the Department of Corrections discussed Free Through Recovery and peer support and working with the BHD working on care coordinators.

Sara Kemp, the Community Care Coordinator on the Suicide Prevention Team at the Fargo VA, reported that she is working on helping veterans who are not eligible to use the VA or using their VA benefits out in the community. The providers serving these veterans are not necessarily receiving the same training as other providers within the VA system. They have started a Veterans Care Coordination Coalition to create a veterans-smart network of care to ensure that veterans are receiving the same level of mental health care whether they chose VA care or outside care.

Cassie Roness from Military OneSource reported on the recent partnership with the Army Guard Substance Abuse and Suicide Prevention program to provide information about OneSource resources and information at ND training and ASIST training courses. She also offers monthly webinars, My Best Mil Life, on various topics. An interactive newsletter of events keeps members updated.

Amy Ruff from the National Guard discussed the CR2C program and the five working groups that address, physical, family, social, spiritual, psychological health. Nutrition Heath and Sleep Health are also addressed to comply with the new Army Field manual. There is a special focus sigma reduction regarding substance abuse reduction and suicide prevention. The physical health work group will focus on the ND wellness camp. The ND Because We Care campaign offered information on services to service member to prepare for the aftermath of a crisis.

Marlys Morgenstern of the US Department of Labor reported that members of the National Guard, serving on active duty under state orders for 14 days or more, support of a national emergency or disaster, are now entitled to USERA protection as of January 5, 2021.

For the ND Cares Administrative updates, Michelle Panos discusses the Business and Community programs by reporting on her visits with Minot State University and the City of Washburn. It is important to reconnect with communities to ensure momentum is not lost after the COVID-19 hiatus in activities. Michelle also discussed some of the highlights of the new ND Military Data Book and then gave a report on the ND Cares budget and donations. Lastly, she reported on how the gaps identified during the last Coalition meeting fit into the revised 2021-2022 Strategic Plan.

Upcoming events were discussed as listed on the agenda and Cassie Roness reported on several other events for the Month of the Military Child.

Lastly, Michelle asked coalition members to update their Facebook settings to ensure they receive ND Cares postings in their feed.

The next Coalition meeting will be announce after the Executive Committee meeting in April.