

ND Cares Coalition Meeting Minutes November 6, 2025

Cindy Whitesell opened the meeting at 1:00 PM and the meeting when straight into member reports:

Heather Call of the North Dakota National Guard mentioned that despite being furloughed, it has been business as usual. She received an email about a new support group run by Andrew Horning at the VFW in Bismarck, which meets twice a week and is based on an AA format, promoting the VA's whole health concept for mental health.

Kora Dockter of NDSPC reported that their annual meeting went well with full in-person attendance and online participation. Once the videos of the conference are available, they will be uploaded to the website. They are planning next year's agenda to address issues affecting children through college age, including college students and gambling, noting the statistic that one in five people who gamble is suicidal. Cora also shared that Allyson had her baby the previous Saturday.

Kelli Weiland of ND Military Outreach shared information about a successful stand down event in October, with 188 veterans and service members attending, along with 32 dependents, and mentioned plans to visit the new City Manager to discuss ND Cares.

Jonathan Ross of the NDDVA stated that he doesn't have too much to update, he's just been keeping track of data on the dashboard. He also mentioned that he is going to the Minnesota Veterans Suicide Prevention Collaborative on the 12th.

Susan Thompson introduced herself as the supervisor of the Suicide Prevention team at the VA, sitting in for Doctor Imholtz. She also introduced Mallory Nygard, the new community engagement and partnerships coordinator. Susan mentioned the new facility director, Mr. Harold Brent Pharis, who started on Monday, but had no other updates from the VA.

Mallory Nygaard introduced herself as the new community engagement and partnerships coordinator at the VA, in her third week in the role. She is excited about the position and looking forward to side conversations with meeting attendees.

Jeffrey Diemert of Legal Services of North Dakota reported that things have been full swing. The government shutdown hasn't affected their grant at all. Their grant got renewed for another two years. They've helped almost 286 different veterans across the state stay in their homes or remove risks of foreclosures. He's been helping veterans file Chapter 7 for consumer debt relief, noting VA disability and Social Security disability are not garnishable. He also mentioned getting clients through online, TV, and radio ads.

Lonnie Wangan Commissioner of the NDDVA reported that the Fox Grant application status is still pending and provided an update on Kramer's bill to prioritize states that

haven't received the grant. He also mentioned the \$500,000 for homeless veterans and to prevent barriers to getting into HUD/VASH housing.

Kodi Pinks of the NDHHS provided an update on veteran suicide statistics, reporting 19 veteran deaths due to suicide so far this year, which is around the normal range for North Dakota. This accounts for 16.2% of all deaths in the state this year. The majority of deaths are in the 20 to 29 and 70+ age groups. Kodi also mentioned an internal dashboard that allows for more detailed querying of case information from 2019 to 2023.

Michelle Panos provided several updates and insights during the meeting including new partnerships with Altru and the upcoming Prairie Recovery Center. Michelle discussed the coalition's social media presence, including the new Instagram account, and detailed paid advertising strategies for SAVE training, stand downs, suicide prevention summits, CALM, Safety Planning, and veteran stories. She noted the challenges with Facebook's algorithm regarding firearm-related content. There are radio ads, including the active campaigns for the Compact Act, Veterans Home, veteran stories, and legal services in North Dakota. She discussed her involvement in the North Dakota Suicide Prevention Action Committee and how it integrates with the Governor's Challenge, focusing on training and education and lethal means safety will be enhanced with the efforts of more people working on the issue. Training civilian peer support providers in military culture is still ongoing through the PsychArmor contract and Michelle shared a link to video on YouTube. For the Tricare update she addressed the issues with the Tricare provider directory after the changeover to TriWest, emphasizing the need for providers to verify their information and the plans to communicate this to them. Lastly, she highlighted some of the upcoming events.

The meeting ended at 1:50 PM.