 **ND Cares Executive Committee Meeting Minutes**

**August 18, 2021**

**Attendees** Connie Sprynczynatyk, Cindy Whitesell, Brian Watters, Dale DeKrey, BG Jackie Huber, Shyla Weston, Pam Sagness, Michelle Panos.

**Absent** Dr. Weintraub, Shawn Flemmer, Davina French, David Becker, Lonnie Wangen.

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

**2. Minutes.** Minutes from the July 14, 2021 meeting where accepted as written.

**3. New Business**

* Michelle gave an overview of United Us North Dakota, a new recruiting partners to use their veteran contact referral and contact management system – free to non-profit agencies. The basic premise is once a referral is made to services of a subscribed partner the referring entity will be able to see the outcome of their referral and any other referrals made on behalf of the veterans. The system was created by two veterans concerned about care coordination and who were tired of telling their entire story to multiple service providers, which they felt was a barrier to seeking assistance. The information is provided for the executive committee’s situational awareness in the event they receive a referral from this contact management system.
* **Executive Committee Updates**
  + **Co-Chair:** Cindy Whitesell reported that due to a surge in COVID cases Minot Air Force Base has a 100% mask mandate, went back to teleworking, and is restricting airmen access to bars. This has been hard are airmen who are already stressed from previous strict COVID prevention measures.
  + **ND Dept. of Veterans Affairs:** Brian Watters stated that funding is still ongoing for the Fisher House, the next ACOVA meeting is in September, they are looking for a Veterans Court coordinator, and they are working on updating their policies and website.
  + **Fargo VA:** Dale DeKrey reported that 60% of veterans in their catchment area are vaccinated as well as 90% of VA staff. Oct 8 is the date for employees to be %100 vaccinated. Those who don’t want to say if they are vaccinated or not, but those that don’t will be tested daily. Masks are mandatory. The VA is back to close to 100% except for group therapy. Booster shots are approved for organ transplant or immune compromised patients.
  + **ND Dept. of Human Service:** Pam Sagness discussed an additional funding opportunity for mental health projects due to COVID-19, as well as another round of suicide prevention grants. Connie suggested ND Cares send the information to entire Coalition and place it on the agenda for the next Coalition meeting in Sept. Regarding peer support, over 600 people have been trained in the state and there is more opportunity for reimbursement of services through Medicaid and other programs. She also reported that since permanent supportive housing program resides with Behavioral Health, staff have visited these programs to better understand the needs of this population and the veteran who also require these services. Project Renew is now HelpisHere.nd.gov – with a landing page for all things behavioral health. Housing and rental assistance is also available. Work is underway to integrate the departments of Health and Human Services. Finally, Behavioral Health is working closely with FirstLink on the 988 project – that will replace the 1-888 Crisis Line number.
  + **NDNG:** BG Huber reported that currently masks are required in areas where social distancing is not possible and during in-person meetings, the size of which are reduced to 50%. Currently 38% of Army and Air Guard personnel are vaccinated so there is more work to do. For mobilizations there is an engineering detachment that deployed to Kuwait for a year, the 285th Aviation unit and several Blackhawks are coming back, the 957th Engineers will deploy 125 people to the southwest border in October. The Air Guard will have several individual deployments all over the globe. The ADA Battalion is in Washington DC for the next year. We are also supporting wildfire suppression efforts. Lastly, the Guard hosted the Lt. Governor’s Task Force MIND meeting that works on initiatives affecting military in the state.
  + **NDNG:** Shyla Weston reported for LtCol Flemmer that the Nathan Griffin project for suicide prevention is going well. Griffin will address the entire Air Guard in September about his suicide attempt experience. He will also address the Commander and First Sergeant Course. BG Huber also mentioned that a member of the Air or Army Guard will participate in Recovery Reinvented in October.
  + **Chairman:** Connie reported that the deadline for recommending her replacement at the Civilian Aide to the Secretary of the Army was in August, but she believes that matters may delay the selection of the next person to serve.

**Old Business:**

* Michelle reported that the ND Cares Communities and Businesses numbers are the same as last month.
* ND Cares received a $2000 donation for completing a needs assessment for the Bob Woodruff Foundation that will inform its programmatic focus for the upcoming year.
* Michelle also gave an update on the state of TRICARE problem and the work done thus far to improve the situation. A working group will meet with TRICARE to confirm what we’ve heard from provider that there is a cap on the number of mental health providers and an addiction counselor credentialing problem as well as a physician requirement for SUD programs in the state. From what is learned during the meeting the working group can work toward resolution of any problems we can confirm. The other step is to meet with Dr. Rosalie Etherington, Superintendent of the ND Human Service Centers about the lack of services for the members of the National Guard and how to resolve it.
* For the strategic plan update Michelle stated that Steve Anderson, the American Legion Department Commander for North Dakota is scheduled to record television and radio spots telling is story of suicide and struggling with PTSD. The spots will air in September for Suicide Prevention Month. Steve is also interested in peer support and learning more about FirstLink.

**5. Upcoming Events**

1. **ND Brain Injury Network Concussion Symposium:** Sept. 17th
2. **911 Memorial (20 yrs.):** Sept. 11, 10am, GWOT Memorial, Fraine Barracks
3. **Behavioral Health Peer Support In-Person Training:** Sept. 13-17, Fargo
4. **ACOVA Meeting –** Sept. 23-24, Bismarck
5. **Veterans Stand Down:** Oct. 21, Minot
6. **ND Behavioral Health & Children and Family Services Conference:** Oct. 26-28
7. **NEXT MEETING DATES**

* The next ND Cares Coalition meeting is set for, Sept. 16, 2021. The meeting will be hybrid virtual and in-person at the RJB Armory and the next Executive Committee meeting is October. 6, 2021.