 **ND Cares Executive Committee Meeting**

**February 4, 2021**

**Attendees:** Connie Sprynczynatyk (virtual), Cindy Whitesell (virtual), Joyal Meyer (virtual), Brian Watters (virtual) LTC Shawn Flemmer (virtual), BG Jackie Huber (virtual), Pam Sagness (virtual), Dr. Weintraub (Virtual), Davina French (virtual), Michelle Panos.

**Absent:** Lonnie Wangen, David Becker

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

**2. Minutes.** Minutes from the January 7, 2020 meeting where accepted as written.

**3. Old Business**

* Michelle stated that there was no change to the number of ND Cares Businesses (19) and Communities (48). She reported she reconnected with Andy Heitkamp at Minot State University and discussed their plans to host periodic resource events that connect military/veterans students with local services. He asked to create QR codes of for the Military Outreach flyers so students can easily glean information with their phones instead of acquiring paper brochures. During the meeting, Andy made two suggestions. First, the next iteration of the Military Data Book should include information about Military Sexual Trauma. Second, he stated that some mental health provides don’t know how to bill for peer mentor services. Michelle also reported she has an appointment with Washburn in two weeks to reconnect. She will also contact Minot to discuss a replacement for Andy Heitkamp on the Minot ND Cares committee.

**4. New Business**

* As part of her report on the Strengthening Peer Support portion of the ND Cares strategic plan, Michelle discussed her meeting with Survivor Outreach. Sara Blazek will survey the survivors during their next event to determine if additional peer support training is needed or to identify some other unmet need. Sara would also like information on providers that offer tele-mental health. Davina French offered to connect with Survivor Outreach about has resources that could assist. Davina will also help us learn more about the TAPS peer mentor curriculum. Advertising any civilian survivor programs is also helpful. Lastly, Michelle reported that she contacted Kristy Johnson of Behavioral Health Division about downloading information about the peer mentor certificate program and the 24/7 program and distributing it through Military Outreach. When Pam Sagness joined the meeting, Michelle mentioned Andy Heitkamp’s concerns about peer mentorship. Pam reported that peer support is reimbursed through the SUD voucher program, the Community Based Behavioral Health program, and beginning February 16, services through 1915i will reimburse individual and family peer support. BCBS will also roll out coding for peer support. Behavioral Health is currently recruiting providers.
* Michelle reported that the Data book is available and discussed the distribution.
* Legislative bill tracking is being provided by Pam Mack of Protection and Advocacy and Lonnie Wangen of the Veterans Administration.
* Executive Committee Updates:
  + Cindy discussed the Culture and Community program from the Air Force. One aspect is to match families with Airmen with similar interests to build a sense of community. Suicide prevention is another aspect. Interesting stats of note include, although airman were prohibited from going to bars during the pandemic the DUI rate among Airmen did not go down and reports of domestic abuse rose. She also spoke of monthly dinners and the formation of 20 new interest clubs to help Airman adjust to life during the pandemic. Connie suggested learning more about the Culture and Community program during the next coalition meeting.
  + Brian Watters from the NDVA reported that Lonnie would be tracking legislation and providing periodic updates. Michelle also talked about the veteran vaccination clinic in Minot and the upcoming clinic at RJB. She thanked Lonnie Wangen for forwarding the VA’s request for assistance.
  + Dr. Weintraub reported on the vaccination effort overall. Many veterans are actively seeking vaccinations. Over 600 shots were administered in Minot between vets and staff. They expect more in Bismarck. Looking at the Armory in Grafton, Jamestown and Devils Lake will be next. COL Flemmer mentioned that the SMFS will have services available for veterans at the Bismarck event. BD General Huber offered the VA further National Guard assistance as required.
  + Joyal Meyer reported that suicide rate for children ages 10-19 in ND. In 2020 suicide attempts increased 11%. Kody Pinks could provide more information at a coalition meeting. She also talked about the upcoming ND Suicide Prevention Coalition conference. Behavioral Health Division in funding the conference.
  + Pam Sagness discusses a few legislative themes. First, the legislature does not appear to make cuts to behavioral health efforts initiated last session – some are just being implemented now, such as crisis services. Next, the 1915i state plan received federal approval. Recruiting providers is a focus. The Department’s website offers more information. Weekly technical assistance is offered to providers to learn to bill Medicaid. Next, the Community Connect program is the extended Free Through Recovery program, which expands care coordination for patients in the criminal justice system to those outside the system helping with addiction or mental illness. Lastly, concerning Medicaid expansion, there is debate about reimbursing providers at less than commercial rates – which is the primary cost savings to the department’s budget. Pam also briefly presented the ND behavioral health data book.
  + BG Huber reported on the Because We Care Campaign highlighting services provided by the National Guard on an array of issues. Video clips from programs provided information. The Kognito interactive online peer to peer program, recently implemented, and now approved by NGB, helps service members create the skills to have tough conversations about psychological trauma and getting help. A successful test with Recruiting and Retention led to a full pilot program with the Army Guard beginning in the fall. BG Huber also mentioned a DOD program called Real Warriors that also encourages help seeking behaviors.
  + COL Flemmer reported about efforts to reduce stigma by increasing the amount of testimonials featuring service members who struggled with suicide. Soldiers deploying to DC were given contacts for resources ahead of time. He also talked about reestablishing the 211 contract.
* **Upcoming Events**
* VA Vaccination Event –RJB Armory in Bismarck - Feb 11, and Mar 11, 2021
* VA Vaccination Event – Minot Armed Forces Reserve Center - Mar 3, 2021
* ND Suicide Prevention Coalition Conference - Facebook Live - February 24, 2021 8:30- 3:00
* **Next Meeting Dates**
* The next ND Cares Coalition Meeting, March 3, 2021, will feature legislative updates of interest to the Coalition. The next ND Cares Executive Committee meeting is set for April 1, 2021.