 **ND Cares Executive Committee Meeting Minutes**  
 **February 1, 2024**  
  
 Attendees: Cindy Whitesell, Dr. Weintraub, LTC Ann  
 Willoughby, Michelle Panos, Pam Sagness, Lonnie  
 Wangen, Joyal Meyer (All virtual)  
  
 Absent: BG Jackie Huber, David Becker, Bryan Watters,  
 Shelly Sizer

**1. Opening.**  Co-Chairman Cindy Whitesell briefly opened the meeting, and the minutes of the January 4th meeting was approved.

**2.** **Presentation:** Paul Weckman, Sanford Health Veteran Services provided an overview of Sanford’s commitment to veterans and some initiatives. First, at registration they ask the question “have you every served” and then they determine who is paying for these services, private, Medicare, Tricare or the VA. Stanford has also encouraged clinicians to utilize the PsychArmor platform for military culture training. Those that have completed the training a special designation will be added to their bios. Sanford staff that are veterans have a special designation on their badges/lanyards. They also utilize QR codes that go to contact information for the local CVSOs. Lastly, he talked about Sandford’s Veteran Ambassador program where veteran volunteers visit all the veterans in the hospital face to face, listen to them, answer questions, and provide support.

**3. New Business**

* **Executive Committee Updates**
  + **ND National Guard:** LTC Willoughby reported that there is a Yellow Ribbon Event at BSC on Saturday for the 1st of the 112th Aviation Battalion that returned from the southwest border. The 817th Engineer Company are still on the Southwest border. A Welcome Home Event Feb 4 at the Aviation Support Facility. The next Aviation Unit to come home was in the CENTCOM area and Bravo Battery is still in the region as well. They are still looking for a Child and Youth Program Coordinator, but the Fish Camp is slated for June 9-14. She also reported the death of a service member who died by self-inflicted harm.
  + **NDHHS**-**Health:** Joyal Meyer is working with state epidemiologist Kodi Pinks to see is the state can share any information about the recent death in Minot.
  + **Regional VA, Fargo**: Dr. Weintraub reported that for the last several months there has been effort to get veterans earlier appointments in primary care, specialty medicine and mental health. They are still struggling to increase their mental health workforce, but they are making progress. Over 70% of veterans have been screened under the PACT Act and the have seen low levels of veterans utilizing care under the COMPACT. The purchase of the parcel of land they hoped to build the Fisher House on fell through, so the process will start over again. The emergency department received the Guardians of Excellence Award for positive experiences in the the 95th percentile and they have been designated as an age-friendly healthcare system Level 2. Their recent CARF survey of their homeless program led to three-year accreditation with 0 adverse findings
  + **Co-Chair:** Cindy Whitesell reported on her attendance, along with Shelly Sizer, at the State of the State event where the Governor announced the proclamation for the Military and Veteran Suicide Prevention and Awareness Year. ND Cares and the work of the Governors Challenge was mentioned in the proclamation.She found all the information during the governor’s speech informative.

**4. Old Business:** Michelle reported that the number of ND Cares Communities and Business has stayed the same but that may change after the North Dakota League of Cities Spring Conference in March. Also in March is the Governors Challenge Veterans Suicide Mortality Review Academy in Phoenix, AZ. Heather Brandt from NDHHS is still working on gathering names of veterans interested in Peer Support Training. So far, 333 people have taken CALM training and 48 people attended S.A.V.E. training. There will be two more opportunities to attend S.A.V.E. The Hidden Wounds Bridge is now official set me Thursday, May 16th at 2:00 p.m. at the Buffalo Mall in Jamestown. Along with sign with the new name, the DOT will also place 988 signs. Regarding Tricare, TAG had a chance to talk with the assistant secretary for the Defense Health Agency, Dr. Martinez Lopez about our issues. He promised to look into our concerns and respond. We later received a letter explaining why they couldn’t change anything without legislation. We are working on a response. It is also worth noting that there is a recent article, in our daily press clips, about how the DOD will try to encourage Tricare recipients back to DoD facilities instead of using private providers.

**5. UPCOMING EVENTS**

Michelle highlighted some of the events listed below:

1. **STAR Behavioral Health Providers:** [**January Training**](https://starproviders.org/providers-tier-training/#search)
2. **VA Virtual S.A.V.E. Training:** Feb 20, Mar 19th 9AM-10:30AM, email Tammy to register [**tammy.monsebroten@va.gov**](mailto:tammy.monsebroten@va.gov).
3. **VFW State Mid-Winter Conference:** Feb 16-18, VFW Post 7564, West Fargo
4. **ACOVA:** Feb 8-9, Expressway Suites, Fargo
5. **FirstLink:** [**Feb-Mar Trainings**](https://myfirstlink.org/trainings/)
6. **Western ND Honor Flight:** April (TBD)
7. **VA Fargo** [**Creative Arts Competition**](https://www.va.gov/fargo-health-care/programs/veteran-creative-arts-competition/?fbclid=IwAR3P-BPC4FZyG1LDIHzWzYncH-GM0mtw_Ji8i336Per1qvee7DKzETi_aDo) **Classification Handbook due Mar.**
8. **ND League of Cities Spring Workshop:** Mar 19-20, Clarion Hotel, Minot
9. **Governors Challenge Mortality Review Academy:** Mar 19-21, Pheonix AZ
10. **ND Brain Injury Network**: [**2024 Mind Matters Conference**](https://www.ndbin.org/events/mind-matters), Mar 21-21, Fargo.
11. **Vietnam Veterans Welcome Home Celebration**: Mar. 29, Armed Forces Reserve Center, Minot.

1. **NEXT MEETING DATES**

The next Coalition meeting date is March 7,2024, and the next Executive Committee meeting date is April 4, 2024.