



May 22, 2014

NC National Guard Headquarters

Present: William Abb, Wesley Alston, Larry Ashton, Rudy Baker, Archie Barrow, Nick Black, Ronald Bogle, Johnny Borunda, Jason Boyd, Brenda Brubaker, Cleveland Bryant, Jr., Brandon Buscher, Joshua Cain, Diane Coffill, Charles Cosgrove, Eric Crawford, Ph.D., Gerry Cruz, Holly Danford, Hank Debnam, Paul Dillon, Scott Dorney, Wendy Dyer, Beverly Elliott, Li Fang, Ph.D., Karen Goetz, James Gorham, Sylvia Hammons, Angela Harper, Patricia Harris, Andrew Haswell, Robert Hegitt, Jack Holtzman, Ernest Hoopii, Robert Immormino, Andrew Jackson, Dianne Jinwright, Victoria Johanningsmeier, Susan Johnson, Faith Junghahn, Terri Kane, Mark Kelly, Colleen Kenney, Stan Kimer, Harold Kudler, MD, Wilson Lester, Kimberly Lindsay, Aaron Mabe, Dick Mann, Leslie Maynard, Anne McCall, Enrique McClymont, Mike McNeely, Henry Moore, Patty Muehlberger, Meghan Norton, Sheryl Pacelli, Ilario Pantano, Alan Perkwal, MAJ Frank Poovey, Roy Pressley, Joe Rapley, Cheryl Rawls, Eric Redrick, Michael Reich, Bob Remino, Jeremy Roberts, Joanie Rodriguez, Rev. Scotty Rogers, Chuck Sanchez, Mike Schindler, Mark Schuler, Steve Sedahl, Alan Shaw, Rob Sherwood, Paul Siverson, Jeff Smith, Peter Smith, Tony Sowards, William Squires, Flo Stein, Annette Stevenson, Mark Taylor-El, Mark Teachey, Vincent Tesoro, Rebecca Torres, GEN Kevin Turner, Brian Volk, James Wall, Cecelia Wallace, SFC Austin Walther, Lynn Widener, Matthew Wilcut, Herman Williams, Jim Williams, Brandon Wilson, GEN Cornell Wilson, and Laressa Wit

Mr. Pantano welcomed everyone. The new logo for the Governor's Working Group was unveiled. Attendees introduced themselves by name. GEN Wilson welcomed all and emphasized that the State "takes care of our own". He said that the Governor is grateful to the large number of veterans living in the State, as they attract more businesses to the State. He then thanked everyone for attending.

Dr. Kudler said that veterans and their families are an essential part of our community. Everyone needs to decide what our stake is in terms of their reintegration into the community.

MAJ Poovey said that the Education and Employment Center has been operating since July 1, 2013 and is located in all five regions of the State. It was started to assist those seeking help when they returned home. Clients include current Guard members, dependents, and any veterans and military retirees residing in the State; they don't turn anyone away. SFC Walther works with the Center. The Center would like to network with anyone who wants to help Veterans and build partnerships. They encourage HR (human resources) folks to help develop resumes and offer interviewing techniques and tips (e.g., what to wear). They sponsor monthly

events, such as a resume building workshop, and quarterly events, where the second day is a job fair (the next one will be in Charlotte in August). In addition, they conduct hiring events.

Mr. Tesoro lives down east and expressed the frustration that they receive few services. SFC Walther said that they have a representative who works in his area. Mr. Pantano also suggested that Mr. Tesoro contact Mr. Barrow. Mr. Cosgrove also lives in a rural community and offered his services as a volunteer.

MAJ Poovey said that they use company commanders to identify employers in their localities. Since July 1, 423 have been hired through their Center.

Mr. Alston works for the NC Division of Workforce Solutions (DWS), Department of Commerce. He provided an update on the Unemployment Compensation for Ex-Service Members (UCX) Initiative, which was started due to the large amount of money spent in unemployment compensation (\$944M in 2012). Funded by the US Department of Labor in 2012, the Army UCX Initiative involves four states—Georgia, Illinois, North Carolina and Texas—to develop and model new strategies to reduce the unemployment claim duration.

Its primary goal is training. As a part of the UCX Initiative, they have also started a Veteran Computer Resource Center in Fayetteville. They also have a virtual job search and referral system, www.ncworks.gov. During FY 2013, a total of 6,281 Veterans were hired.

Mr. Barrow also works for DWS. They have 117 Workforce offices across the State (see www.nccommerce.com/workforce for a list of locations, addresses and telephone numbers). Services include job matching and referral; re-employment services; training programs; case management; and labor market information. In addition they host 52 DVOPS (Disabled Veteran Outreach Program Specialists) and 44 LVERs (Local Veterans Employment Representatives). They conducted 13 Stand Downs last year and expect to do 17-20 this year. Twenty-three career fairs were held last year.

Prior to her public sector job with the City of Jacksonville, Ms. Lindsay worked in human resources in the corporate sector. She is adapting her skills to conduct employer outreach and education so that they understand that veterans can drive bottom line results. She is initially focusing on human resources; she will then focus on strategic leadership (e.g., CEOs, CFOs, owners, managers) since they are the ones who set the goals and make the commitment. She is working with Mr. Pantano to develop an implementation plan that involves not only employers and Veterans but also the NCDVA, the NC National Guard, ESGR (Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve), and other interested agencies.

Mr. Abb stated that the Citizen Soldier Support Program also worked with employers to ensure that their hires were retained. They developed an EAP online course, which is a free and accredited course offered through AHEConnect. Through their database, he can identify employers online in any county.

Ms. Stevenson is working with small companies in corporate America. Through focus groups, she found that people are reluctant to hire veterans because of bad press related to PTSD and suicide. She and Ms. Lindsey agree to partner with each other.

Mr. Kimer thought that employers want to hear success stories. He suggested that we develop one-page career maps of successful veterans and disseminate them. These “maps” will serve as models and encourage employers to hire Veterans.

Younger veterans are concerned that they don’t have the necessary education and skills. They are also fearful of going to the VA and getting a rating and/or disability that may affect their ability to work in the future. These concerns can get in the way of getting a job.

MAJ Poovey said a fractured relationship may exist between the Guard and some employers. As a result, they educate recruiters and HR managers as well as the Guard. He has found that some employers are reluctant to hire service members because they may be deployed and it is often difficult to keep that job open for the Guard member. He noted that one solution is to work with Kelly temp services for those being deployed.

Mr. Dorney questioned what the role of the Working Group and the State of NC in solving problems facing Veterans. What is the problem? Once that is figured out, then we can design the mission and develop the plan, with sufficient leadership, resources, and stakeholders. Because of the name, we the have opportunity as a state entity to bring a level of attention to the issue, provide coordination, and identify gaps that we can fill. We will be able to bring a focus on this issue that it has never had before.

Mr. Pantano cautioned that the Working Group has no budget, no teeth. What we can do is facilitate the interchange of ideas and identify the parent agency that can provide the various supports (e.g., staff, website). It is a strategic imperative to do whatever we can to serve veterans, and we need to be engaged in a myriad of interventions. Dr. Kudler suggested that we pick one or two systemic issues (e.g., homelessness, employment) and see if we can bring it all together. Ms. Stevenson asked where she should put her resources from SAS? She can bring other resources to the table. What is important is everyone coming together with a single voice.

Perhaps we can develop a blog for issues facing veterans (e.g., employment, education, homelessness, veterans courts, stigma). The homepage of the website, www.ncveteransworkinggroup.org, has a calendar for posting events and training opportunities.

What is the difference between the Military Affairs Commission and the Veterans Advisory Council?

Ms. Flo said that people need to know how to navigate all the help that is available. We need to involve those who want to help but need to be certain that agencies are reputable and

providing services to veterans and their families. Another question is how to manage all the programs that are offering similar services.

Some needs aren't being met. There are not programs specific to address the needs of the Navy, Coast Guard, and Air Force and their families.

Dr. Kudler said that the VA is hosting another series of community mental health summits between June 30 and September 15, 2014. Last year 20,000 people participated. He encouraged people to volunteer to attend.

Ms. Stein said that the Division of MHDDSAS is working with the NCNG and the Governor's Institute on Substance Abuse to conduct focus groups of military families. These focus groups will identify what works and what does not.

Mr. Moore said that the DPI Troops to Teachers program is looking for troops who are interested in becoming leaders in the classroom. The program provides financial assistance to help troops complete their teacher certification.

Ms. Dyer is retiring from the Red Cross but will serve as president of Community Blueprint in Fayetteville, which is now community owned and operated. They meet on the third Wednesday of each month at the Partnership for Children. Similar to the Working Group, they address a theme each month. She encouraged folks to email her or look up Community Blueprint on Facebook.

On May 28-29, the US Department of the Navy is hosting an employers conference at North Raleigh Hilton. It is the first time it is being conducted in NC.

Mr. Ilario said that the NCDVA is moving to the NCNG Headquarters. This move will provide greater visibility. They plan to stand up a 24/7 call center.

Mr. Teachey announced that veterans courts are being developed in Cumberland and Durham counties. Currently there is a veterans court in Hartnett county.

The next meeting of the Working Group will be held in the Command Conference Room of the National Guard Headquarters in Raleigh on June 26. Due to security, participants must register by June 23 in order to attend the meeting in person. Attendance will be limited to 40 registrants due to the size of the room