

Commission on PTSD & TBI Meeting Notes
Walker Building, Room 274
Thursday December 19, 2019
Recorder: Tony Paradiso

Member attendance:

Peggy LaBrecque	NH Veterans Home
Maj Gen Gretchen Dunkelberger	SVAC
Rep. Richard Osborne	NH House of Representatives
Michael Rice	SVAC
Amy Cook	DMAVS
Jerry Donovan	Robin Hill Farm
Dr. Nicole Sawyer	NH Psychological Association
Denise Roy-Innarelli	NHES
Seth Gahr	NH State Police
Tony Paradiso	Veterans Advocate
Erin Hall	Brain Injury Association
Rep. Latha Mangipudi	NH House of Representatives
Alicia Semiatin	Manchester VA
Chuck Saia	Governor's Commission on Disabilities

Excused

Eric Johnson	NH Behavioral Health Association
Ana McKenna	Care Coordination Program NH
Ken Norton	National Alliance on Mental Illness, NH
Craig Sanderson	NH National Guard
Catrina Watson	NH Medical Society

I. Welcome & Introductions

Pledge of Allegiance

New Member Introduction:

None

New Guest Introductions:

None

II. Approval of Minutes

The minutes for the November 21, 2019 meeting were approved as written.

III. Commission Updates (Updates pertinent to COPT mission)

General Membership

Denise Roy-Innarelli (NHES): The job fairs for 2019 have been completed. NHES will start the fairs back up in the spring of 2020. Denise provided a handout with the latest national veteran employment statistics. The following are some highlights:

- Veteran unemployment dropped to 3.5% in 2018 - its lowest rate since the BLS started collecting the data in 2000.
- In November of 2019 the unemployment rate was up slightly from 3.2% in the previous to 3.3%.
- The unemployment rate for women veterans fell to 3.0% in 2018
- Veteran homelessness decreased to 5.4% since last year.

Jerry Donovan - Robin Hill Farms: Jerry noted that Brain Injury Awareness Day in Washington will be held on March 4, 2020.

Maj Gen Gretchen Dunkelberger – SVAC: Due to weather, SVAC did not meet in December and consequently there is nothing new to report. Michael Rice noted that the next SVAC meeting is scheduled for January 7, 2020.

Rep. Osborne - NH House of Representatives: Rep. Osborne indicated that he took a PTSD screening to familiarize himself with the tool, He sent an email to the Administration for the New Hampshire Medical Society to inquire whether they had any plans to do anything with respect to veterans health. He has not heard back as yet.

Rep. Mangipudi - NH House of Representatives: Rep. Mangipudi is a member of numerous mental health groups. She mentioned that they had two workshops for legislators to help them better understand the issues. January 23, 2020 is the next schedule workshop. Rep. Mangipudi indicated that she is very involved with public education on mental illness and suicide prevention and sits on the Veteran's Affairs Committee.

Alicia Semiatin – Manchester VA: The Manchester VA will be hosting its second symposium on TBI. The event provides CEUs and will be held on March 30th 2020.

Seth Gahr – NH State Police: The state police conducted peer support training last week in which various outside resources contributed. Seth noted that dispatchers, and 911 operators have been incorporated into the training.

They are attempting to assist a number of veterans and connect them with the Manchester VA. Seth noted some of the challenges these veterans face include: unclear diagnosis, problems with medication, maintaining a normal routine, and sleep and eating irregularly. The issue isn't availability at the VA but getting the veterans to agree to seek assistance from the VA.

Dr. Nicole Sawyer – NH Psychological Association: Nicole attended the Star Behavioral Health training in Boston. She described the training as interesting and a good quality program. She indicated that state snapshots were handed out during the training and that there were several attendees from Riverbend. Five service members who shared their experiences were also in attendance. The training is very basic (i.e. you have never met a veteran before). Nicole noted that the training presented a number of things that we have presented over the years and it was good to know that there is consistency. The second part of the training is upcoming. The first two parts are free.

Amy Cook indicated that the Star Behavioral Health program is regional and not New Hampshire specific so there is a need to continue the training we have been doing. The objective is to make it more accessible and tailored to NH

Nicole noted that the PTSD bill for first responders has passed but that it hasn't been determined how the bill will manage pre-existing conditions versus service-connected illnesses. Many veterans seek first responder positions so this is a significant issue in need of resolution. Nicole believe that once a person has passed all the screenings and has been hired, that any previous PTSD should not be a factor.

Jerry Donovan mentioned the second injury fund. This is designed to address previous injuries that are unknown at the time of hire but are aggravated by their work duties. This program is part of the NH Department of Labor. He indicated that this may apply to those who suffer from PTSD.

Peggy LaBrecque - NH Veterans Home Peggy: The Veterans Home was very busy preparing for Christmas. Peggy encouraged people to like them on FaceBook. The current census is about 175 and that they are still looking to fill LNA and other positions. They are working with Travelers to try and fill shifts for 12 weeks but even Travelers is having trouble staffing.

NH DMAVS (Amy Cook)

Amy noted that a young marine had just died leaving a wife and two children behind. She was seeking veterans who might be willing to attend his funeral.

HHS will be issuing an RFA for new Servicelink contracts. A goal has been to establish a single number as a hub for all veteran services. She has been working with HHS to expand the scope of services in the RFA. The plan is for them to include military culture training and be advertised as “the hub”. The dilemma is attempting to do this without funding so the timing was ideal to team with HHS. The RFA should be going out around Feb 1st. New contracts will take effect on July 1st

There is a three-year pilot program with \$100k in funding in Cochas County. Amy noted that the board in the North Country will determine how the funds will be used.

There is a letter campaign planned. The Military Leadership team met and reviewed how Vermont implemented this type of program/communications. This is an awareness campaign that Amy hopes to implement in NH within the next few weeks.

On Jan. 9th the Department is co-hosting a panel forum on innovative transportation solutions. National experts will be attending to discuss transportation issue particularly in rural areas.

The CMHC liaisons continue to meet. They continue to seek funding for this program but as yet a definitive source has not been identified.

Recently the Adjutant General asked that we recognize veteran friendly businesses such as BAE and the Dead River Company. It was noted that everyone is working together to recognize veteran friendly businesses and that the Governor is very supportive.

IV. Action Items (Items that require decision /action by COPT)

None

V. Old Business

None

VI. New Business

Peggy indicated that she would be happy to send out the VBA to anyone who would like it

The Blue Water Navy program was discussed. If a veteran was within 12 miles nautical miles off shore of Viet Nam they can qualify for benefits.

The Commission discussed conducting roundtables and the possibility of creating subcommittees to address specific issues.

Amy Cook suggested a second round of the ATQ campaigns but noted that the issue is funding. We have the human resources but not the funds. She suggested that members spread the word among the other committees and agencies that they interact with.

Dr. Sawyer mentioned that in 2015 and 2016 she and Nick Tolentino went to numerous hospitals. However, they didn't arrange the events, just presented, so she didn't have a contact list. It was mentioned that Jo Moncher probably has the contacts. Given that we haven't presented to these facilities for a couple of years, it may be time for a second round.

Amy suggested creating a COPT speakers bureau. This could significantly increase outreach.

There may also be an opportunity to make ATQ state law. Connecticut has introduced it into law. The CT law requires hospitals to ask if someone being admitted is a veteran.

We should also work to get military culture training included in college degree programs. The question was raised whether military culture could be part of culture competency requirements. Massachusetts has some examples of this. Rivier has asked Dr. Sawyer to come and speak at their conference in March so it's on their radar. It is believed we may see these types of program at the graduate level but not so much at the undergraduate level.

Existing training tools were discussed. It was indicated that the Dare Mighty Things presentations that were given would be useful. These we believe are owned by the State so we should be able to get copies. We will inquire with HHS.

Peggy mentioned it might also be beneficial to make a presentation to the State Veterans Committee. Peggy presented to the Oversight Committee last month. She went on to note that the NHES does a great job of helping veterans get jobs but there remains a question regarding underemployment among veterans. She questioned whether this was an area that the Commission could address.

It was indicated that for the next meeting Commission members should review those agencies that they have talked to in the interim.

VII. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 4:21 pm

Next Commission Meeting is Thursday, January 16, 2020 from 2:30 – 4:30 pm at the Walker Building, Room 274, 21 South Fruit Street, Concord