

**Commission on PTSD & TBI Meeting Notes**  
**Walker Building, Room 100**  
**Thursday January 17, 2019**  
Recorder: Tony Paradiso

**Member attendance:**

Dr. Nicole Sawyer	NH Psychological Association
COL Richard Oberman	NH National Guard
Michael Rice	SVAC
Erin Hall	Brain Injury Association of NH
Kevin Myers for Denise Roy-Innarelli	NHES
Jerry Donavan	Robin Hill Farms
Seth Garth	NH State Police
Dr. Richard Wren	White River Junction VA
Peggy LaBrecque	NH Veterans Home
Suellen Griffin	NHCBHA
Amy Cook	DHHS a Bureau of Community Based Military Programs
Tony Paradiso	Veterans Advocate
Cherry Gavin	Easter Seals Military Veterans Services
Catrina Watson	NH Medical Society

**Guest attendance:**

David Appleby	NH State Police
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**I. Welcome & Introductions**  
Pledge of Allegiance

Col. Richard Oberman

Incoming Chair Peggy LaBrecque Opening Comments

The new Chairperson indicated she is honored to be in the position and will strive to ensure that our veterans are treated with the dignity that they deserve. As part of her new position she has reviewed the RSAs and the Commission's bylaws. Potential changes to the bylaws will be discussed under new business.

New Member Introduction:

Cherry Gavin representing Easter Seals  
Kevin Myers is attended for Denise Roy-Innarelli representing NHES

New Guest Introductions:

**II. Approval of Minutes**

The minutes for the December 20, 2018 meeting were approved as written.

### **III. Commission Updates (Updates pertinent to COPT mission)**

#### **General Membership**

Dr. Sawyer update the Commission on the progress with the ATQ toolkit. She met with Amy Cook at DHHS, reviewed the bullet points and clarified a number of items. Edits will be provided to Amy in the next week or so. Dr. Sawyer indicated that the plan is to post the toolkit online but noted that doing so will take some additional time. The goal is to get hard copies out ASAP to those that have already submitted requests.

Kevin Myers indicated that the unemployment rate in New Hampshire is at 2.5% while the national average among veterans is 3.2%. The national average is down from 3.7% in December. NHES continues to conduct job fairs throughout the state.

Suellen Griffin noted that she was pleased that despite losing its funding, the military liaison program at the CMHCs was still going on and that the liaisons continue to meet regularly.

Dr. Wren said that the Littleton Community Based Outpatient clinic remain a focus. They have been able to fill an important clinical position at that location which had been vacant for some time.

Michael Rice shared that SVAC as an organization has yet to fully review and comment on the proposed legislative bills. Language is still being crafted. They hope that during the February meeting they will be able to complete a full review and establish a position. It is expected that Mike will become the permanent representative on the Commission but this still needs to be finalized.

Erin Hall noted that their final data indicated that the Brain Injury Association has directly worked with 47 veterans. That number is up from the previous year. She went on to inform the Commission that all the proceeds from the vertical ski challenge and other winter events will go to helping veterans. Bretton Woods will have downhill skiing and snowshoeing, and adaptive equipment will be available. They are looking for help with outreach. Peggy said she will send out e-mail notice of the event.

Catrina Watson said that with the legislative season beginning they are trying to narrow the number of bills down to about 150. As they begin to organize their conference, they are looking for material aimed toward providers. Attendees will include family physicians. The conference will be held at the Mountainview Grand in Whiteville NH.

The question was asked if the Commission should consider having an ATQ table. Catrina mentioned that she may be able to provide one for free or at a reduced rate.

Amy Cook of DHHS mentioned the Governor's challenge to prevent suicide. Fifteen team members participated in a data collection exercise. Along with six other states, they are sending a team to Washington. She indicated that in addition to conducting some events, they may use a webinar format to launch the ATQ toolkit. She shared their schedule of regional information sessions. They will be discussing the status of the

executive order and soliciting feedback from regions and communities as to what they would like to see.

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

None

**V. Old Business**

2017 Veterans Survey

The first draft of the summary document has been completed. It includes highlights and assessments of the findings. It is estimated that the summary will be completed within a few weeks.

It was noted that there were differences in collection process between the 2012 and 2017 surveys. In 2012 it was heavily paper-based with a good deal of representation at veteran conferences. In the latest survey there was more of an emphasis toward online. Between the two surveys the representation of the various conflicts differed. The demographics also somewhat changed but the findings were consistent. There is a direct correlation to the Commission's activities and improvements in the specific areas of focus. In brief, we have moved the needle but there remains more work to be done. A potential focus moving forward is an emphasis on peer-to-peer.

**VI. New Business**

Possible change to the bylaws

The Chair noted there was an issue regarding financing and the Commission's ability to accept and distribute funds. It was indicated that in the law the Commission does not have the authority to have finances, to accept donations, or to donate money. We may need to remove that language in the bylaws (Section 2.2). If the Commission has a desire to have financial authority it would require a new LSR. The Chair recommended a potential change to the language in the bylaws. If the Commission chose to alter the language, it is felt that the legislature would be receptive. The Chair will circulate the bylaws for review along with sample language if we choose to make a change. It was suggested that if we had to do something related to financing it could be accomplished through another agency. Our current language says develop, organize and oversee.

An open discussion occurred regarding the pros and cons of having the ability to handle funds and accessing grant dollars. It was mentioned that grant money could potentially be directed to related agencies. The Commission could write letters of support etc. The strategy would be to leverage the data we have collected to support grant requests. There was a discussion on applying for grants and how that process might work with respect to DHHS and the Commission. DHHS can't apply for a grant. However, the Commission could and DHHS could potentially administer the funds.

It was noted that legislative representatives are appreciative that as a Commission we are not asking for money and that we are focused on data to drive our direction.

Mike Rice suggested that if we are going to move forward and be effective, monies are needed to fund programs.

The CMHCs are seeking \$160,000 for the liaison program. Peggy and Nicole mentioned that they continue to advocate to the Governor for the CMHCs to receive the dollars that are needed to continue the effort – particularly the military culture training.

A motion was made by Col Oberman and seconded by Catrina Watson to review the language in the bylaws. The motion carried unanimously.

It is expected that the Commission will conduct a vote at the next meeting on whether or not to change the language and go forward with an LSR.

The discussion then turned to TBI. It was observed that we tend to talk mostly about PTSD and not as much on TBI but the March meeting will focus on TBI with an external speaker presenting. Col. Oberman thought it would be good to have refresher education for new members and also discuss what we are seeing with respect to TBI among veterans. There is a need to discuss the differences between TBI and PTSD. A goal is to determine if we can identify deficits or needs among the veteran population. The question was asked if there are additional people we might recommend to attend the March meeting and whether there is anything that the Commission needed to focus on prior to that meeting.

Col. Oberman recommended that we skip the updates for that meeting, focus on the education piece and have an open dialogue. Further discussion is planned for the February meeting.

## **VII. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 3:37 pm.

**Next Commission Meeting is Thursday, February 21, 2019 from 2:30 – 4:30 pm at the Walker Building, Room 227, 21 South Fruit Street, Concord**

**Note:** The Commission met on Room 227 versus the normal meeting place – Room 100 because that room was occupied due to a scheduling oversight.