

New Hampshire Military Leadership Team

*A Meeting to Build Partnerships & Improve Services for
New Hampshire Veterans, Service Members and their Families*

26 June 2020

9:00am – 11:00am

Webex Virtual Platform

New Hampshire Military Leadership Team Attendance

X	Major General David Mikolaities
X	Jim Adams, NH State Office of Veterans Services (Chair, Veterans Council)
A	Steve Ahnen, President, NH Hospital Association
A	Matt Albuquerque, Next Step Bionics and Prosthetics
X	Pete Burdett, Civilian Aide to the Secretary of the Army
X	Amy Cook, Administrator, Community Based Military Programs, NH DHHS
A	William Gaudreau, Director, NH Office of Veteran Services
X	Dave Kenney, Former Chair, State Veterans Advisory Committee
X	Paul Lloyd, Chair, State Veterans Advisory Committee
A	Margaret LaBrecque, Commandant, NH Veterans Home
A	Bradley Mayes, Director, VA Regional Benefits Offices in MA, NH & VT
A	Kevin Forrest, Acting Director, Manchester VA Medical Center
X	Ginger Munson, Family Representative
X	Jeffrey Newman, Administrator, Division of Higher Education, NH Department of Education
X	Warren Perry, Deputy Adjutant General, NH National Guard
A	Dr. Brett Rusch, Director, WRJ VA Medical Center
X	Roger Sevigny, NH Veterans Council
X	Pam Szacik, Employment Service Bureau Director, NH Employment Security
GUESTS IN ATTENDANCE:	
X	Corey Beem, Manchester VAMC
X	Carol Hitchcock, White River Junction VAMC
X	Ena Lima, Assistant Director, VA Regional Benefit Offices

Meeting Minutes

I. Welcome

Introductions were completed and the agenda was reviewed. Paul Lloyd was introduced to the Team as the newly elected SVAC Chair who will replace Dave Kenney. Paul, Dave & SVAC members will determine who should participate in the MLT meetings to represent SVAC. General Mikolaities started the meeting with opening remarks. He provided some details about how the NH National Guard has been operating during this time, thanked MLT members for the extra work they have been doing and encouraged them to continue.

II. Review of February Minutes—Warren Perry moved to accept the minutes as written. Ginger Munson 2nd, all members approved.

III. Old Business

Veteran-Friendly Business Recognition Program Update—Amy Cook
Program was recently launched and announced. Press release was provided to major media outlets on 6/5. Warren spoke about program on Jack Heath show on 6/9. Email announcements are currently being sent to trade associations and professional networks in NH as well as places that can publish and promote like NH Business Magazine. Personal invitations to apply will also be sent to

select businesses—if you know of a business that is Veteran-Friendly and you'd like for them to apply, please encourage them to do so or provide the business name & contact information to Amy. Deadline for applications is 8/30. There are many possibilities for building on this foundation in the future and the hope is that the first cohort of recognizes businesses will help to do that.

Suicide Prevention letter to Veterans

Warren informed Team that the letter is still with the Governor's Office awaiting a date for the TAG and the VAMC Directors to co-sign. Now that the public health crisis is under better control, we will pursue completion of this action. Carol asked if we can review letter again before it's signed to ensure that the resources identified are still available.

Warren will send out the letter, revisions should be made and returned to him, then he will contact the Governor's Office to provide updated letter and ask for a date for signing. All agreed that the delayed timing of the letter may have been advantageous—at this point in time, due to the public health crisis, many individuals may be looking for such resources.

Virtual Living Room

The Office of Rural Health has funds available to help rural communities set up virtual sites for Veterans to utilize telehealth/TeleConnect services. Team expressed interest in exploring this prior to the public health crisis, but it was then put on hold. Telehealth services are now actually more widely available and will, hopefully, continue to expand in the future. Corey added that the VAMC has data to show the success that has been experienced during the pandemic. The North Country experiences significant internet connectivity challenges, so this may be a good opportunity to help with that. The VFW is interested in possibly hosting sites for telemedicine suites. Warren will re-connect with Paul Lloyd and Carol Hitchcock to move this forward. Carol shared that it's a somewhat easy goal to accomplish especially because there are funds available; however, the biggest challenge can be getting local internet companies to collaborate.

Local internet company + host site + Office of Rural Health

IV. New Business

Discussion: How can MLT support military spouses/families?

Amy & Ginger met to identify needs and brainstorm possible methods MLT could implement to support spouses/families. Attached document was used to facilitate conversation and spark new ideas among members.

Theme of interest that emerged—technology. Families are using technology more now to keep connected during times of separation and also to find resources and support when a family member is deployed. Further exploration will be conducted to determine how MLT can possibly make a positive difference in this area.

All members agreed Emotional & Physical Support should be prioritized.

Other comments & thoughts:

- Ask the Question should be woven into any strategy utilized
- Access to, and use of, telehealth should continue to be important in order to maximize reaching out to Veterans. MLT members can influence internet providers
- MLT members could advocate Congress for funds for technology—expand or connect the Virtual Living Room initiative?
- Mental health—always important; connects to emotional & physical support for family
- NHES can help with employment supports for military spouses and also children ages 14+; this promotes financial stability and emotional well-being for family unit

Next steps: Amy & Ginger will reconvene to talk further, taking into consideration the feedback and new ideas received at today's meeting.

V. Information Briefs

Dept of Military Affairs & Veterans Services Update—Warren Perry provided update

i. Division of Community Based Military Programs

We continue to roll out our Veteran Friendly Business program. To date we have received 3 applications and 20 additional requests for information and applications. We have also received 2 submissions from school children for the logo design. The application period ends on 30 August.

There was enough interest in Belknap County for *Together With Veterans* to move forward with a presentation for interested Veterans and community partners in the county. The *Together With Veteran* staff in Colorado will lead the presentation, which will occur on June 24th. Partners from the Department of Military Affairs & Veterans Services, the VA, and the Winnepesaukee Public Health Council will attend. We are inviting Veterans in Belknap County who are interested in learning more about this suicide prevention program and opportunities to assist with its implementation.

SAMHSA Invitation for Mayor's Challenge—Invitation from SAMHSA inviting Claremont, NH to participate in a *Mayor's Challenge to Prevent Suicide among Service Members, Veterans and their Families* is confirmed to be forthcoming. The VA will also be sending a Proclamation regarding to suicide prevention to the Governor's Office for signing.

ii. Division of Veterans Services

Appointments are way down. Only 90 conducted in May. 12 month average is 316. Working a press release to ensure Veterans know we are conducting claims processing remotely. No scheduled date to re-open the federal building.

iii. NH State Veterans Cemetery

Funeral numbers are back on track. Size restrictions for ceremonies have been lifted. Social distancing and masks are required.

VA Updates (White River Junction & Manchester)

Carol Hitchcock provided an update for White River Junction VAMC. She described how they have been operating during the public health crisis. WRJ-VAMC was selected as a VA-VISN 1 pilot site to develop, test and model effective re-opening policies and procedures. Time-sensitive procedures have started already, so they are working on the back log. Many patients will continue with telehealth services. Two entrances are currently being used—1 for staff, 1 for patients. Staff are utilizing an online screening tool. They are currently working to generate a message to be shared with Veterans regarding how individuals should determine if/when/where to seek care if a health concern arises—no one should arrive at VAMC without an appointment.

Corey Beem provided an update for Manchester VAMC. Kevin Forrest was selected to be permanent Director at VAMC. Will be recruiting for new Associate Director. A new Nursing Executive has also been identified. They are undergoing a slow re-opening process. Will continue virtual Teleconnect services for most patients. Urgent Care & Mental Health building construction due to be completed in January 2021. On track for opening. A cover is being added to Mountain Entrance. They continue to work with community partners on billing. NH Hospital Association has been instrumental in helping to facilitate communication with community providers. Employees at both Manchester & White River Junction VAMCs have been deployed to other sites to help during the COVID-19 crisis.

VBA Update

Ena Lima provided VBA update. All VBA sites had to submit re-opening plans for approval. White River Junction site was approved to open at 25% capacity—will be open to public by appointment only. Manchester & Boston sites remain closed, so will continue to provide claim services virtually. Staff can access physical sites if necessary for administrative purposes.

Member Updates & Announcements

Department of Education, Jeffrey Newman—DOE will be making an announcement soon that will help businesses; despite public health crisis, still processing claims.

Pete Burdett—he received information relevant to students that he will share with interested members

VI. Next Steps

Next meeting dates (Aug, Oct, Dec) TBA;

Plan on another virtual meeting in August, but it will be confirmed.

Carry over items from February meeting to be discussed at a future meeting:

- brief JMTR Purple Star Schools and Military Liaison Initiative replication—delayed due to COVID-19
- Strengthen brand—strategic planning
- Promote military brand in NH—no state museum in NH to promote military; what efforts might we need to do that?

Attached document: Military Leadership Team Family Initiative Ideas

Military Leadership Team

Discussion: Military Spouse & Family Supports

Questions

- Do military & veteran spouses and families in New Hampshire have resource/support needs or gaps in services that can be addressed by MLT?
- What are some ideas that might be worth exploring based on the needs identified and abilities of MLT to influence change?

Identified Needs

Need	Source	Active Military	Veteran	Connected to	Ideas & Opportunities
<p>General Healthcare</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • more healthcare providers need to accept TRICARE for coverage (especially pediatric specialists); • TRICARE reimbursement policies need to be comparable to commercial and other government plans, so more providers will enroll; • out-of-pocket costs associated with obtaining healthcare need to be decreased; • healthcare providers need to be more knowledgeable about resources available in NH to military & Veteran families. 	<p>Anecdotal;</p> <p>National Military Family Association</p>	X	X	<p>Interagency Planning Session for 2018-2020 (Healthcare, Mental Health)</p> <p>NH Interagency Recommendations 2016</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Promote a re-launch and phase 2.0 of the Ask the Question campaign-- Ask, Link, Collaborate (CT actually made it mandatory for certain healthcare providers to ATQ; additional states pursuing legislation as well) ➤ Promote military culture training ➤ Awareness campaign to encourage charitable groups to help with financial burdens through fundraising and financial assistance to families

<p>Mental and Behavioral Health</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • mental and behavioral health providers who are knowledgeable about the military family experience are needed; • provider shortage is a problem in addition to # of TRICARE providers; • out-of-pocket costs associated with obtaining treatment need to be decreased. 	<p>National Military Family Association;</p> <p>Rand Corporation 2014 study—Community-Based Provider Capacity to Deliver Culturally Competent, Quality Mental Health Care to Veterans and their Families</p> <p>Anecdotal</p> <p>2017 survey of NH Veterans—Commission on PTSD & TBI</p>	<p>X</p>	<p>X</p>	<p>Interagency Planning Session for 2018-2020 (Mental Health)</p> <p>NH Interagency Recommendations 2016</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Military culture training—promote, support, create recommended list of trainings (refer to Virginia’s as example) ➤ Promote a re-launch and phase 2.0 of the Ask the Question campaign—knowing who they are serving may validate the need for training ➤ Support expansion & replication of the Military Liaison Initiative—implementation of the CMHC model resulted in a significant increase of TRICARE provider enrollment and increase in provider training (BDAS is in support of this for SUD Providers)
<p>Education for Military Children</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • schools need to have better procedures for identifying and supporting military families (MIC3 does not require schools to ask about National Guard or Reservist families); • educational staff need to be more knowledgeable about the experiences of military children/families and the resources 	<p>NH Military Interstate Children’s Compact Commission reports</p> <p>Anecdotal</p> <p>National Military Family Association</p> <p>Blue Star Families 2018 Military Family Lifestyle Survey</p>	<p>X</p>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Military Culture Training for schools—develop a recommended “curriculum” ➤ Ask the Question in schools <p>Notes: Include Jen Hollidge</p>

available to support them.					
Career Support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> military spouses need opportunities to enhance the financial stability of their families 	National Military Family Association Anecdotal Blue Star Families 2018 Military Family Lifestyle Survey	X	X	Interagency Planning Session for 2018-2020 (Employment) NH Interagency Recommendations 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Encourage large companies in NH to design military spouse-friendly flexible work options ➤ Opportunities to enhance the transfer of licenses? ➤ NHES programs for spouses or just military/veterans?
Emotional & Physical Support (particularly during times of family separation, not only deployments) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> childcare to assist spouse during times of separation is needed—either respite break or so spouse can work; emotional support and connection to local resources is needed—specifically during times of separation; recognition and appreciation for family sacrifices is valued (“I see you”, “I remember you” goes a long way.) support after deployment is done—(ie. after service member returns home) 	Blue Star Families 2018 Military Family Lifestyle Survey Anecdotal	X	X Veterans who continue to work in civilian positions experiencing deployments?	Interagency Planning Session for 2018-2020 (Mental Health; Employment) NH Interagency Recommendations 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Promote awareness in community about the need and services available ➤ Promote awareness of Department of Defense child care fee assistance programs for those eligible ➤ Develop quality, free or reduced-cost childcare options in local communities—partner with state and local partners (eg. after school programs, SitterCity, YMCAs) to encourage development of programs to supplement the DoD fee assistance for deployed/mobilized servicemember families ➤ Engage local churches or other community groups to develop supportive, local network for families experiencing separation (Steven Ministry as example) ➤ Hometown Patriot Award (Ginger) ➤ Opportunities to enhance Blue Star Card program in NH? ➤ Promote collaboration with Servicelink agencies by finding opportunities to invite them to the

					table (servicemembers, veterans, families & veteran caregivers)
<p>Technology</p> <p>*this arose as a theme of discussion during 6-26-20 MLT meeting—many areas that technology is needed and can be helpful to the other areas (employment, health, emotional & physical support, children/education, etc)</p>					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Internet connectivity for telemedicine ➤ Internet connectivity for remote schooling for children ➤ Internet connectivity for remote working ➤ Technology equipment to accomplish the above (iPads, laptop computers, software, etc) ➤ Online supports—social media, resources, etc. ➤ Training & support for individuals to learn how to utilize new technology

Supplemental Documentation:

- Interagency Planning Session for 2018-2020
- NH Interagency Recommendations 2016
- Blue Star Families 2018 Military Family Lifestyle Survey
- 2017 survey of NH Veterans—Commission on PTSD & TBI
- Rand Corporation 2014 study—Community-Based Provider Capacity to Deliver Culturally Competent, Quality Mental Health Care to Veterans and their Families
- Example of Military Culture Training recommendation list for providers provided by and used in Virginia