

New Hampshire Military Leadership Team

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

September 26, 2023

10:00am – 11:30am

Location: Heritage Room, Building C, State Military Reservation
1 Minuteman Way, Concord

New Hampshire Military Leadership Team Attendance

X	Major General David Mikolaities, Adjutant General, NH National Guard
X	Warren Perry, Deputy Adjutant General, NH National Guard; MLT Co-Chair
A	Kevin Forrest, Director, Manchester VA Medical Center; MLT Co-Chair
X	Brenton Fraser, Director, Community Based Military Programs, NH DMAVS; MLT Facilitator
X	Jim Adams, Chair, NH State Veterans Council
A	Steve Ahnen, President, NH Hospital Association
X	Matt Albuquerque, Next Step Bionics and Prosthetics
X	Pete Burdett, Civilian Aide to the Secretary of the Army - Emeritus
X	Amy Cook, Representative for Community Behavioral Health
A	Madeline Dreusicke, NH State Veterans Council
A	Brendan Finn, NH State Veterans Council
A	William Gaudreau, Director, Division of Veteran Services, NH DMAVS
A	Jason Grower, Business Community
X	Karen Hebert, Director, Division of Economic and Housing Stability, DHHS
A	Ena Lima, Director, VA Regional Benefits Offices in MA, NH & VT
X	Paul Lloyd, Chair, State Veterans Advisory Committee
X	Kim MacKay, Commandant, NH Veterans Home
A	Sarah Morrissey, Employment Service Bureau Director, NH Employment Security
X	Ron Corsetti, CASA Family Representative (as of 10 Oct – estimated)
A	Vacant, State Approving Agency, Office of Career School Licensing for U.S. Dept. VA
A	Dr. Brett Rusch, Director, WRJ VA Medical Center
A	Roger Sevigny, NH Veterans Council
Guests In Attendance	
X	Stephanie Ouellette, Survivor Outreach Services Coordinator
X	Robert Mottola, Manchester VA Medical Center on behalf of Kevin Forrest, Director
X	Jen Doig, CFO, NH Veterans Home

Meeting Minutes

I. Welcome, Introductions

Ms. Stephanie Ouellette, Coordinator of Survivor Outreach Services (SOS) was invited and introduced by Mr. Perry to speak to MLT members about the SOS program and its purpose of providing support to survivors and families of fallen Army Active, Reserve and National Guard Service Members, regardless of component or manner of death. Ms' Ouellete supports 900-1,000 surviving family members across the state with questions concerning benefits and resources.

II. Review of December Minutes—December 2022 minutes were reviewed. Mr. Paul Lloyd. moved to accept the minutes and Mr. Brent Fraser 2nd, all members approved. The December 2022 minutes can be found on the DMAVS—MLT website page: <https://www.dmavs.nh.gov/about-us/councils-and-committees/nh-military-leadership-team>. No minutes were recorded for the March and June 2023 MLT meetings.

III. MLT Initiative Status Updates

MG Mikolaities highlighted “what’s next” for the Department of Military Affairs & Veterans Services as to the NH Veteran-Friendly Business Network and the “Ask the Question” outreach campaign and examples of the Department’s engagement.

A. NH Veteran-Friendly Business Updates

Recent marketing campaign efforts include: NH V-FB promotional video produced by NH Division of Economic Development featuring Mr. Matt Albuquerque of Next Step Bionics & Prosthetics [NH's Veteran-Friendly Business Program - YouTube](#); Down to Business NH Business Review podcast of NH VFB [NH Veteran-Friendly Business Program - NH Business Review \(nhbr.com\)](#); WMUR NH Business segment with Fred Kocher [NH Business: Veteran-friendly & veteran-owned businesses, plus a pool of veterans returning to NH to work \(wmur.com\)](#). White Mountain Community College applied to join the NH VFB Network. President Charles Lloyd in his upcoming role as CCSNH Vice Chancellor will engage Community College System to advocate for participation in the network. Governor Sununu is encouraging participation in the NH VFB network, most recently in his public remarks at Easterseal’s Franklin campus groundbreaking that NH business should enroll as platinum-level members. Mr. Burdette offered the Governor might leverage his links with NH businesses such as Ski areas. Request for MLT members to recruit businesses to apply to the network. NH state agencies and local government are welcome to apply. 2023 NH VFB Annual Symposium will be held on 11/7 with panelists speaking to a variety of topics including NHHFA Mr. Rob Dapice as to business outreach to planning boards to create additional housing. Ms. Erica Webb is the newly hired Military Skills & Test Waiver Program Specialist, replacing Jim Roberg as the department’s NH VFB contact. NH VFB Lunch and Learn series will be re-starting this fall. Information about the Lunch & Learn Series and recordings of webinars: <https://www.dmavs.nh.gov/about-us/nh-veteran-friendly-businesses/nh-vfb-lunch-learn-series>

B. Initial thoughts on “Next Phase of Ask the Question” and Marketing Support

The Ask the Question initiative began with educating providers to ask, “has you or a family member ever served in the military?” The next phase of the program is to train providers with how to operationalize when the answer “Yes” with a targeted way ahead in 2024. Ms. Karen Hebert shared that NH Child Support Services (CSS) includes ATQ in its application process and supports SMVF with military culture trained child support officers. Karen offered NH CSS staff to speak at an upcoming MLT. Ms. Amy Cook addressed that operationalizing ATQ within businesses includes the why of asking this question and how is it relevant to their business practice and tasking a staff member to this role. Facilitation of ATQ could include on-site visits to businesses to show how to develop best practices with ATQ. Mr. Matt Albuquerque discussed their approach for screening for prior military service with ATQ on Next Step intake forms, saving Veterans from paying out of pocket costs occurring with private insurance as their service-related limb amputations allow for prosthetics covered through VA benefits. Mr. Albuquerque stated Platinum level NH VFB should include ATQ as mandatory as part of the application process. Mr. Jim Adams discussed law enforcement using ATQ and Mr. Perry shared that NH State Police Trooper Seth Gahr includes ATQ training for their officers.

C. Pilot initiative with VFW – CONNECT suicide prevention training and assistance for the leaders

CONNECT, designed and owned by NAMI NH, is a nationally designated best practice program as to suicide prevention and postvention. Harbor Care is utilizing funding from the SSGT Fox Suicide Prevention Grant for NAMI NH to present CONNECT Train-the-Trainer to three staff members. Having additional CONNECT trainers in NH will allow for outreach to Veterans groups including VFWs. In the past four-five months, NH VFW Posts reported they experienced

~8 suicide losses within their community. NAMI NH is coordinating CONNECT training for VFW leadership with the goal of each post having a designated member trained in suicide prevention/postvention. There will be a series of four regional trainings (30 members per session) over a twelve-month period: Fall -Nashua; Winter -virtual training; Spring -North Country and Summer -Laconia. NH SPC, Harbor Care, NAMI NH and VFW are working together to help Veterans utilizing CONNECT. Additional organizations may inquire about select leadership attending trainings if capacity is available.

D. Collaboration with the Defense State Liaison Office

The purpose of the Defense State Liaison office is to work with state policymakers to change laws and policies to improve military family well-being. The ten key priorities for 2024 by the Defense State Liaison office were reviewed with the MLT. NH's focus is on the "State Response to Military Interpersonal Violence", a program where states can address harmful behavior such as sexual assault and domestic violence by expanding protections for victims. Melissa Willette is the Regional Liaison for New England and has been invited to attend a future MLT meeting.

E. Legislative Initiatives for Upcoming State Session

The Legislative Service Requests for the 2024 NH Senate session are currently open. The total House LSR for the 2024 session is 792, of which DMAVS is tracking 26. [New Hampshire Legislative Service Requests \(LSR's\) \(state.nh.us\)](https://www.state.nh.us/legislative-service-requests) The expectation is for 1,200-1,300 legislative service requests total. Legislative language is currently not available, only LSR title and sponsor. Continue to monitor the General Court Website for legislative updates.

IV. Old Business

None

V. New Business

None

VI. Information Briefs

A. VA Medical Center, Manchester—Robert Mottola

The main entrance remains closed for construction, entry is through the new primary care entrance. The third and fourth floor are out of service at this time with the public facing facility plan is on their website. The new hiring rate is 9% and turnover rate is reduced to 6%. The VA performed 18,400 toxic exposure screens in past months and as of September 9th, PACT claims total approximately 3,500 in NH.

B. VBA

None

C. DHHS—Ms. Karen Hebert

NH DHHS has restructured its operations to house the Bureau of Homeless Services under the authority of Division of Behavioral Health Services as the bureau's services for individuals is more in alignment with the Division of Behavioral Health than Division of Economic Stability.

D. DMAVS—Mr. Warren Perry

Division of Veterans Services processed 6,000 calls/month greatly impacted by the PACT Act and the office was behind 40 voice mails a day; they have tapered off somewhat with a downturn

on PACT inquiries. The State Veterans Cemetery continues with its \$3M expansion of the columbarium and is currently down one grounds employee.

E. NH Veterans Home—Ms. Kim MacKay

The Veterans Home is currently housing 134 Veterans (123 men, 11 women) with a 40% vacancy for residential beds. There is currently a 46% vacancy rate for nursing staffing, the Veterans Home will not be filled to capacity due to the staffing shortage. VA has approved funding for a new unit (we call them neighborhood). The new unit will feature private rooms with private bathrooms for better quality of life for residents, construction will take a ~year and half to complete. Currently two Veterans share a room with a semi-private bathroom shared between two rooms, totaling four Veterans per bathroom. The Veterans Home is looking to optimize the spacing of Veterans given the vacancy impact. The VA initialed a mental health pilot program with the Veterans Home for psychiatric therapy. The annual craft fair this Saturday, 9/30 starting at 9:30am with 90 vendors.

F. NH Hospital Association

None

VII. Member Updates/Announcements

-New CASA, Mr. Ron Corsetti will be starting this position in about two weeks, transitioning from the Army and Reserve component after 33 years of service. He is focusing on a positive system dynamic and workforce development, broadening the public's perception of military service and increasing recruitment.

The State Veterans Advisory Committee is meeting Tuesday, 10/3, 5:00pm at the Edward Cross Training Complex.

VIII. Next Meeting in mid-December or early January

Tuesday, 24 October, 2023 1000-1130

Location: TBD

Suggestions for future guest speakers are welcome.