

# New Hampshire Military Leadership Team

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

January 9, 2024

10:00am – 11:30am

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

## New Hampshire Military Leadership Team Attendance

A	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
X	Steve Ahnen, President, NH Hospital Association
X	Matt Albuquerque, Next Step Bionics and Prosthetics
A	Amy Cook, Representative for Community Behavioral Health
X	Madeline Dreusicke, NH State Veterans Council
A	Brendan Finn, NH State Veterans Council
A	William Gaudreau, Director, Division of Veteran Services, NH DMAVS
X	Jason Grower, Business Community
A	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
A	Kim MacKay, Commandant, NH Veterans Home
A	Sarah Morrissey, Employment Service Bureau Director, NH Employment Security
X	Ron Corsetti, Civilian Aide to the Secretary of the Army
A	Vacant, State Approving Agency, Office of Career School Licensing for U.S. Dept. VA
A	Dr. Brett Rusch, Director, WRJ VA Medical Center
X	Roger Sevigny, NH Veterans Council
A	Lee Mulcahey, Family Programs Director, 99 <sup>th</sup> RSC Family Rep and Veteran Advocate
<b>Guests In Attendance</b>	
X	Deputy Director, VA Regional Benefits Offices in MA, NH, and VT

## Meeting Minutes

### I. Welcome, Introductions

Deputy Adjutant General, Mr. Warren Perry opened the meeting and shared a welcome and intent to review select Veteran related LSRs for the MLT's situational awareness.

**II. Review of December Minutes**— 26 September 23 minutes were reviewed and approved The September minutes can be found on the DMAVS—MLT website page: <https://www.dmavs.nh.gov/about-us/councils-and-committees/nh-military-leadership-team>.

### III. MLT Initiative Status Updates

#### A. NH Veteran-Friendly Business Updates

The Veteran-Friendly Business (V-FB) network entering its fourth year continues to group, with the current count at 74 including recent approvals by several NH state organizations including the NH Department of Transportation and Department of Safety as Platinum members, with three applications pending review from Connections Inc, Merrimack, Suburban Propane and the NH Department of Corrections.

The complete V-FB list was provided to the MLT Members. The annual V-FB Summit was conducted on 9 NOV with a theme of recruiting and maintaining Veterans in the workplace. Panel composition included Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve; Director, NH Office of Professional Licensure and Certification; the National Alliance on Mental Illness NH; Recovery Friendly Workplace; Executive Director/CEO NH Housing; Director, Employment Service Bureau/Operations, NH Employment Security; Director/Investigator, U.S. Department of Labor – Veteran’s Employment and Training and; Southern New Hampshire University. The NH VFB Lunch and Learn series was reinitiated this past fall with topics including NH Employment Security discussing opportunities and incentives for hiring Disabled Veterans; PsychArmor providing an overview of training programs. NH Employment Security will present an overview of the WorkInvestNH Training Reimbursement Program available for NH businesses on 18 January. DMAVS is working to increase communications with the network and initiated a newsletter in December, greater leveraging of the V-FB LinkedIn site and is refining the application to make it more intuitive and user friendly. Mr. Albuquerque asked whether statistics might be available outlining the numbers of Veterans at respective businesses across the state. While DMAVS does track the number of Veterans employed by the individual Veteran-Friendly Businesses and general employment statistics on Veterans by the U.S. Department of Labor, DMAVS will reach out to NH Employment Security to see if more specific Veteran numbers are tracked by the state. Mr. Perry electronically provided the “NH Employment” data on the “General Demographics for Veterans to the MLT. The website is hosted by the Housing Assistance Council (HAC). The HAC is a national nonprofit corporation established in 1971 to increase the availability of decent and affordable housing for rural low-income people. Mr. Forrest asked about the potential to include information for transitioning Service Members about VA benefits and enrolling in the VA within the DMAV’s “Choose NH” monthly – DMAVS will synch with him on the information. Mr. Corsetti shared the best way to get the word out about the VA was through positive experience by their customers – applauding his personal experience with the VAMC, Manchester. Mr. Perry shared some general thoughts on military skills transfer with examples of LNA language, citing a recent engagement with state representatives on 326-B:21-a Licensed Nursing Assistant; Licensure by Alternate Experience. Mr. Lloyd asked if that information could be shared, which Mr. Perry provided electronically to the MLT members.

### **B. Initial thoughts on next phase of “Ask the Question”**

The next phase of Ask the Question will focus on operationalizing what happens after the question “have you or a family member served in the military”, addressing the “what’s next” after the question in order to facilitate a more focused discussion enabling targeting specific actions toward providing more culturally competent care. The next phase will build upon what currently exists, raise awareness of the campaign, develop targeted approaches and expand beyond that of the historically dominant health care providers enroute to an enduring and sustainable solution. DMAVS is working with an executive small group including including NH DHHS, the NH Hospital Association, Easterseals NH, NAMI NH, the NH State Suicide Prevention Military and Veterans sub-committee and others to develop and socialize the initial plan and then expand the community of practice to include a range of domains including emergency services and law enforcement, municipalities, education, and even businesses. Mr. Albuquerque shared that *Ask the Question* should be integral to NH V-FB’ processes. He emphasized that documenting the question and it’s answer at intake is critical. Mr. Ahnen shared the criticality of addressing the now what aspect after asking the question, training that might be involved, particularly in light of the severe staffing shortages across the healthcare enterprise.

### **C. HUD Annual Homeless Assessment Report – NH one of the top 5 states to reduce homelessness.**

DMAVS shared an overview of the collaborative effort of the Veterans Steering Committee (VSC) with NH DHHS, Manchester VA Medical Center, Harbor Care, Easterseals NH, landlords and numerous others on the project of “Ending Veteran Homelessness in NH”. The action includes bi-weekly case conferencing of ~100 Veterans as a key component of the solution as well as work by the VSC addressing the goal of housing “50 (Veterans) in 5 (months)” where the team exceeded the goal by permanently housing 70 Veterans in five months. These numbers, a fragile statistic given the transient and dynamic nature of the situation, are permanently housed Veterans opening up capacity for communities in their emergency shelters and transient

housing. Reflective of these efforts was the HUD Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress and the 2023 Point in Time (PIT) numbers. [The 2023 Annual Homelessness Assessment Report \(AHAR to Congress\) Part 1: Point-In-Time Estimates of Homelessness, December 2023 \(huduser.gov\)](#)

While there was a notable increase in homelessness in almost every category - New Hampshire was highlighted in the AHAR report as one of the top five states nationally to reduce veteran homelessness from year 2022 to 2023- showing a 21.3% decrease. NH was one of only six states nationally who reduced the PIT number by more than 20 veterans from 2022 to 2023 (reporting 127 veterans in 2022, and 100 veterans in 2023).

#### **D. Legislative Initiatives for Upcoming State Session**

There are currently 1299 bills before the NH Legislature this session of which DMAVS is currently tracking 34. Six bills were highlighted: HB 1023; HB 1247; HB 1338; HB 1335; HB 1589 and SB 485. There was a question for how the MLT might impact the language, with options to share feedback to the bill's sponsors as the intent of the review was not to debate the merits of the respective language but to share for situational awareness to enable an individual or organizational opportunity to engage legislators, testify at hearings or potentially by exception for consideration for the MLT to develop a position on a specific bill to engage legislators. There was some general discussion with respect to themes with an implication that all Veterans are challenged, with Mr. Corsetti sharing an analogy of the perception of healthy recruits going into the Service and coming out "broken", with the consensus of the MLT this was not accurate nor helpful particularly given today's recruiting challenges amongst the Services. With respect to HB 1385 (Veteran's Licensing Acceleration Program), Mr. Perry to invite Mr. Ahnen to the next stakeholder meeting for inclusion of the NH Hospital Association.

#### **IV. Old Business**

None

#### **V. New Business**

**A. Child Support Outreach for Military Families (CSOMF).** Ms. Edie Chiasson, DHHS, Bureau of Child Support Services shared an update on CSOMF which includes ATQ in its application process and support to Service Members, Veterans and their Families with military culture trained child support officers. These efforts represented dedicated administrative outreach resources at district offices including initiatives for: Veterans and Military Liaison Network; Manchester VAMC Provider Network 2023; Military Culture Training and annual stand down events. The objective is no delay in service and the case worker maintains the case. This DHHS program an exemplar for positive integration of the Ask the Question Campaign. Mr. Burdette asked about linkages with 211 and Veteran protocols – Mr. Perry shared 211, other than homelessness, isn't set up to address feedback on support. Mr. Ahnen shared that DHHS's pending "Close Loop Referral" is intended to include feedback to providers on care provided.

**B. Free/Reduced Cost for Dental Care for Qualified Veterans.** DMAVS provided an update on an ongoing effort with key stakeholders from Military and Veteran Affairs bureaus in Maine and Vermont along with NH DHHS and Northeast Delta Dental to build upon an effort developed in the North Country by Rep. Massimilla to provide Free/Reduced Dental care to qualified Veterans who are not VA service connected, don't have health care and are unable to afford it. The intent is to develop language for this Summer's legislative cycle. Mr. Forrest shared dental care is among the top 3 resourcing areas at VAMC, Manchester and asked about draft criteria – DMAVS will share the pre-decisional language built upon the Maine Bureau of Veterans Services model as well as integrate the Manchester VAMC and NH Hospital Association.

## **VI. Information Briefs**

### **A. VA Medical Center, Manchester— Mr. Forrest**

The Manchester facility is experiencing its fifth straight year of growth, and with growth comes additional resourcing for Veteran's initiatives. One ongoing initiative at the facility includes Navigators to facilitate post VA care to follow-on care. The initiative has been extremely successful, ~90% success rate for transitioning Veterans to follow-on services.

### **B. VBA -**

All goes well across facilities in Boston, Manchester, and White River Junction. Project mostly complete with PACT Act activities with 75% success of requests received. Implementing new programs specifically targeting rural communities – translating to providing support to Veterans where they live.

### **C. DHHS— None.**

### **D. DMAVS—Mr. Fraser**

In addition to what was covered during the course of the MLT (Ending Veteran Homelessness, next phase of ask the question, and the TAG's approval of the cemetery expansion project), the Division of Veteran Services returning to more pre-PACT Act normalcy with respect to call volume and is close to filling their open Veteran Service Office on the seacoast position.

### **E. NH Veterans Home—Mr. Lloyd.**

125 Residents with 42 applicants in process. The home continues to experience staffing shortages 37% Nurses and LNA's 42% short. The home to share a flyer on employment opportunities with DMAVS for posting to social media.

### **F. NH Hospital Association—Mr. Ahnen.**

Hospitals are at 100% capacity across the state with challenges in staffing continued post pandemic. Despite the challenges, a number of programs and initiatives continue in support of the Veteran community.

## **VII. Member Updates/Announcements**

Mr. Sevigney shared an update on VGLI from collaboration Congressman Pappas, attempting to increase awareness on eligibility requirements and timing for application from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. - <https://www.va.gov/life-insurance/options-eligibility/vgli/>

## **VIII. Next Meeting**

(For Planning Purposes) Tuesday, 23 APR, 2024 1000-1130

Location: Heritage Room, State Military Reservation

Suggestions for future guest speakers are welcome.