

**NH Suicide Prevention Council—Military & Veterans
May 5, 2021**

In attendance:

Co-Chairs: Amy Cook, Beth Alves

Members & Guests: Lisa Boedigheimer, Seth Gahr, Dale Garrow, Kate Sullivan, Sheena Bice, Stephanie Oullette, Andrea Reed, Tye Thompson, Susan Stearns

If you were logged on to this meeting, but your name did not get recorded in the attendance, please notify Amy Cook for a correction to be made.

Membership Update

Pam Szacik from NH Employment Security retired and Sarah Morrissey will be her replacement and will continue to join us when she's available. Pam will be missed and her contributions are greatly appreciated.

The June meeting will continue to be a virtual meeting; however, we will begin holding in-person meetings again in July or August. We will attempt to find a location that can also support virtual attendees, too.

SPC Full/Leadership Update

Jennifer Sabin, the new SP Coordinator, will join our committee meetings when she's available. Planning continues for the fall Suicide Prevention Conference. It will be a hybrid model this year, CEUs will be offered for the more in-depth workshops. In person workshops will be held at Grappone Center on 11/4—register early when it opens as space will be extra limited due to COVID restrictions.

All Committees need to review their goals and submit goals/objectives to the Council by Fall.

The SPC is adopting and expanding DHHS's I Care NH Campaign. DHHS has a webpage dedicated to this suicide prevention campaign-- www.dhhs.nh.gov/icare --and we can add Veteran resources to the page.

Postvention

Moving forward, we will include Postvention as an agenda item in our monthly meeting encouraging further discussion. As a result of regular discussion and sharing experiences, appropriate action items will be developed in this area as-needed.

No report or update available. No discussion.

Committee consensus was to keep this on the agenda as a space for members to share experiences or express concerns and receive peer support from other members.

Peer Support Services (Expand access to peer support services for SMVF.)

This was identified as an area in which the committee would like to focus efforts in the coming five-year plan period and, therefore, has been added to the standing agenda.

Discussion took place regarding whether the committee should keep this topic area and develop goals within it. Consensus was that we should—peer support services are needed greatly for Veterans and have a great, positive outcomes. Committee should promote services that exist, expand opportunities for Veterans to connect to peers, and expand access to quality peer support services. Need in NH = training for peers (including where to refer Veterans), qualified supervisors. Look at combining First Responders?

Virtual Care Services (Increase access for SMVF population to virtual care services.)

This was identified as an area in which the committee would like to focus efforts in the coming five-year plan period and, therefore, has been added to the standing agenda.

No report available. No discussion. There was not any identifiable support for keeping this topic area and developing related goals. This will be removed from future agendas. Members agreed that advocating for access to virtual services should be something we all continue to do as virtual attendance options for not only healthcare appointments, but also professional meetings, has removed barriers in participation for many.

Military Cultural Competency Training (Increase number of general healthcare and behavioral healthcare providers trained in military culture. Increase confidence of Veterans in the military cultural competence of their providers. Expand access to military cultural competency training to other sectors outside healthcare.)

This was identified as an area in which the committee would like to focus efforts in the coming five-year plan period and, therefore, has been added to the standing agenda.

Star Behavioral Health Providers—Star Behavioral Health Providers has multiple trainings coming up. You can register by logging onto their website. All trainings are still virtual at this time. Recently SBHP pushed out info to the CMHCs and

Nashua expressed interest. The Manchester VAMC’s Council may still be willing to promote SBHP—need to give Beth what we’d want sent out (Sheena).

Next steps carried over from April meeting:

- 1) ~~Obtain list of MH Providers in CCN from WRJ VAMC and share list with Manchester VA Veterans Council.~~
- 2) Promote SBHP Tier 1 trainings to Servicelink agencies.
- 3) Identify small group to work on developing an action-focused timeline for strategic promotion.

Other Military Cultural Competency Trainings—As a result of the Governor’s Challenge work and feedback that New Hampshire gave to SAMHSA and PsychArmor over the past year, there will be an online training portal and dashboard available to all Gov Challenge states! The portal will contain 10 trainings related to suicide prevention and basic military culture and will allow tracking of who has completed the trainings. Amy C. recently met with the CEO of PsychArmor and their team to share what NH is doing to promote training through the new NH Veteran-Friendly Business program. PsychArmor has offered to add additional trainings for Employers and Higher Education professionals to NH’s portal. In May, the launch date will be announced and there will be a presentation prior to that for everyone to learn more about it.

The NH Veteran-Friendly Business applications are now available and the application has been revised. It now has more of an emphasis on training for businesses and the application contains a recommended curriculum for businesses that includes MCC trainings as well as suicide prevention trainings. In the coming year, the program will also be developing a branch called NH Veteran-Friendly Service Providers and the committee can provide input as to what should be included in the definition and criteria.

Social Connectedness (*Increase social connectedness of rural Veterans. Increase social connectedness of military-Veteran spouses & families.*)

This was identified as an area in which the committee would like to focus efforts in the coming five-year plan period and, therefore, has been added to the standing agenda.

Veteran Wellness Series, Lakes Region (Tye T., NEP)—Activities continue in Laconia, cycling, salt water fishing. Additional activities will be added in warmer weather. Check out NEP’s website calendar for an up-to-date listing of what is occurring in the Lakes Region and around the state.

Together With Veterans (Beth A.)—The Lakes Region Veterans Coalition (LRVC) continues to promote the Buddy Check Coffee program. They haven’t had as much traction as they hoped, so they aren’t sure if it will continue year-round or be time limited.

Other Related Initiative Updates

Zero Suicide Academy (Beth A., VA)—Academy will take place for the selected teams next week, May 11-13, 2021.

Military Spouse & Family Supports (Amy C., DMAVS)—Amy and a member of the NH Military Leadership Team (Ginger Munson) continue to work on this project. A Military & Veteran Family survey was sent out for distribution through networks. As of today, we have 105 responses, so please continue to share it with your network and on your social media accounts. We’re hoping to reach 200 respondents. The survey will identify what military & Veteran families feel they need and how/where they access services and supports.

Ask the Question: Ask, Link, Collaborate Technical Assistance Program (Amy C., DMAVS)—This program is the result of work conducted by the Joint Military Task Force under the Governor’s Commission on Alcohol & Other Drugs. Applications are being accepted now for participation; however, the program start date is still pending and will be determine by when the state is authorized to spend the funds. Estimated start date is around 9/1. Eligible organizations are those that identify, refer, assess and/or treat risk for SUDs in military & Veterans. Up to 40 organizations will be able to participate in the pilot program. Organizations will be able to access up to \$1,500 to offset the cost of participating and implementing the program. This project will also serve to create materials and procedures that can be used in a future phase and rolled out to additional organizations. There is a good possibility that a Year 2 and 3 will be added to the program and there will be many opportunities for expansion during those years.

For more information or the application: <https://www.dmavs.nh.gov/community-based-military-programs/ask-link-collaborate-technical-assistance-program>

New Discussion

Discussion took place regarding other topic areas that members felt should be included in the work the committee completes in the coming 1-3 years.

- **Pet respite**—having pets that need care and no access to quality respite for them is a barrier to Veterans seeking in-patient care (SUD or MH). It has also been identified as a barrier in some instance for homeless Veterans offered shelter. Developing a network in the state to help with this might be a good goal to set. Discussion took place regarding existing resources and potential partners to tap into: Coalition Against Domestic Violence might be working on this. Shelters and Rescue Organizations have networks of foster families for pets. Clear Path New England might be able to train people interested in fostering. Guardian Angels for Soldier Pets—Steph O. will seek more info about this, it's a national resource for deployed soldiers with pets. Homeless Providers group might want to collaborate. Sheena has a staff who is interested in this topic—she will seek more information.
- **Partnership with Servicelink**—now that this has picked up and specific steps have been identified, this should be added as a specific goal we are working towards rather than a Related Initiative. Update: in process of scheduling a date with the Servicelink agencies that will pilot SQUARES.

As needs and opportunities arise within the topic areas the committee has chosen to work on, there may be ways in which we can achieve results or embed pieces into the upcoming Ask the Question: Ask, Link, Collaborate Technical Assistance Program and also the NH Veteran-Friendly Business program model.

Member Updates

Amy Cook, DMAVS—There is a Community Calendar on the DMAVS website that all committee members are encouraged to check out for local events & trainings, but also encouraged to add to. Partner organizations can promote their own events on the website. The website page gives instructions on how to request an event be added.

<https://www.dmavs.nh.gov/about-us/calendar>

The Division of Community Based Military Programs will be hiring 3 new positions this summer—Grant Writer/Resource Development Coordinator, Housing Stability Manager and Military Waiver Specialist. More info to come if/when the state budget supporting the positions gets approved.

Sheena Bice, Forge VFR—VFR has a new umbrella name—Forge Health. VFR is using “Forge VFR”. They are in the process of opening services in Massachusetts, New York and also working on a grant in PA. They are starting to return to in-person services.

Lisa Boedigheimer, VAMC White River Junction—This is Lisa's last meeting, she will be transferring in 2 weeks. WRJ VA is currently looking to fill her position.

Dale Garrow, Contractor with National Guard—Two new ASIST workshops are coming up—one in April, one in August. The 2-day training offers CEUs and is free if attending through Dale. If interested contact Mr. Dale Garrow at (603)227-1450 or email: dale.e.garrow.ctr@mail.mil.

Stephanie Oullette, SOS—Stephanie is currently doing a needs assessment for the surviving families and will share results when available as they may inform some of the work of the committee.

Susan Stearns, NAMI NH—NAMI NH held an Annual Conference virtually in April. Recorded sessions can be viewed on YouTube. They will continue to host other webinars (LGBTQ+ & MH in June) and at least 1 virtual groups in the future.

Andrea Reed, Harbor Care—the Bees Program continues to be available through the clinic and is seeing positive outcomes. A MH & Employment research program is being conducted at the High Street location.

Kate Sullivan, Servicelink of Strafford & Rockingham Counties—there are a lot of new staff at Servicelink and need for referrals continue to be steady.

Next Meeting

June 2, 2021; 2PM – 3:30PM

Theme: we forgot to pick one!! ☹

Webex virtual platform