

NH Suicide Prevention Council—Military & Veterans

June 3, 2020

In attendance:

Co-Chairs: Amy Cook, Beth Alves

Members & Guests: Ed Drury, Dale Garrow, Chaplain (LTC) Steve Veinotte, Tye Thompson, Sheena Bice, Ray Gilmore, Thom O'Connor, Lisa Boedigheimer, Seth Gahr, Troy Townsend

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.

Note about COVID-19: The meeting started with members sharing how COVID-19 has impacted their daily and normal work operations. Many projects related to the work of this committee have been put on hold or have experienced a delayed implementation or timeline.

SPC Full/Leadership Update

The SPC is in the process of contracting with an independent facilitator for the goal planning process. Two facilitators have been identified as potentials. The SPC will apply for grant funding to pay for the cost of the facilitation. The SPC Annual Suicide Prevention Conference will, most likely, be switched to a virtual format.

Status Reports on Initiatives

Together With Veterans (Amy Cook)—TWV is in the process of developing programming in the Lakes Region. An info session is planned for invited Veterans on June 24th. At that time, Veterans will decide if TWV is an initiative that they are willing to commit to and support in the region.

Veteran Hub (Amy Cook)—new Servicelink contracts are due to begin on 7/1. After the vendors get settled, we will initiate further discussion about how to move forward with a more formal and effective working relationship with the Servicelink contract vendors. It's undetermined at this time if COVID-19 will delay this timeline.

Postvention (Beth Alves)—Beth Alves will reach out to those who participated in the most recent postvention discussion in order to move this forward. No new progress has taken place since the last meeting.

Military Culture Training (Sheena Bice)—Star Behavioral Health Provider program trainings will be moving to a virtual platform until further notice. There are a Tier 2 and 3 training coming up. In order to attend Tier 2 or 3, you must have attended Tier 1 already. At this time, there are no Tier 1 trainings scheduled; however, if an organization is interested in hosting one, they can contact Sheena. About 25-35 people are needed to host a Tier 1 training. Sheena will send Amy the most recent flier for distribution.

Lakes Region Veteran Wellness Series with NEP (Tye Thompson)—NEP is still waiting to hear if they received the funding for the Veteran Wellness Series. They should hear no later than September.

Replication of Military Liaison Program (Amy Cook)—This initiative is currently on hold due to COVID-19. Three funding opportunities have been sought in the past year, but none came to fruition. Interest has been expressed by the Bureau of Drug & Alcohol Services for replication in SUD Providers and initial interest has been expressed to explore the possibility of replicating the program in hospital settings with the support of the NH Hospital Association. In order to move the discussion further with either group, it will need to wait until the public health crisis is over. No new progress has been made since the last meeting.

Other Related Initiative Updates

Zero Suicide Academy (Beth Alves)—At this time, due to COVID-19, they are re-evaluating the plan to hold the Zero Suicide Academy and are waiting for more information that will help make that determination. At this time, there isn't an update to give. More details will be available in the near future.

NH Firearms Safety Coalition (Beth Alves)—The Coalition recently surveyed firearms retailers and there was some positive results. 57% had put out suicide prevention information for customers. During the 2011 poll, 50% had agreed to put posters up, so the 57% return was an increase from the 2011 poll. This year's survey also showed an increase in the number of who would be willing to provide similar information.

Looking Forward

In order to help the committee identify new goals for the upcoming term, committee members completed an online survey. The committee reviewed the results during the meeting. The top three areas in which members have interest pursuing are: 1) Identification of Veterans and Veterans At-Risk for Suicide, 2) Education (related to serving SMVF and suicide prevention), and 3) Postvention Services, Resources and Procedures to assist SMVF. Discussion took place about these topics and some ideas were shared about how the committee could develop strategies in these areas. All three are areas that were previously identified in the Governor's Challenge to Prevent Suicide among SMVF plan, but committee members felt that they needed to be continued and/or revised.

Announcements

National Guard update (LTC Veinotte & Dale Garrow)—NHNG has been very busy lately! Many Guardsmen have been activated to continue assisting with the COVID-19 response and they have been assigned a variety of missions. Currently, there has not been a large need amongst the Service members in general, but when the missions end, there may be some who do not have jobs to return to—at that point in time, we may see a greater need amongst the Service members and their families. With regards to on-site staff and contractors, they will be starting to phase people back into the offices. Contractors will start returning the week of June 15th.

DHHS update (Thom O'Connor)—DHHS has a skeleton crew at the state office, most staff are working remotely. Servicelink continues to be open for business, but the majority of Servicelink staff are still working remotely and conducting appointments virtually. They are hoping to begin opening offices soon. They were able to access an ADRC network grant that will provide funding to help with the preparation for opening with regards to safety measures that have to be taken.

Northeast Passage update (Tye Thompson)—NEP has made some scheduling changes and is scaling back services as a result of COVID-19. Some programs are being moved to an online, virtual format. Staff will be furloughed for 4 week terms throughout the summer. Tye will be out of the office 6/15-7/15. Veteran Recreation programs will continue to be provided in small groups.

VFR update (Sheena Bice)—VFR has been operating virtually for all counseling and group sessions due to COVID-19. Feedback from those they serve has been largely positive and it has allowed the clinicians to expand the geographic region in which they practice. Sheena continues to participate in the SBHP Tier 1 trainings which will be implemented as-needed throughout the year.

Division of Community Based Programs update provided by Amy Cook—Applications will be accepted for the Veteran-Friendly Business Recognition Program until 8/30/20. Please encourage your employer to apply and spread the word. There is hope that COVID-19 won't prevent businesses from applying, but we need to spread the word. A press release will be distributed on 6/5.

NH State Police (Trooper Seth Gahr)—NH State Police continue to train officers in CIT with NAMI NH. They will kick off again soon. They are trying to hold more frequent classes with fewer attendees.

Lakes Region Mental Health Center (Ed Drury)—LRMHC has been focusing on COVID-19 response strategies and the ways in which their work has changed. Ed's role has largely been focused on this rather than his Military Liaison role, so there is nothing to report specifically with regards to Veterans.

Asmith Check Foundation (Ray Gilmore)—This is an organization that provides outdoor recreation for Veterans in an attempt to lower the suicide rate through activities, recreation and social connection. At this point in time, the Foundation's work is still on hold due to COVID-19 and looking forward to returning to more normal operations soon.

Next Meeting

August 5, 2020

2-3:30pm; Webex virtual platform