



Governor's Advisory Council on Veterans Services

MEETING MINUTES

Aug 10, 2022 1:00-2:44 PM

NCTC Classroom, Bldg. 8-63, Fort Indiantown Gap

COUNCIL MEMBERS/DESIGNEES IN ATTENDANCE

BG (PA) Maureen H. Weigl, Chairwoman, Deputy Adjutant General for Veterans Affairs	MG Mark J. Schindler, The Adjutant General DMVA
Tammy Ferguson, Dept. of Corrections	Kory Auch, Office of Administration
Denise Verchimak, Dept. of Education	Terrell Martin, DCED
Kevin Atkinson, Dept. of Aging	Kurt Myers, PennDOT
Micah Snead, Member at Large	Toshua Jarrett, Member at Large
Jamie Dunlap, PA Council on the Arts	Cheryl Cook, Dept. of Agriculture
Col (R) Ward Adams, Member at Large	Jeff Geibel, Dept. of Drug & Alcohol Programs
Christine Kotsalos, Dept. of Banking & Securities	Jeffrey Wallace, State Civil Service Commission

COUNCIL MEMBERS/DESIGNEES NOT IN ATTENDANCE

Nick Taylor, State Veterans Commission	Keara Klinepeter/Judy Mahoney- Dept. of Health
Jennifer Berrier/Dan Kuba, Dept. of Labor & Industry	Meg Snead/Kristen Houser, Dept. of Human Services
Jake Derrick, Governor's Policy Office	John Hallas, DCNR
Tim Schaeffer/Tom Burrell, Fish & Boat Comm.	James "Woody" Hogan, PWVC

OTHERS PRESENT

Ana Arcs, DHS	Brendan Auman, DCED
Randy Wright, US DOL	Dennis Ero, US DOL
Dave Cummiskey, US DOL	Tara Loew, L&I
Tom Cherry, DMVA	Fred Nardei, Pittsburgh VA
Angela Lowry, AOPC	Ralph Roach, L&I
Rick Hamp, DMVA	Billy Lanham, US DOL VETS
Kristi Brawley, PSU	Michael Carrington, DOC
James Fearn, DHS	Janette Krolczyk, DMVA
Jessica Penn Shires, DOC	Tiffany Cleary, DMVA
Joan Nissley, DMVA	John Schwartz, Center for Combatting Elder Financial Abuse
Bill Reed, YWCA	Leora Appleby, DCED
Elizabeth Cooper, DVOP Franklin/Adams Co	Travis Davis, DMVA
Denise Remillard, DCED	Nicholas "Chip" Gilliland, DMVA
Jonathan Bowman, DHS, OLTL	John Noll, DMVA
Laura Maggiorini, VMC	Bill Cress, VISN 4
Jane Heiple, Lyceum Group	Erica Nocho, DDAP
Joel Mutschler, DMVA	Danielle Rudy, PHFA
Kathy Silvia, Military Women's Memorial	Chelsea Ellsworth, DMVA
Seth Benge, DMVA, PPL	Samantha Cossman, DMVA
Lisa Kaye, CDVA Monroe County	Greg Holler, DMVA

Lisa Grayson, PA Bar Association	Sierra Bilous, DHS, OMHSAS
Govan Martin, Suicide Prevention Alliance	Jolene Richardson, PAANG

<p>CALL TO ORDER, INTRODUCTIONS, AND OPENING REMARKS</p>	<p>The Governor's Advisory Council on Veterans Services (GAC-VS) was called to order at 1:00 PM.</p> <p>Ms. Janette Krolczyk welcomed everyone for joining the hybrid meeting and asked everyone to sign in or send an email to have their attendance counted. She led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance, MAL Ward Adams conducted the Moment of Silence, and seated members or designees at the table introduced themselves.</p>
<p>APPROVAL OF MAY 11, 2022 MINUTES</p>	<p>No questions or corrections were noted on the draft minutes. Mr. Kory Auch motioned to approve the minutes, which Mr. Ward Adams seconded and all unanimously approved.</p>
<p>GUEST SPEAKER</p> <p>RANDY WRIGHT DENNIS ERO DAVE CUMMISKEY (USDOL)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Misters Wright, Ero, and Cummiskey spoke on the Homeless Veteran Reintegration Program (HVRP) and the work accomplished by DOL VETS serving commonwealth veterans. ▪ The HVRP currently serves 44 counties leaving 23 counties underserved by an HVRP grant. ▪ Misters Wright, Ero, and Cummiskey shared information about Homeless Veteran Stand Down events. They urged the audience to contact them if there was interest in holding an event or if anyone had suggestions of agencies or entities who could qualify for an HVRP grant so they could assist with these initiatives.
<p>AGING COMMITTEE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mr. Jonathan Bowman shared committee updates starting with the Veterans Pension Poaching Awareness Campaign. This annual communication push occurs each June, and the materials are shared with a growing number of entities. ▪ Papa Pals recently presented to the Aging Committee, sharing how this program works with health plans to connect members with individuals who can help with companionship, everyday tasks, transportation, and more, in 64 of Pennsylvania's counties. ▪ The ongoing connection with the Center for Combatting Elder Financial Abuse has benefits the veterans' community. Through a relationship with West Chester University's Department of Criminal Justice, staff arranged for a summer internship so a student could research veteran scams and subsequent poacher patterns. DMVA will try to assist with a connection between the Center and Temple University next.
<p>HOMELESS COMMITTEE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mr. Micah Snead shared the need to engage with all other committees. ▪ The committee recently heard a presentation from Southwestern PA Legal Aid (SPLA.org) highlighting the free services available. The

	<p>conversation generated great scenarios for those assisting renters and ensuring that tenants (especially National Guard members or those who may be deployed) know when and how to break a rental lease or know their rights in various circumstances.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The CHALENG Survey for 2022 is active; everyone is encouraged to participate and share the link widely. These surveys assess unmet needs and the 2021 results explained that many veterans needed legal assistance. Survey: www.surveymonkey.com/r/CHALENG2022 ▪ Mr. Snead explained that these surveys are generated from the VA and provide excellent data points that organizations can use when applying for grant funding. ▪ Mr. Snead reported that 1.5 million Pennsylvanians are renters, and to afford a one-bedroom apartment at fair market rent, an individual needs to make about \$17 an hour. ▪ Mr. Auman shared that DCED has generated a draft of the HOME ARP funds allocation plan, which will be submitted to HUD later in September. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Mr. Bill Cress confirmed that the CHALENG link is still active, and a QR code can take individuals directly to the survey information.
<p>EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT, WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ This quarter’s briefing covered aspects of finding new careers. Ms. Tara Loew briefed on Apprenticeships and Training and noted that veterans are an underrepresented population, so work is done to target the needs of such groups. There are 17,000+ registered apprentices, and about 7.5% are veterans. ▪ Pennsylvania is a state apprenticeship agency, meaning the commonwealth oversees the apprenticeship program through the Apprenticeship and Training Office (ATO). ▪ In 2020 there were two full-time staff members. The complement has grown to 12 members, and there could be up to 18 staff members by the end of 2022. ▪ The ATO has built tools to assist veterans with their GI Bill when working through apprenticeship and training processes. ▪ Each state has its process, so there may be miseducation on how setting up programs work within PA. Registered Apprenticeships can also be customized and tailored to fit the workforce needs, which many individuals may not know is possible when setting up a program. ▪ Mr. Ralph Roach provided the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) background. He explained that the office attempts to provide a rapid response once an individual reaches to OVR for services. ▪ Mr. Roach explained that many individuals need credentials recognized by businesses to obtain higher earning potential, including a high school diploma, college associate degree, technical certificate, bachelor's degree or higher, state license, or apprenticeship credential.
<p>HEALTH PROMOTIONS</p>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ms. Erica Nocho explained that the committee focuses on promoting whole health and sharing resources around suicide prevention, including the launch of the “988” crisis hotline which occurred this past July. ▪ Ms. Nocho provided programmatic updates and congratulated Mr. Fred Nardi for being selected as the VISN 4 Peer Support Specialist of the Year. ▪ Breaking down stigma surrounding mental health and substance use remains a challenge, as does raising awareness of how to access services available for those in need. High turnover of healthcare workers in these areas poses consistent challenges as well. ▪ The committee remains open to working with those who can assist with outreach and engagement on the various topics covered.
<p style="text-align: center;">WOMEN VETERANS COMMITTEE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ms. Elizabeth Cooper explained the current goals the committee is working to achieve with updates expected in future quarters. ▪ Ms. Cooper has completed her Peer-2-Peer Support Group training and communicated with the women veterans honored by the PA Commission for Women this year. Eight honorees reached out for WoVeN information on Peer-2-Peer Support Group training. ▪ Ms. Cooper will connect more with Robin’s Home, a women veterans house in Butler County, providing workforce development and referrals to community resources to assist with getting members back on their feet in the community. ▪ The main challenge for the committee is successfully reaching older women veterans. A mailing through PACE may occur in September, but there will still be the need to reach this population, so collaboration with the Aging Committee or anyone else is welcomed. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Mr. Cummisky mentioned that he would be happy to partner together when reaching out to Robins House in Butler.
<p style="text-align: center;">JUDICIARY COMMITTEE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mr. Michael Carrington explained that the DOC would like to hold a veteran employee symposium twice a year so that employees can obtain knowledge on veteran resources and have their questions answered by subject matter experts. ▪ Approving the first American Legion post within a PA state correctional institution will help bridge the gap between veteran employees and inmates who share membership. ▪ IT challenges are preventing PA VETConnect from being accessed throughout the SCI locations. Various employees have access to the program information, so inmates are still being served, yet full access is still a work in progress. ▪ DOC employees will travel to the non-VSU SCI locations to advocate for veterans to obtain VSU placement. Certain inmates may not want to change locations or change their current routine or lifestyle, but they may not know the many benefits that come with VSU placement and resources. ▪ Mr. Carrington highlighted the service of Lee Mix, an Outreach Specialist with the Veterans Multi-Service Center (VMC). Ms. Mix

	<p>comes from a military family and has long advocated for those in the justice system and the veteran population, making her an excellent veteran services employee deserving recognition this quarter.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Mr. Snead commented that Lee's recognition is an excellent example of valued service as we are all part of the team that assists veterans.
<p>GOOD OF THE ORDER</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mr. Snead asked for an update on the policy request discussed last quarter. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Mr. Seth Benge stated that discussions went well with many departments. However, some requests would be for agencies to adjust intake forms to note veteran status, which will incur a cost. Those details are still being discussed. ▪ BG (PA), and Chairwoman, Maureen Weigl addressed the Council and thanked everyone for their participation and dedication. BG Weigl stated that President Biden would sign the PACT Act later in the day, allowing the VA to presumptively provide care to veterans suffering from more than 20 toxic exposure-related conditions. The DMVA understands there will be an influx of work, and the department is ready to assist anyone with questions. ▪ Two more virtual Town Hall events are scheduled. They will cover the topics of transportation and honoring our veterans. ▪ BG Weigl encouraged everyone to continue referring individuals to PA VETConnect. The program is growing, and shortly visitors of the site will be able to search for resources by entering a zip code. With assistance from VHA and PennDOT, an extensive mailing will go out to over 500,000 PA veterans and will include information on PA VETConnect. ▪ The Veterans Trust Fund (VTF) grants money to organizations assisting veterans throughout the commonwealth, and the fund is available for SECA donation. ▪ Ms. Krolczyk reminded all participants to check the DMVA website (www.dmva.pa.gov), where the approved meeting minutes and full slide deck will be available. ▪ Ms. Krolczyk also reminded all service members, veterans, family members, and caregivers to sign up for the Veterans Registry (www.register.dmva.pa.gov). Individuals can opt-in to the DMVA digest, the weekly publication with beneficial information.
	<p style="text-align: center;">Next Meeting: November 2, 2022 1:00-3:00PM TBD</p>
<p>ADJOURNMENT</p>	<p>The meeting adjourned at 2:44 PM.</p>

NEW ACTION ITEMS

#	ACTION	STATUS
1	DMVA to assist in connecting John Schwartz from the Center for Combatting Elder Financial Abuse to Temple University.	Completed
2	Ms. Krolczyk to send out CHALENG survey and related information to the GAC-VS group distribution list.	Completed
3	Ms. Krolczyk to send GAC-VS distro DCED's public hearing information on the draft HOME ARP allocation plan scheduled for September 1 st , 2022.	Completed

OLD ACTION ITEMS

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