



Governor's Advisory Council on Veterans Services

MEETING MINUTES
AUG 2, 2023, 1:00-2:50 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	Marc Ferraro, DMVA
Steve D'Ettoire, Governor's Policy Office	Danielle Pierre, Dept. of Health
Tammy Ferguson, Dept. of Corrections	Kory Auch, Office of Administration
Denise Verchimak, Dept. of Education	Terrell Martin, DCED
Kevin Atkinson, Dept. of Aging	Kara Templeton, PennDOT
Dan Kuba, Dept. of L&I	John Hallas, DCNR
Toshua Jarrett, Member at Large	Cheryl Cook, Dept. of Agriculture
Col (R) Ward Adams, Member at Large	Jeff Geibel, Dept. of Drug & Alcohol Programs
Tim Arthun, Dept. of Banking & Securities	Jamie Dunlap, PA Council on the Arts
Donna Tilley Hess, Dept. of Human Services	Tom Edwards, Fish & Boat Commission

COUNCIL MEMBERS/DESIGNEES NOT IN ATTENDANCE

Nick Taylor, State Veterans Commission	Micah Snead, Member at Large
James "Woody" Hogan, PWVC	Pam Iovino, State Civil Service Commission

OTHERS PRESENT


Tom Foley, Gov's Policy Office	Danielle Duckett, DHS
Andrew Barnes, DHS	Tyler Gum, PA Military Museum
Fred Nardei, VISN 4	Jane Heiple, PDE
Dan Gruver, DMVA	Crystal Houser, L&I
Billy Lanham, DOL VETS	Janette Krolczyk, DMVA
Margo Coleman, DMVA	Zackary, Portser, DMVA
Laura Maggiorini, VMC	Jen Snyder, DMVA
Erik Orient, UPMC	Tiffany Cleary, DMVA
Doug Ickes, UPMC	Tom Cherry, DMVA
John Noll, DMVA	Greg Fry, DMVA
Bill Cress, VISN 4	Danielle Demirovic, L&I
Keisha Kerr, VISN 4	Angela Eder, Penn Waver
Michael Carrington, DOC	Sam Estrada, DMVA
Taylor Dippery, DMVA	Erica Nocho, DDAP
Ed Cherry, DMVA	Joe Batt, DMVA
Enid McMillan, DMVA	Susan Wolfe, DMVA
Sara, Gligora, Dept. of Ag	Ally Murr, American Legion
Rick Hamp, DMVA	Brendan Auman, DCED
Troy Edwards, DOC	Joann Tresco, PAARNG
Ralph Roach, L&I	Cory Bender, DMVA
Kathy Silvia, Military Women's Memorial	John Schwartz, Center for Combatting Elder Financial Abuse

Shawn Harris, West Chester University	Erin Gaffney, West Chester University
Victoria Butler, West Chester University	Jon Tumolo, West Chester University
Kristi Brawley, PSU	Leora Appleby, DCED
Tom Applebach, CDVA – Lehigh County	Jolene Richardson, PAANG
James Fearn, DHS	Tori, Archive Captioning
Norm Marden, OAG	Michael Belcher, DMVA
Chris Clark, DMVA	Chelsea Ellsworth, DMVA
Susan Meighen, DMVA	Brian Natali, DMVA
Chip Gilliland, DMVA	Samantha Cossman, DMVA
Greg Holler, DMVA	Craig Swineford, DMVA
Erica Moore, DMVA	Jennifer Spitler, DMVA
Joel Mutschler, DMVA	Lana Evans, DMVA
Jamal Wakeem, PDE	Patricia Clark, PDA
Nicholas Haller, VISN 4	Kelly Hitz, DMVA
Melissa Baxter, DOH	

<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 joining the hybrid meeting and asked that everyone sign in or send an email to have their attendance counted. She led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance and Moment of Silence.</p> <p>Mr. Marc Ferraro thanked everyone for joining the quarterly meeting and participating in collaborative discussions on how to serve our veterans best.</p>
<p>APPROVAL OF MAY 3, 2023, MINUTES</p>	<p>No questions or corrections were noted on the draft minutes. Mr. Kory Auch motioned to approve the minutes, which Ms. Donna Tilley Hess seconded, and all unanimously approved.</p>
<p>VETERAN OF THE QUARTER</p>	<p>Ms. Ally Murr was recognized as the GAC-VS Veteran of the Quarter for her dedication to working with veterans. Her military service and subsequent challenges led Ally down a path of recovery and empowerment. She is now working for The American Legion, mentoring individuals going through Veteran Treatment Court programs, and pursuing a master's degree in social work to continue assisting fellow veterans in need.</p>
<p>GUEST SPEAKER: TYLER GUM</p> <p>PA HISTORICAL AND MUSEUM COMMISSION- PA MILITARY MUSEUM</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mr. Tyler Gum shared that the mission of the PA Historical and Museum Commission (PHMC) is to preserve any commonwealth history and ensure that it remains accessible to everyone in multiple forms. ▪ Twenty-six historic sites across the commonwealth fall under the PHMC, and the PA Military Museum maintains 31 monuments. ▪ Mr. Gum explained that the 501c3 organization attached to the museum assists in fundraising efforts allowing the museum to accomplish goals they would not otherwise be able to accomplish. ▪ The PA Military Museum opened in 1969, but the history of the grounds dates to WWI. The 70-acre lot encompasses four buildings and has free

	<p>parking for guests, so the community utilizes the museum and lot for many events. Some exhibits are scheduled for remodeling in the future, including an oral history compilation allowing for new stories. The museum is undergoing a heating and ventilation remodel to ensure proper climate control for the artifacts.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The museum is also undergoing complete digitization of the onsite library so individuals can schedule research time, as is done at the national archives. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ BG (PA) Weigl asked if there were plans for a Korean War exhibit and something for women or minority veterans. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Mr. Gum explained that exhibits will cover the Cold War to Desert Storm and feature an array of Women and minority military history, including personal stories of complex social structures throughout service history. ○ Mr. Gum also shared the plan for displaying rotating artifacts to use the available square footage best. ○ There is also a plan to return to the Farm Show Complex this coming January to feature PA military history, especially women's stories of working there during WWII.
<p style="text-align: center;">AGING COMMITTEE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ms. Margo Coleman shared the committee's efforts to increase the number of partners who annually receive the Pension Poaching Awareness Toolkit and how the committee has remained in contact with the Center for Combating Elder Financial Abuse. This year the Center worked with a team of four West Chester University students for a summer internship. These students presented to DMVA leaders their poaching/scam findings. ▪ Representatives from a veteran-centric Fairweather Lodge provided a briefing to the committee describing the lodge admission process and how communal living benefits the members. ▪ The PA Master Plan for Older Adults is underway as a Governor's initiative, so the committee will share any information that develops. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ BG (PA) Weigl recognized the four students in the audience from West Chester University who presented information to DMVA.
<p style="text-align: center;">HOMELESS COMMITTEE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mr. Brendan Auman explained that a Commonwealth Interagency Council on Homelessness would be beneficial. A Coordinated Investment Planning (CIP) group meets monthly, but a designated Council for the entire commonwealth would be more impactful through Executive Order or legislation. ▪ The Federal VA has set the annual goals for housing homeless veterans for 2023. Pennsylvania was a significant leader in 2022 and continues to lead in 2023, reaching benchmarks ahead of many other states. As of June, Pennsylvania has completed 64% of its goal to house homeless veterans and 80% of the goal to engage with unsheltered veterans. ▪ A guest speaker briefed the committee on housing programs through the Department of Corrections. They included the Community Correction Centers, the Housing Assistance Program, and the REACH Program

	<p>(reentrants attaining community housing program), which will launch soon.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ BG (PA) Weigl asked if 64% of housed veterans included the individuals displaced from the Coatesville area. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Mr. Bill Cress shared how the Federal VA captures the homeless veteran data and does not believe the veterans who moved were considered homeless because they shifted from one housing program to another, but he would investigate the matter. ➤ BG (PA) Weigl also asked about increasing the HUD-VASH voucher value as many landlords do not want to work with the program, especially in cities with high rental prices. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Mr. Cress did not know about voucher increases, but this may be discussed at the national conference at the end of August.
<p style="text-align: center;">HEALTH PROMOTIONS COMMITTEE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ms. Erica Nocho described how the committee works on various social media materials for posts through communication teams. The committee also discussed various social media forms and how to utilize those platforms best to share information about assisting veterans and where to find resources. ▪ Ms. Nocho stated that sending messages beyond substance use can be challenging as agency communications may be limited in scope. Utilizing other communication teams will be needed to share messaging widely that veteran advocates and industry professionals would benefit from seeing. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ BG (PA) Weigl asked what the target audience would be for the committee. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ms. Nocho stated that the audience would be primarily healthcare professionals. ➤ BG (PA) Weigl asked if DDAP is working with other agencies to share these messages. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ms. Nocho explained that initial messages were developed, but agency communication teams altered the content per their guidance. The statements were general about resources instead of touching upon all the areas for assistance. If possible, Ms. Nocho would prefer to get more detailed information to healthcare professionals assisting veterans. She also hopes relationships with other agencies can develop to make sharing information across all social media platforms more straightforward. ➤ Ms. Krolczyk stated that it may be easier for the communication teams to work together if they belong to one "hub" instead of sharing information across different hubs. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Mr. Ferraro confirmed that DMVA is part of different hubs depending on which work function is discussed. He stated there might be a way to work through the DMVA hub to obtain the Governor's awareness so collaborative

	<p>and communicative efforts become easier across agencies when sharing information from the top down.</p>
<p>EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT, WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ms. Crystal Houser introduced her speakers, discussing training or reskilling. Ms. Danielle Demirovic discussed how apprenticeships are a premiere pathway for veterans. A national registered apprenticeship program exists, called the United Services Military Apprenticeship Program, or USMAP, helping transitioning service members. ▪ Ms. Demirovic explained that her office plans to research USMAP to see how the commonwealth can benefit from this program. ▪ Ms. Demirovic shared a Quick Guide on Apprenticeship Benefits for Veterans. She always seeks ways to share information about Registered Apprenticeships, so collaborative efforts and ideas are welcome. PA CareerLink® Registered Apprenticeship Resources for Registered Apprenticeship Programs <div style="text-align: center;">  <p>Apprenticeship for Veterans - Quick Gu</p> </div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ms. Jane Heiple presented on the Troops to Teachers (TTT) program, scheduled for a national sunset last year. However, with a grant extension, the program is still in operation within PA to assist transitioning service members in obtaining teaching certification to address the current teacher shortage. They are hoping for an additional year of the grant extension to keep the program alive in PA. ▪ There are 17 veterans in the program at Mercyhurst University. The university has been a fantastic partner, offering veterans a 50% tuition discount on the flexible, one-year online program. ▪ The TTT program will transition to the Military-Civilian Transition Office. It will be among other programs, such as the Transition Assistance Program, the Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program, and the DOD SkillBridge program. ▪ Ms. Heiple also shared that nationally, one in 400 veterans who receive information will participate in the TTT program, but in PA, that ratio is one in 20. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ BG (PA) Weigl asked if other educational institutions besides Mercyhurst University are seeing the same success or if DMVA should try to connect with the military branch transition programs to highlight Mercyhurst. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ms. Heiple explained that Mercyhurst had shown a commitment to veterans interested in becoming teachers. Other locations around the country offer information but do not track the data of where those veterans go for certification. ▪ Mr. Ralph Roach briefed on the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) and how they offer individualized career plans. Data explained the number of veterans and those with a disability served by the program over the past few years.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Anyone who has a disability, but is legally able to work, can apply for assistance through the OVR to obtain an eligibility screening. ▪ Mr. Roach explained that after an initial connection to the OVR, team members rapidly engage to assist a client within 30-60 days.
<p style="text-align: center;">WOMEN VETERANS COMMITTEE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ms. Ally Murr discussed the PA women veterans’ magazine publication compiled by Melissa Washington from Women Veterans Alliance, a non-profit working on individual states’ publication editions. Materials, articles, photos, and ads are being collected through March 2024, with time for editing and polishing before the launch in June 2024. ▪ Ms. Murr explained her connection to SCI Muncy and how she is the American Legion VSO representative who regularly visits the prison on the last Wednesday of each month. These all-day visits include outreach, peer support, and benefit information. Ms. Murr will assist the incarcerated women veterans with their needs and share community and DMVA resources where applicable. ▪ The women veterans at SCI Muncy have access to a doctor and can obtain a compensation and pension (C&P) exam for benefit eligibility while inside the facility. ▪ One barrier preventing women veterans from connecting to resources is the lack of digital literacy or web access. ▪ The American Legion headquarters has named Ms. Murr, a consultant for the women veterans American Legion meeting, to help modernize the organization and reach younger veterans. Additionally, the organization hopes to collaborate more with other women veteran conventions and organizations. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ BG (PA) Weigl mentioned the need for women veterans to participate in the PA women veterans’ magazine and for organizations to consider paying for ad space.
<p style="text-align: center;">JUDICIARY COMMITTEE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mr. Michael Carrington described his recent presentation to the PA Parole Board, explaining the positive outcomes of veteran inmates who voluntarily participate in the Veteran Service Units (VSUs) at various SCI locations. The Parole Board was very impressed by the services offered within the VSUs and the extremely low recidivism rates for those who participate. This environment allows the inmates to support one another on their journey to building a better future, and the hope is to open more VSUs at other facilities. ▪ The second veteran employee symposium was a huge success, serving hundreds of employees. ▪ SCI Mercer is the first correctional institution within PA to have an American Legion post. Other facilities are looking into starting a post as well. ▪ Mr. Carrington invited any committee or member of the GAC-VS to visit an SCI location for Memorial Day ceremonies or a tour of any VSU. ▪ A recent "Shark Tank" event occurred at SCI Houtzdale, where inmates pitched business plans to a panel of judges. This opportunity allowed the inmates to research an idea and practice sharing the business model that could develop after release.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The DOC consistently reaches out to any new hires with prior military service. Hence, those new employees understand there is a veteran support system and individuals who can assist in getting resources, should they be needed. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Ms. Krolczyk asked if the DOC worked with the DCED Business One-Stop Shop for any assistance regarding the Shark Tank event. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Mr. Carrington shared that they did not connect with DCED as they have only held one event so far but were willing to work together if that could assist the veterans. ➤ BG (PA) Weigl stated that DMVA tends to deny entry to the veterans' homes a few times a week due to behavioral health issues or past challenges that put individuals in the "hard-to-place" category. DMVA is working with the Federal VA on strategies to assist these individuals better, and DOC partners will receive pertinent information. ➤ BG (PA) Weigl explained that inmates must be very creative and resourceful regarding projects like the Shark Tank or the greenhouse initiative because they do not have internet access. Because of this, any agency that can assist with adding resources to the SCI locations to educate the inmates would be beneficial on their road to reentry. ➤ Ms. Murr asked about the application process for creating an American Legion chapter at other SCI locations, as she would be interested in starting one for the women veterans at SCI Muncy. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Mr. Troy Edwards stated that he is working through that process now at SCI Dallas and would share his knowledge with Ms. Murr.
<p style="text-align: center;">GOOD OF THE ORDER / CLOSING REMARKS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ BG (PA) Weigl encouraged all participants to talk with their agency leaders about the work of the GAC-VS and share the importance of having quarterly meetings so that DMVA can share programs and initiatives for awareness. ▪ Mr. Ferraro explained that DMVA is close to acquiring a school building in Lickdale as a resource center. All state agencies represented on the GAC-VS will have the option for representation at the center to assist veterans. ▪ Ms. Krolczyk reminded all participants to check the following resources: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ DMVA website for the approved meeting materials. (www.dmva.pa.gov) ➤ Veterans Registry, where service members, veterans, family members, and caregivers can sign up for the DMVA Digest. (www.register.dmva.pa.gov). ➤ Veterans Trust Fund, where non-profit organizations and County Directors of Veterans Affairs can apply for grants that assist veterans in their communities. (Veterans Trust Fund Grant Program (pa.gov))

	<p>➤ Operation Recognition encourages veterans who dropped out of high school to enlist in WWII, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War to contact their local school board to possibly obtain an honorary High School diploma. This may also include posthumous instances. Resources (pa.gov) 1949 Act 14 - PA General Assembly (state.pa.us)</p>
	<p>Next Meeting: November 1, 2023, 1:00-3:00 PM Governor's Residence (by invitation)/virtual</p>
ADJOURNMENT	The meeting adjourned at 2:50 PM.

NEW ACTION ITEMS

#	ACTION	STATUS
1	Janette Krolczyk to share contact information from Tyler Gum of the PA Military Museum.	Complete
2	Janette Krolczyk to share the registered apprenticeship Quick Guide from Danielle Demirovic.	Complete
3	BG (PA) Weigl to connect with Danielle Demirovic regarding apprenticeships.	Complete
4	Janette Krolczyk to connect Michael Carrington of DOC with Terrell Martin of DCED for resources in the Business One-Stop Shop for future business events for inmates.	Complete
5	Troy Edwards will share the application process for creating an American Legion post at an SCI location with Ally Murr.	Complete

OLD ACTION ITEMS

#	ACTION	STATUS
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