



Multnomah County Veteran Services Taskforce

October 5th, 2015, 9:00am – 11:00am

Multnomah Building, Room 126, 501 SE Hawthorne Blvd, Portland, Oregon 97214

MEETING MINUTES Focus – Accessing Benefits

Welcome and Introductions

Task Force meeting attended by: Diane McKeel, Sean Files, Estanislado Quinones, John Concepcion, Rachel Livernois, Walter Robinson II, Nancy Bumpus, Jonathan Sanford, Patrick Morrison, Casey Curry, Raychel Gary, Jill Behunin, Matt Burton, Eric Ensley, Peggy Kuhn, Mitch Sparks, Andrea Jusino, Mary Carroll, Ed Howard, Diane Labant, Pete Pringle, Doug Kuhl, Laurie Skillman, Cameron Smith, Don Weber

| TOPIC / PRESENTER | NOTES |
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| Veterans who don't meet eligibility criteria for benefits or services: A group discussion about barriers, action steps | <p>Commissioner McKeel introduced the topic, noted that much of the Task Force's focus has been on connecting veterans with available services, and goal of this discussion is to get more information about reasons veterans may not be eligible for those services, and available alternatives to meet their needs.</p> <p>During discussion, task force members identified the following groups of veterans they are seeing who don't qualify for services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Army and Air National Guard and Reserves who were not hurt or federally activated for deployment• Marines not deployed 180 days• Veterans who were dishonorably discharged <p>Others included veterans who have been convicted of a sex offense that are not eligible for housing programs, and veterans who served after Vietnam but before Desert Storm who may be eligible for home loans but not many other VA services.</p> <p>The Air Guard is currently scheduled for a deployment to Romania and many will not be eligible for VA services upon their return – similar to how many of those who were uninjured during deployments to Hurricane Katrina or wildfires aren't eligible, despite trauma that they may have experienced. Returning Veterans Project is serving this population, and there are also resources available from American Legion and the National Guard for families. Transition Projects is screening for Guard and Reserve soldiers, and the task force discussed ways to prioritize this population for other programs they may be eligible for.</p> <p>The county is currently engaged in an initiative to end veteran homelessness by the end of the year. The county has allocated general fund dollars for anyone who doesn't meet eligibility criteria for VA housing. The HUD definition of homeless is living in a place not suitable for human habitation, including campgrounds. If you meet a homeless veteran, have them call 211 to get assessed and referred to Transition Projects. The goal is to identify homeless veterans on the registry, use it to improve outreach to them, and get homeless veterans housed.</p> |

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| | <p>Another barrier is misinformation, as veterans don't think they are eligible for any services or benefits so they don't ask. The action step is to funnel veterans to an accredited veteran service officer so they get good information and have a strong advocate. Eric described work the county VSOs are doing for character of service discharge hearings, education about eligibility, and referrals to other partners at the county or in community to get the support they need. The county veteran service office is receiving 1,100 calls per month, and over the past four months they have met with 600 people.</p> <p>Action Steps:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The JTAP role will be filled by CRRC outreach staff. Task Force will have a presentation on this group's work at a future meeting. 2. Will continue to review resources available to guard and reserve service members, potentially as an item on next year's task force work plan. 3. Develop proposals for priority referral for Guard and Reserve veterans in local programs if they aren't eligible for VA services. 4. Explore ways of developing clearing house of information to increase service provider understanding and connectivity. How can this leverage the work of Veteran Resource Guide position in county veteran service office. |
| <p>ODVA Update; Overview of LGBT Coordinator Position</p> <p>Cameron Smith & Mitch Sparks <i>Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs</i></p> | <p>Director Cameron Smith presented an overview of ODVA's 2015 Annual Report, available at http://www.oregon.gov/odva/INFO/docs/2015%20ODVA%20Annual%20Report_web.pdf, as we approach the 70th anniversary of the agency. Specific highlights from this year include \$60 million in low-interest home loans, over 9,000 new claims that draw down \$2.5 billion in federal dollars to this state, and an average disability and pension payment of just over \$19,000, which is almost 50% above the national average. Discussed demographic trends among Oregon's veterans and shared policy agenda and the value of leveraging voices and expertise of everyone at the table.</p> <p>Mitch described the new women and LGBT positions that were created with funding from the 2015 legislative session. The goal for each of these positions is to get into the community, see what the issues are for these populations, and come back to the agency with strategies to effectively connect with counties, state agencies, and other local partners. The women veteran policy position will likely be posted this month, and the LGBT position will be posted by the end of the year. A key focus for these new roles will be to get info and build relationships at meetings and events, so please get details to Mitch if you'd like ODVA to participate (mitchel.sparks@odva.gov).</p> |

Updates

All

The Portland Stand Down took place September 11th and was attended by 550 veterans. The East County Stand Down is scheduled October 17th. Contact Pete Pringle for more information or to volunteer.

Jonathan discussed the importance of the new ODVA positions and how important they are in improving outreach and relationships with veterans and getting them benefits.

Honor Flight just returned from Washington DC a few weeks ago. To get involved in the next flight or engaged in fundraising or volunteering, contact Diane at diane@synergync.com

Returning Veterans project is beginning a massage program at U of O for veterans, mental health programs will begin soon at Clackamas CC, and Pacific University is starting speech and language programs with potential for others soon. All information is on the Returning Veterans Project website.

Eric reported that the county veterans service office recently hired 2 new CVSOs, one justice involved VSO and one veteran resource guide.

The JTAP program may get rebooted. Updates will come as they become available, hopefully with more funding and stability for this important program.

Upcoming Events:

- Tuesday October 6th: Homefront 911 book reading by author Stacy Bannerman. 5441 SE Belmont St, Portland. Doors open at 6:30pm. Event presented by Returning Veterans Project, email mail@returningveterans.org for more information.
- October 10th: Downtown Compassion Clinic. First Baptist Church 909 SW 11th Ave, 8-3pm.
- October 14, 21, 28: Lioness Writing Project workshops at the Hollywood Library. Visit <https://multcolib.org/library-location/hollywood> to for more info and to register.
- October 28th: LGBTQ quarterly alliance meeting. Eric Ensley has helped organize a subcommittee meeting with ODVA and the three metro counties on October 29th from 3-4:30pm to discuss LGBT veterans and services. Contact the veterans service office at 503-988-VETS for more information.
- November 1st: Victory on the Homefront event at Camp Withycombe. Visit helpingmenheal.org for more information.
- November 5th: Multnomah County Board of Commissioners will adopt a proclamation to recognize Veterans Day. 9:30am at the board room in Multnomah Building.
- November 19th: Hiring our Heroes job fair at the Veteran's Memorial Coliseum. Employment workshop for job seekers and the brunch & learn for employers begins at 8:30am, hiring fair is from 10am – 1pm. For registration questions, please email hiringourheroes@uschamber.com or call 202-463-5807.
- December 6th: Holiday party for veterans at Camp Withycombe. Contact Diane Labant for more information.