

-MINUTES-

GOVERNOR'S TASK FORCE ON VETERANS' SERVICES FULL COMMITTEE

Date: June 5, 2008

Place: Oregon Military Department

Time: 3:00 p.m.

In attendance: Jacqueline Moir, Paula Brown, Jim Keller, Vicki Berger, Jerry Lorang, Jim Booker, Mike Caldwell, Dan Estes, Jack Heims, Bob Plame, Paul Evans, Michael Claussen (sp), Molly Kok and Carolyn Lundstrom.

Note: the tape recorder/microphone malfunctioned periodically during this meeting so the transcribed notes may be missing information.

Chair Evans started the meeting noting the low attendance and that it was likely due to members being confused since the state-wide tour dates have been set.

There was some discussion about forming a model (plan) based on what Clackamas County has put together. Evans agreed to make contact with Oregon Congressional delegates and discussing the concept with them.

Jack Heims, Mental Health Director at the Portland VA Medical Center and Task Force member, provided a presentation about the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Healthcare. Also there from the Portland VA were Michael Carlson, Molly Kok, and Carolyn Landstrom. The VA's duty of caring for the physical and emotional needs of America's veterans and their families is an extremely large challenge. Some of the key items that were brought out during the presentation were the following.

- The VA Northwest Health Network, Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) 20, includes the states of Alaska, Washington, Oregon, most of the state of Idaho, and one county each in Montana and California. It is the largest network area geographically.
- The VA is not in any way a part of the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD).
- Community Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOC's) are opening across the state in order to provide better access for primary care needs. Specialty care needs for most patients still requires a trip to a VA Medical Center facility.

- Of all VA Medical Centers, the Portland facility ranks 3rd in ‘Research Excellence’. The Portland facility holds four ‘Center of Excellence’ titles in the fields of – Mental Health, Parkinsons, Multiple Sclerosis and Hepatitis C.
- One of many purposes the VA strives to achieve is to also be a premium training facility for the healthcare workers, and to commit to being emergency response resources in their communities.
- The number of patients for VA facilities in the Northwest has doubled in the last 10 years. The top care needs are in the area of mental health and brain injuries, followed by hearing and other compensation and pension related care.

Some of the biggest challenges facing local VA Medical Centers are –

1. The timeframe in which the federal budgeting process operates in comparison to the growth rate of patients.
2. Having enough mental care providers to meet the current and growing demands.
3. Acquiring and retaining quality care providers for the CBOC’s throughout the state.
4. The complexity in deciphering eligibility codes; what care is qualified for VA coverage, co-pays or not, etc.
5. Urgent and emergency care needs and the proximity or availability of a VA Medical Center to provide that care.

The VA Healthcare online medical records system is a model being looked at by the Healthcare industry worldwide.

Some of the factors that are and will shape the challenges in the very near future are –

- The sharp increase in women veterans and their unique care needs.
- 34% of current military members experience multiple deployments
- Increased traumatic incident survival = increase cases of TBI, PTSD etc.
- Large numbers of Vietnam veterans who never accessed care from the VA before now aging and seeking care.

The group then dispersed into the sub groups. They met for approximately 30 minutes and then the whole committee gathered for final wrap-up information sharing.

Chair Evans asked that if any of the sub-groups have some particular questions they would like asked at the tour town hall or leadership meetings relating to issues that have come up in their groups, to please forward and him an email.

Someone brought up the suggestion that exploration be done into the Governor issuing an executive order for state agencies, counties, and cities collect information as to if an individual is a vet or if they would be interested in receiving veteran related information. This could be done for all persons using an agencies service. Paul stated that this could be looked into.

He then brought up that he is currently in discussion with ODOT (Oregon Department of Transportation) about the option of indicating veteran on Oregon Licenses. Not too well received initially but more discussion will be taking place. A workgroup is setup to work on this project.

Bob Plame then brought up the question as to where the depository for this information would be and how access would be monitored. Discussion on this involved revisiting a presentation that was done several weeks ago concerning the OPUS data system. It is best scenario that this system since it already exists and can hold a large volume of data, could be enhanced somehow for this purpose.