

Legislative Task Force on Veterans' Reintegration

Minutes
June 25, 2010

Participants

Mike Burton
Sen. Martha Schrader (Phone)
Bob Plame
Jack Heims
Bill Doctor
Jim Booker
Michelle Davidson (Phone)
Elanna Schlichting (Phone)
Fritz Graham (Phone)

The meeting began at 10:05 a.m. and introductions were made.

The goal of the meeting was to review the Findings from the previous meeting and begin identifying Recommendations for those findings. Both Chair Burton and Jack Heims suggested grouping the Findings by category. Three categories were identified: Conditions, System and Continuum. Conditions are findings that relate to a veteran's condition upon returning to Oregon. System findings relate to issues with existing reintegration systems. Continuum refers to continued service through the entire 36-month reintegration period. The following findings were placed in the following categories. Some findings overlap categories and will be listed multiple times.

CONDITIONS

1. Military culture discourages troops from self-identifying medical/emotional/psychological and other reintegration concerns.
2. Not every veteran is eligible for services.
3. Providing reintegration services to Active Duty and Reserve veterans is difficult if they do not self identify.
4. National Guard and Reserve veterans are being redeployed within the reintegration period and they are not healed by the time they redeploy.
5. Families are essential to the Reintegration of soldiers.
6. Unemployment for Oregon's returning veterans is exponentially higher than the national average.
7. Military takes six months to train soldiers for war and only five days to prepare them for home.
8. There are no caseworkers following veterans through their 36-month reintegration period.
9. Women veterans may experience different reintegration issues than there male counterparts.

SYSTEMS

1. Transitional/Bridge Funding is insufficient to help veterans transition between unemployment and work.
2. Military skills are not routinely cross-checked for college credits.
3. Currently funding for Fort Oregon is limited to one-year. The website will need continued future funding.
4. Not every veteran is eligible for services.
5. Returning soldiers are being told by active duty elements that the VA will take care of them instead of being taken care of by the military.
6. Soldiers on terminal leave cannot use VA and Tri-Care is difficult to access in specific areas and difficult to navigate.
7. Returning soldiers are being told by active duty elements that the VA will take care of them instead of being taken care of by the military.
8. VA overwhelmed by large demobilizations that apply for VA health care.
9. Services for family members post deployment are lacking.
10. Marketing an important component of reintegration service delivery.
11. Military takes six months to train soldiers for war and only five days to prepare them for home.
12. ODVA's Campus Veteran Service Officer Program has been a successful outreach to student veterans.
13. There are no caseworkers following veterans through their 36-month reintegration period.
14. An integrated and coordinated reintegration program will require funding (for services and coordination).

CONTINUUM

1. Currently there is no regional or central coordinating authority for reintegration efforts.
2. Current services for reintegrating veterans are significant during the first 6 months in most areas.
3. There appears to be three distinct 12-month phases that a veteran goes through and services are need for each phase.
4. Veterans seemingly begin to have significant crises at the 18-24 month timeframe.
5. There needs to be a smooth handoff of reintegrating veterans from the military to the Oregon Department of Veterans' Affairs.
6. Families are essential to the Reintegration of soldiers.
7. Military takes six months to train soldiers for war and only five days to prepare them for home.
8. There are no caseworkers following veterans through their 36-month reintegration period.
9. Women veterans may experience different reintegration issues than there male counterparts.

RECCOMENDATIONS

Conditions

1. Draft legislation directing the Oregon Military Department to examine military cultural barriers that discourage servicemembers from self-identifying medical/emotional/psychological and other reintegration concerns. Direct the Oregon Military Department to draft recommendations to eliminate these barriers and report back to the Oregon Legislature.
2. Draft a Joint Memorial urging Congress to have the Pentagon examine military cultural barriers that discourage servicemembers from self-identifying medical/emotional/psychological and other reintegration concerns. Direct the Pentagon to draft recommendations to eliminate these barriers and report back to Congress.
3. Encourage the Governor to draft an Executive Order directing all state agencies to provide appropriate referral services to veterans seeking reintegration services. Draft legislation directing all state and county veteran service officers and the Oregon Military Department to provide veterans appropriate referral services for reintegration services.
4. Draft legislation to address apparent loopholes in current Veteran Preference law.
5. Continue to support 90-Day Soft Landing proposal currently in Congress.

Continuum

1. Draft legislation establishing a statewide Veterans Reintegration Coordinator in the Governor's Office. (Bill will contain duties and responsibilities).

The Task Force agreed to meet again for a four-hour retreat to complete the recommendations work. Staff will arrange this meeting.

The Task Force adjourned at 12 p.m.