

Oregon Veterans' Services Task Force
Reintegration Subcommittee

Date: Thursday, April 10, 2008
Place: Room 360, State Capitol
Convened at 3:42 p.m.

Attendees: Jack Heims, Scott McCrae, Martha Schrader, Mike Burton, Brian Shuck, Paulina Miller, John Concepcion, Michelle Nelson, Tom Mann, and Robin Steckley (minutes).

Chair Mike Burton began meeting with discussion about the amount of information that has been provided to him and may be in the future. His concerns lie in that there is a limited time in which to conduct the business that the cluster needs to do and a tremendous amount of data to wade through. There will be some outside discussion as to sorting information and determining relevancy. Need is to identify gaps soon and begin work on those. Questioned the committee if they would like to have Revenue folks come and speak to the group today? Yes.

Dallas Weyland came into the room and introduced himself. Explained that he is legislative fiscal officer for ODVA and Military Department. It was decided that in the end of the process the group might want to revisit with Dallas.

Copies minutes from the last meeting were handed out.

Discussion began about last meeting and trying to get a lay of the land so to speak and Tom Mann of ODVA tried to help me with this. Tom has created a PowerPoint and basic flow chart to help us put things in perspective. Chair Burton would like everyone have a copy.

It was requested that any new attendees be sure to give their email address to Scott McCrae for sharing of information purposes.

Chair Burton thanked Jack Hiems of VA for also bringing handouts of information about VA health care facilities in Oregon. Locations and availability to health care services. The Chair then gave a description of the current pilot project at Portland State with the temporary placement of an ODVA veteran service officer, Frank VanMeter. This generates a lengthy discussion about the issue of outreach and the identifying veterans. Some of the key items included –

- Evaluating the environment in which outreach is provided. What barriers face veterans and possibly keep them from seeking services.
- Perhaps some exploration into how to make the point of contact for veterans to be in their community and neighborhood.
- Removal of bureaucracy and stereotyping.

- Clackamas County held a community celebration that was a foundation for many to reconnect with their fellow battle buddies and provided a wonderful show of support and concern to veterans and their families.

This then led to questions to clarify what the demobilization process is and what outreach is made and on what schedule. Scott McCrae gave a brief overview and stated how because this program is new it is still adjusting the contact and follow-up times as they are evolving. Most recently deployed have so much on their plate and one of the last things they want to do is listen to more instructions. Discussion follows –

- When should reintegration outreach begin?
- Most are not ready to come back in or reconnect with military.
- Does pre-mobilization briefings make sense?
- What is or is there a magical time that you can connect and reach those newest veterans and or their family?
- We need to identify if there are services that are in higher demand for these returning veterans?
- The high incidence of TBI, PTSD and other mental issues.
- There are many community and county events that are held to help veterans find jobs, seek services etc. But should they be more neutral?

The subject of those who return and commit suicide. This raises questions about how are they not aware of the help available. How do we make certain that they have that information (knowledge of services and hotlines) and that mental conditions are common side effects of war (remove stigmas). There need to be local, educated, trained and available individuals who veterans can contact. It is a different war and time.

Chair Burton then asked Tom Mann if he would briefly give an overview of the PowerPoint that he prepared and following are key topics.

Reintegration timeframe - Once they have been discharged from the military (DD-214) and are a veteran -

- Disability and Compensation, service-connected
- Non-service connected pensions
- Vocational Rehabilitation and employment assistance
- Health care and Medical care
- Education tuition assistance

Chair Burton notes time and need to wrap up the discussions. It is agreed by the group that a list of specific topics that this committee wants to address before August needs to be compiled. The group wants to be clear as to what the priority needs and issues are for veterans during the reintegration process. Evaluate what is failing them currently and how or what proposals can this committee make to impact this group of veterans. This will involve the how, where, when and so on. All favor the idea of local communities

being available to offer services however there is a concern of enforcing quality and consistency, who would hold them accountable. Funding of new programs or expanded services will be an issue for discussion as well.

Other subcommittee's return to the room and the meeting closes.

Conclusion: Determined that there are informational needs in order for the group to move forward and also set some goals that the group would like to set and meet.

Closing - the scope of what the 'Senior Care and Retirement' subcommittee needs to address and the definition of the group of veterans we are working for must be clarified. Group wants to look into the accessibility and delivery of all of the services and programs that are addressed and improve networking.

Who needs to be at this subcommittee's meetings –

Frank Van Cleave suggests that a CVSO needs to be on the committee -Chair will look into.

Jeff Bodenweiser urges the inclusion of UVGO membership – he is then officially invited to be part of this group.

Sen. Peter Courtney clarifies that he will not always be able to attend but his assistant Sasha will be present and representing him.

Linda McMillan of the ODVA Portland Claims Office offers a final statement as to the work of the veteran service officers in that office and the process of claims filing.