

MINUTES

GOVERNOR'S TASK FORCE ON VETERANS' SERVICES FULL COMMITTEE

Date: April 24, 2008

Place: Capitol Room 360

Time: 3 p.m.

Dan Estes opened and stated that he had been asked to step in for Chair Paul Evans who was going to be a bit late due to another obligation. He asked that everyone introduce themselves beginning with the person to his left.

Mic Alexander, Daniel Thompson, Paula Brown, Jim Willis, Jerry Lorang, Tino Ornelas, Karissa Caldwell, Mike Burton, Diane Gooding, Jim Keller, Jack Hiems, Doug Elieson, Jim Lace, Frank VanCleave, Amy Goodall, Max Brown, Mark Miedema, Theresa Arndt, Chuck Lindley, Robin Steckley, Mike Hanley, Val Conley, Christopher Dauterman, Jeff Bodenweiser, Sasha Pollack, Barry Ventner, Eric Martz, Megan Moyer, Bill Morris and Tom Mann.

Dan then briefly went over what handouts were before them; an 8.5 x 14 sheet from ODVA projecting veteran population in Oregon, per county and by age groups; Copies of the minutes from the last meeting and subcommittee meetings. He then thanked all those that are involved with the minute taking process, they serve the committee well as they are able to use as reference. Also a report and recommendations from the Veterans' Services Work Group, Governor's Task Force on Federal Forest Payment and County Services.

Dan then gave a short lead into the healthcare presentation planned for the whole group. It was agreed upon last week that it worked better to have the main presentations be given to the entire group instead of the presenters trying to get to all three subcommittees in the one-hour time slot allowed.

Dan then turned it over to Amy Goodall, Director of Government Affairs of the Oregon Medical Association. Introduced her guests – Dr. Elieson of Salem, who sees more TRICARE patients in Oregon than any other physician, Dr. Lace who is the Chairman of the Oregon Medical Association's Legislative Committee. Also, Mike Hanley who is a Regional Representative for TRIWEST Healthcare Alliance.

Their presentation was informational regarding TRICARE and its challenges in Oregon. Some of the key issues that were pointed out and briefly discussed included:

- One purpose of TRICARE is to provide access to care outside of VA medical facilities.
- Program was not designed to act as a commercial health insurance program.

- TRICARE is a government entitlement.
- Many challenges for TRICARE-overcoming the stigmas, lower reimbursement rate, signing up physicians to accept a TRICARE patients, and getting those who are seeing TRICARE patients to see a higher number of them.
- Currently across this state most primary-care doctors are not accepting new patients.
- The current, and forecasted, primary-care physician shortage along with number of physicians preparing to retire in Oregon along with the continued increase of returning troops.
- Physicians and/or their staff must take the time to learn TRICARE system, become familiar and comfortable with how it works.
- What can be done in Oregon to address the circumstances of TRICARE in the state (legislation) because some of the challenges are unique to Oregon.
- Transitional Assistance Medical Management Program (TAMMP) for newly returning service members.
- The confusion about the levels of TRICARE and who is eligible for coverage (dependents, widows, survivors?)
- Mike Caldwell explained a bit about personnel at the Oregon Military Department who are proficient in TRICARE/TRIWEST.

The Committee agreed that some hard data showing numbers of covered persons and physicians who accept TRICARE and how many patients with the coverage do they see etc. is needed for support to any suggestions that might be made by this committee.

Paul Evans arrived during the TRICARE presentation and followed up the presentation and discussion with a summary and final clarification of some of the main points. He then dismissed folks at 4:16 p.m. to the subcommittees and mentioned that there were some visitors that were there to speak to a couple of the groups.

Reconvened at 5:01 p.m.

Paul Evans calls upon each chair to provide an update on their committee.

Mike Burton – (*Reintegration*) Had folks from Eastern Oregon Training Center of Pendleton, spoke about a proposal to convert the center into a care center for Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI). A marketing plan and budget proposal for the local community events/outreach is in process by some of the committee members. Incentives for physicians to accept TRICARE patients.

Dan Estes – (*Aging Veterans*) Cemetery capacity and locations were discussed along with veteran population and projections. Expedited claims Tiger Teams for claims submitted by folks 70 yrs-old or for claims that are more than 1 yr-old.

Mic Alexander – (*Post Separation*) Discussion about raising the Medicare reimbursement rate, getting veterans some benefits or priority for getting on the Oregon Health plan or similar if needed. Outreach to physicians and their office administrators about TRICARE.

Paul then reminded the group that the May 1st Task Force focus is Education. Also mentions the film "This is war" may work out some time to view this prior to meeting times will announce at a later date. Also, may consider folks from VA Regional Office to come speak to the group or for the group to visit the regional office perhaps later as one of our tours, etc.

He reviewed upcoming meeting topics - May 8 is set for Housing; May 15 for Workforce; May 22 will be optional; and May 29 is Federal Healthcare.

Question about business/employers coming to discuss items with the group. Paul explained that it has been decided that there will be individuals who will work to coordinate this and some in depth discussions will take place and the outcome shared with the group.

Paul then thanked all for attendance and participation and dismissed the group at 5:14 p.m.