**ND Cares Coalition Meeting Minutes**

**December 5, 2024**

Co-chair Cynthia Whitesell opened the meeting at 1:00 PM, CST. There were 19 people in attendance either on-line or in-person at RJB Armory in Bismarck – each introduced themselves.

Mary Anderson of Protection and Advocacy talked about the statewide electronic voting machine training for those with disabilities. The Secretary of State provided numerous machines that are completely accessible for people with vision, hearing, and other disabilities. P&A plans to do another round of training to prepare for the next election in two years.

Jeremy Harrison from the VA Benefits Administration reported that he has two outreach representatives that are out talking to veterans about the PACT Act.

Jennifer Illich from FirstLink reported they are working with 911 dispatch centers across the state of North Dakota to transfer calls regarding behavioral health needs to FirstLink instead of sending law enforcement. So far about half the 911s have signed up. State Radio is the newest center to sign up.

Sarah Kemp-Tabbut of the Fargo VA, spoke about the University of Jamestown partnership to provide CEUs for the CALM and Safety Planning Trainings, the Atlas System Privacy Pod at the American Legion in Watford City for mental health and other appointments, and the Firearms, Mental Health and your Rights brochure the explains myths and facts about what could happen to one’s firearms if diagnosed with a mental health issue.

Kora Dockter of the ND Suicide Prevention Coalition gave a recap of the Suicide Prevention Annual Conference held in September which we well attended with great feedback. There were 50 in-person with 300 people online and 88 CEU were provided. 100% surveyed stated they would recommend the conference to a friend or colleague. There is a Hope Café scheduled for Dec. 10th where Sen Tim Matthews will provide an update on behavioral health legislation.

Shawn Abbas, PIO for the Vargo VA talked about the VA’s radio and TV suicide prevention outreach where the VA and a few other organizations participated in a Main Street podcast radio show through Prairie Public, and we spoke about activities for Suicide Prevention Month.

Summer Hanson of the Fargo VA explained how they contacted 70 servicemembers recently back from deployment and so far, 35 have been enrolled in the VA healthcare system. She is also starting a cohort for the mindfulness-based stress-reduction group at the VA that will be a virtual offering. Active case management numbers are at about 65, for those veterans who have significant psychosocial needs or severe illness or injury. They are screening about new 100 post-911 veterans every month and, on average about, three or four new military treatment facility transfers are occurring each month for those being medically discharged for some severe illness or injury.

Kodi Pinks of the ND Dept. of Health and Human Services talked about the release of the state’s suicide dashboard. There are 19 reported deaths so far in 2024.

Bryan Watters of the ND Dept. of Veterans Affairs reported that their veteran and surviving spouse data contract with Deloitte should see some results by the end of December, however Daniel’s Law out of New Jersey is preventing them from looking at on reporting data for public servants. The cost per infraction is $1000, so Deloitte stripped out all the public servant data in all states they are working with. This is a problem since about 30% of government service are veterans as opposed to 5% for the regular population.

Rodney Gellner of the Fargo VA, talked about how well Dr. Imholte of the mental health department is doing recruiting providers. He also reiterated that the VA is trying to engage more veterans through a media campaign, and they are close to kicking that off. Many veterans are also taking advantage of the benefits of the COMPACT Act – there were many episodes of care in North Dakota.

Kelli Weiand of ND Military Outreach reported that the Minot Stan Down saw 164 veterans and about 50 family members attend. She is continuing to work with the clients in my area, traveling the upper part of the state, weather permitting.

Nikki Frohlich of ND Military Outreach reported that she just returned from the City of Horace ND Cares Community Partner presentation and will be participating in a post-Yellow Ribbon event in Jamestown for a returning National Guard unit.

LTC Ann Willoughby of the North Dakota National Guard Family Programs reported that they are hosting several holiday events around the state. April is Month of the Military Child, and they are already starting to plan for the kids’ summer camps. On Dec 3rd the National Guard held a legislature education event to showcase units, their missions, the different types of equipment and the different programs of both the Army and Air Guard. A Guard Your Future event is coming up in Fargo and Bismarck which is a retention and recruiting event. The NDNG is looking for a financial adviser to assist service members They are starting to see financial stress come through in some of our serious incidents that are involving suicide ideation and or attempts.

Sen. Dever talked about the need for legal assistance for housing and relayed a story of a Marine Veteran who was being evicted from a trailer part. He just heard of Legal Services of North Dakota could help. They presented their services at a recent meeting at the DAV.

Pam Sagness of NDHHS discussed the legislative session, a new state hospital and the human service centers conversion to CDBHCs. Continuing to expand community-based services is important as including Community Connect and Free Through Recovery have waiting lists for almost six months. There is also an effort to redefine what “crisis” means from someone’s life is at risk to a broader definition. Pam will email information about the Opioid Best Practice Summit Dec. 9th and the Day for Prevention on Dec. 10th.

Michelle Panos of ND Cares reported that Legal Services of North Dakota will officially become an ND Cares Business Partner next month. We are currently running a radio ad for them and working on a TV ad. For the Governor’s Challenge Update, we are also working with the ND Suicide Prevention Office on a 988-campaign targeted toward veterans and the military community involving radio and television outreach and tangible items such as posters and possibly drink coasters. In addition, ND Hopes is also working on a media campaign targeting Veterans with the goal of reducing stigma and encouraging help-seeking. Kora Dockter and Tammy Monsebroten of the VA spoke at the ND Hospital Association conference in the fall. Attendees where receptive to their message. Will are partnering with the VA in April to hold a provider military culture training with CEUs at the Armory in Bismarck. In September Nikki Frohlich and Aaron Moss of the Minot Vet Center provided military culture training as part of a larger Suicide Prevention Symposium put on by Together with Veterans. For Peer Support, we have 24 civilian peer specialist who have complete the military endorsement and 8 veterans trained as peer supports. The ND Peer Support Association is interested in partnering with us to train more veterans and provide their members with military culture training. She also talked about upcoming CALM and Safety Planning training, the Myths and Facts trifold and the biometric trigger locks that will be available through ND Hopes.

The group talked about the pro and cons of creating messaging about suicide prevention, enrolling in the VA and the issue of service member promotability after seeking care.

Michelle highlighted some of the upcoming listed events.

The meeting ended at 2:37pm