**ND Cares Coalition Meeting Minutes**

**June 6, 2024**

Co-Chair Cindy Whitesell opened the meeting. There were 22 people in attendance.

Samantha Christopherson of the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention gave a presentation on the free postvention resources available to anyone who suicide loss survivors such as Healing Conversations, a program of actual loss survivors acting as volunteers reaching out to recent survivors with assistance in person or over the phone or video chat. Another resource is the International Survivors of Suicide Loss Day where people come together in small conferences around the state to find connection and understanding and a healing activity. The next one is the first Saturday before Thanksgiving. Two the resources are Support Group Facilitator Training and Clinician Training. She talked about available free materials and booklets for individuals, schools and business.

Kora Dockter from the ND Suicide Prevention Coalition reported that they are busy planning their annual conference and the possibility of establishing a LOSS Team to assist law enforcement or the coroner with the needs of loss survivors immediately after the time of loss.

Carlotta McCleary with Mental Health America and the ND Federation of Families for Children's mental health stated that they just launched a new website providing a self-screening tool. If the tool detects a positive for a mental health need, instructions will be given on what to do next. MHA offers individualized navigation to resources. She also talked about the Consumer and Family Network Conference in Bismarck on June 11th.

Lonnie Wangen of the ND Dept. of Veterans Affairs reported that his organization was able to fund a service dog for a veteran wit PTSD and a few more in the works. Lonnie also mentioned that Dr. Breton Weintraub the Director of the VA Medical System is Fargo is transferring to New Mexico and the interim director is Jason Petti.

Jason Petti of the VA in Fargo introduced himself and talked about how the VA is expanding the area of consideration for the Fisher House to a 5 mile radius of the Fargo VA which could mean it located in Minnesota. The solicitation went out last week.

Caren Stewart, integrated primary prevention officer from the ND National Guard explained her program was created to prevent harmful behaviors such as domestic violence, suicide, substance and child abuse and sexual assault by creating policies and programs in the community the affect change that decrease the number of incidents of harmful behaviors. They are currently developing plans moving forward.

Amy Ruff from the ND National Guard reported that she and Sarah Kemp Tabbut from the VA met with the ND Department of Public Instruction about the opportunity to provide CALM Training at the School Counselors Conference in February. The NDNG suicide prevention office will support the Moffit Family Day at the firing range, and they are also starting work on plans in September for Suicide Prevention month.

Mary Anderson from Protection & Advocacy reported are working still with North Dakota assistive technology to promote independent living by customizing homes to meet needs. May also mentioned that the TBI committee of P&A is interested in expanding services to veterans with documented TBI. Veterans should know they are entitled to be free from abuse, neglect, exploitation, their civil rights are protected. P&A is also working to train those with a disability how to use voting machines, so it is not new to them on voting day.

Jeffrey Diemert from ND Legal Aide explained that a new grant allows them to provide services to veterans, and specifically under a homeless veterans and endangered for homelessness. His currently in the ND National Guard and is deployed to the southwest boarder but he is still working with veterans remotely. He can help with a variety of legal issues including criminal cases as long as the legal issue, if unresolved, could lead to homelessness. Michelle Panos mentioned getting the word out to veterans through radio and television.

Nikki Frohlich of ND Miliary Outreach (Bismarck) talked about the outreach she will be doing with the Bismarck Vet Center, Hazen and Beulah. She will attend the Vision West Conference in Dickinson and the PTSD Awareness Event in at Sertoma Park. She will also be helping to plan a military kids fishing day with geocaching on the 11th of July and will attend the Moffit Family Day on the 13th, then the Military Appreciation Day at Medora. The Central North Dakota Stand Down is planned for Aug. 22 in Bismarck.

Kelli Weiand of ND Miliary Outreach (Minot) talked about her participation at Military Day in the Park, the Native American Stand Down in Belcourt on the 10th -11th at the casino. The VFW is hosting a PACT Act event that evening as well. Kelli will also have a table of resources at Flag Day Ceremony at the local Chevrolet dealership and at the North Dakota State fair during Military Appreciation Day. She is also working with the VA to show the suicide prevention film, the Ripple Effect at MSU in September.

Heather Call, the new Director of Psychological Health for the Guard said this was her first Coalition meeting. She is currently working on program curriculum development, but mostly works one-on-one with soldiers.

Kodi Pinks, epidemiologist for the ND Department of Health and Human Services reported that based on April numbers, there were 54 suicides so far this year and 18.9% (10) were that were military or veterans.

Todd Remington from the Bismarck Vet Center talked about many events including the Hidden Wounds Bridge in Jamestown, an On the Water fishing event and the Sturgis Motorcycle Rally where is will be helping Veterans with their claims, counseling and connection with the VA. The Vet Center will also have a mobile unit at the United Tribes Powwow in Sept. Lastly, he reported that all the Vet Centers are fully staffed at this time.

Rachel Pavlicek, the 988 Coordinator from FirstLink, stated that they were able to sign an MOU with Grand Forks sign 11 to start answering their phone calls and then hopefully with the state radio. They are still working with Red River Dispatch. First Link is developing a toolkit for hospitals or anyone that may benefit from a suicide follow up program within their organization. They signed MOUs just this week with Kaiser and Alexis in Bismarck for Care and Support contacts.

Michelle Panos reported that ND Cares Communities stand at 58 and businesses at 28 and they are working with the University of Jamestown to find a date for a presentation. We’re doing well on our budget. We plan to spend a bit more on marketing and travel expenses will likely go up as well. We haven’t spent much from our ND National Guard Foundation account – only $1000 to the University of Jamestown for taking care of the CEUs for CALM Training. Under the ND Broadcasters Association contract we are running spots for FirstLink, veterans home stand downs, the COMPACT Act and adding a spot announcing Legal Services of North Dakota will be serving veterans. She also gave an update on some of the Governors Challenge initiatives such as presenting in front of providers at the ND Hospital Association Conference in the fall, working with ND Hopes on a coroner’s website and possibly a Coroners Association. Promoting military culture training to civilian peer support specialists at the Behavioral Health conference in the fall, training a small group of Minot veterans to become peer support specialist, creating and distributing a lethal means safety myths and facts sheet for firearm owners. Sarah Hemp Tabbut provided a hybrid SAVE-CALM training to ND State executive branch, legislative and judicial leadership at a recent meeting at the Heritage Center. Later on in the year, we will try to develop a training for all state employees via the PeopleSoft website. Lastly Michelle talked about revising the ND Military Data Book for the next legislative session.

The next Coalition meeting will be September 5th, and the next executive meeting will be July 11.