 **ND Cares Executive Committee Meeting Minutes  
 November 7, 2024  
  
 Attendees: Shelly Sizer, Kodi Pinks, Rodney Gellner,  
 Lonnie Wangen, Bryan Watters, BG Huber,   
 LTC Willoughby, Jonathan Ross, Michelle Panos   
 (All virtual)  
   
 Absent: Pam Sagness, David Becker**

**1. Opening.** Chairman Shelly Sizer briefly opened the meeting. The minutes from August 1 were approved.

**2. Presentation:** Jonathan Ross discussed the objectives of Semper Forward which is a program of the   
 Department of Commerce, and his role to talk to service members and veterans about staying in or  
 relocating to North Dakota. At the end of his discussion, we BG Huber recommended we put him in touch  
 with ND Military Affairs Commission and provide him with information on all the ways ND is a military  
 friendly state.

**3. New Business**

* **Executive Committee Updates**
  + **Regional VA, Fargo:** Rodney Gellner introduced himself as the Interim Director of the Fargo VA system is serving a 102-day detail while awaiting a new permanent director. Currently they are implementing a strategic plan to increase the number of veterans using the VA. They will also be adding radiology (and potentially ultrasound), and a chiropractor in the Grand Forks CBOC. The Bismarck CBOC will be larger as well. In addition, they are working to strengthen ties with community providers so veterans can get services in a timely manner. Parking is still an issue as construction on the expanding the first floor with the Whole Health addition and the outpatient mental health building. Lastly Rod reported there was a site tour of a potential Fisher House site on Halloween. In response to Michelle’s question, he will find out how many people have taken advantage of the COMPACT Act.
  + **NDHHS**-**Health:** Kodi Pinks reported that the state has officially posted suicide data online. Currently is does not break down the veteran-specific numbers but she did state that for 2023, 17.8% of 146 suicides in the state were military/veteran related and as of October of 2024, 15.1% of 106 suicides were military/veteran related, so we are seeing a bit of a decline overall numbers. Firearms still lead at the method chosen at 58.6%. Both coroners and law enforcement can fill out the Suicide Critical Risk Assessment Profile (SCRAP) form to that provides better details for reports for their own purposes but also to aid in the suicide fatality review process.
  + **NDDVA:** Lonnie reported that now if you are in North Dakota, but your phone number is out of state, Verizon, and T-Mobile will route your call the 988 in North Dakota. We need to push legislation that makes sure FirstLink has secure funding. Lonnie will start to get death records automatically quarterly. He will share them with Tammy Monsebroten of the VA. He also stated that veteran identification through the data contractor for the state should be done by the end of the year. His long-term goal is to have every DD214 be verified by the NNDVA and the verification should be good for all agency purposes across the state. He also heard the 911 has started to transfer some calls to 988. Finally, Lonnie mentioned the he found a someone interested in being a veterans court mentor to a veteran in need. We’ll see how it works out.
  + **NDNG:** BG Huber reported that they have been very busy supporting state active duty for wild land fires. Aviation flew 83.7 hours, dumped 359 buckets of water (215,000 gallons), and 20 personnel rotated in and out doing on the ground firefighting efforts working with the Forest Service in North Dakota. November is the month of the military family so there will be different events at various facilities for military families. The 817th Engineer company out of Jamestown is in the process of doing a demobilization and back for Thanksgiving. About 50 people from the 142nd engineers out of Valley City are just beginning their mission on the southwest border. This is the 4th year ND has soldiers in a federal status on the border. Several people will be speaking at 11 Veterans Day engagements around the state and a large event at the Veterans Home in December.
  + **NDNG:** LTC Willoughby stated that hosted Halloween events around the state and there were over 800 participants at the event at RBJ armory in Bismarck. There are tables of resources at these events and families can socialize. Katrina Fessler is the new Youth Coordinator in Grand Forks. They are getting ready to start planning the summer camp events and a Welcome Home event for the first chock of the 817th Engineer company.

**4. Old Business** Michelle reported that the ND Cares Partner Presentation date is set for the 13th and we’re holding off on  
 the LSND presentation until Sgt Diemert gets back from the southwest border. She also reported on the  
 TV and Radio spots that are running via the ND Broadcaster Association contract. Facebook posts are  
 reaching mostly women and only 30% men who ND Cares will likely diversify social media but starting   
 an X (formerly Twitter) account. She reported on the progress of the latest version of the North Dakota  
 Military Data book and went through the changes from last iteration. Executive committee members  
 have their opinion and suggestions for edits and improvement. Lonnie mentioned 988 should also be  
 included somewhere. For Governors Challenge updates, Michelle reported that she and Lonnie are  
 working with Melissa Markegard on a 988 campaign that specially targets veterans. We also have 8  
 veterans that completed Peer Support training. We’re also thinking about a TV spot using a testimonial  
 from a veteran who when through the training, hoping others would consider taking it. There have been  
 90 providers who received CEUs for the various CALM trainings conducted in FY24. We are adding  
 safety planning training for the coming year. Our partner ND Hopes will purchase biometric gun and  
 drawer locks and distribute them to our Governors Challenge partners as needed. 47 people have  
 completed one or more tiers of the Star Behavioral Health Provider Training. We are promoting miliary  
 culture training everywhere. Nikki Frohlich of Military Outreach went on the Veterans Hour radio program  
 to promote the training.

**5. Upcoming Events**

Michelle highlighted some of the events listed below:

1. **Month of the Military Family**
2. [**FirstLink Trainings**](https://myfirstlink.org/trainings/)
3. [**Star Behavioral Health Providers Training**](https://starproviders.org/providers-tier-training/)
4. [**ND Brain Injury Network Events**](https://www.ndbin.org/events/upcoming)
5. [**Free Hyperbaric Treatment**](https://www.healingwithhyperbarics.com/veterans-in-north-dakota)**:** Nov. 11,Call 701.532.2426 for appointment, Fargo
6. [**Minot Veterans Day Program**](https://visitminot.org/event-calendar/minot-veterans-day-program/): Nov. 11, Minot Municipal auditorium
7. [**Veterans Appreciation Dinner**](https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=971778361631667&set=a.669762655166574), Nov. 14, Elks Lodge, Bismarck
8. [**ACOVA Meeting**](https://www.calendarwiz.com/calendars/popup.php?op=view&id=170046128&crd=nddva): Nov. 14-15, Comfort Inn, Bismarck
9. [**VA Caregiver Support Group**](https://www.va.gov/fargo-health-care/health-services/caregiver-support/#calendar) (Virtual or In-Person): Nov. 20, 1:00-2:30pm, Bismarck CBOC.
10. **Welfare Checks for Mental Health Crises**: Nov 21, Fargo Public Library, to register email  
     [sarah.kemptabbut@va.gov](mailto:sarah.kemptabbut@va.gov)
11. [**AFSP**](https://afsp.org/chapter/north-dakota/#events): Int’l Survivors of Suicide Loss Day, Several In-person Nov 23, Virtual Nov 24

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1. **NEXT MEETING DATES**

The next Coalition meeting date is February 6,2025, and the next Executive Committee meeting date is January 2, 2025.

The meeting ended at 12:03 PM.