

Macomb Veterans Action Collaborative Minutes
Monday, April 2, 2018
Macomb Community Action Training Room
21885 Dunham Road, Clinton Township, MI

I. **CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order by Laura Rios at 9:10 am.

Attendees:

Christopher Golema, 127 W61 FRG	
Crystal Bersche, SOM Veterans Employment Services	
Adrienne Gasperoni, CARE	Kara Fields, Macomb Community College
Alexandra Zacks, DHHS	Kathy Koths, Macomb Community Action
Bill Browning, Detroit VA Medical Center	Kyle Pollet, Sandra Levin
Charlene Myers, NCOA/DAV	Laura Rios (Co-Chair), Macomb Veteran Services
Chris Franklin, American Indian Vets of MI, Inc.	Lisa Marie Duncan-Edwards, Macomb Veteran Services
Daun Revin, VCA	Luther Gilford, GIS
Darryle Johnson, 1 st BN 24 th Marines	Madeline Habib, MCCMH/HSBC
Erika Hoover, MVAA	Mark Kilgore, CARE of Southeastern Michigan
Gabriella Barthlow, AFSC/CFPB	Robert Callahan
Hante Wolfe Rodriguez, Sander Levin	Rodney Tolbert, Dr.
Jennifer Georgievski, VA Work Study MDHHS	Sama Harp, Macomb Community
Jennifer Kimm, MISC Michigan Works	Tony Whitehead, Selfridge ANGB
Joann Sterne, McCrisis Center	William Schranz, MCCMH
	Yolanda Spencer-Dandridge, VA Medical Center

II. **INTRODUCTIONS**

Attendees of the meeting introduced themselves and stated what agency or business they represent.

III. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Proposed changes: Joanne Stern was spelled incorrectly; Dawn Revyn was spelled incorrectly. Motion to approve the minutes with changes: Bill Browning, 1st; Mark Meadows, 2nd; AIF.

IV. **OLD BUSINESS**

Job Fair – Hire Our Heroes: 200 Veterans registered and 69 got job offers with 123 scheduled follow-up interviews. Within the next 60 days or so we will get a report from Hire Our Heroes.

Detroit VA Medical Center got approval as a priority site from the Secretary. We are working with local partners in the city of Detroit to develop a Fisher House within walking distance to the VA. 3.5 Million will need to be raised locally for the project. There is a matching donation program through the end of April.

V. **SPECIAL SPEAKER**

APRIL SPECIAL SPEAKERS: Nikki Stromberg, Psychiatrist. She has been practicing in Detroit for about 15 years, mostly training young psychiatrists and working on inpatient services. She joined the VA about 5

years ago as director of education. About 2 years ago, she became the chief of mental health at the VA. She wants to help close the disconnect between the veterans and the services available through partnering with community veteran representatives.

Concerns? Brian Webb – After hours crisis management
Unknown – Misdiagnosis concerns from veterans

Context – 50,000 patients per year seen at Detroit VA; 13,000 in mental health. Outside of nursing, mental health is the largest service provided at Detroit VA. 20 psychiatrists, 20 psychologists, 70 social workers – treating all forms of mental health (addiction, PTSD, etc...) Strong collaboration with Wayne State University. Every person who calls the crisis line speaks to a real person. There is a push to hire mental health professionals with military experience (veterans specifically).

Crisis services after hours are addressed in the VA emergency room or local emergency rooms. Detroit does have an inpatient program that is expanding and they are working on after-care options. Suicide is the top mental health priority of the VA at this time.

We are aware of concerns around diagnosis. There are a number of factors used to determine whether treatment is available and warranted. There are multiple professionals used to evaluate patients. There are many times when the clinical diagnosis of PTSD isn't present, the clinical parameters aren't present, but depression is. There is a disconnect between patient understanding and clinical diagnosis.

Questions? Unknown – There is a problem between mental health and C&P. There is no communication. The person rating C&P doesn't have enough information to properly rate PTSD (or increase rating). What is the solution? We need to focus on eliminating these barriers.

Mental Health does no C&P exams. The medical records are reviewed by the C&P mental health professionals. The process does need to be improved.

Unknown – Are there advantages to being treated at the VA over civilian treatment?

I support choice but not the privatization of the VA. The problem is that there aren't many psychiatrists in Detroit that will accept funding, see a veteran in a timely manner and be reputable is almost impossible. The VA has the appropriate programs for veterans and the capacity to handle the needs.

Mark from CARE offers services for addiction and recovery. Advocacy/Sobriety/Celebration/Family

vi. COMMITTEE REPORTS

Benefits/Communication Committee: Laura Rios/Mary Beth Ryan

Non-VA Care process fact sheet available to help veterans with emergency health care and payment. The veteran has to notify the VA within 72 hours. The veteran cannot present any other health insurance at the time of service because the VA is NEVER a second payer. Make sure that the veteran knows this and tells the people around them.

All flow charts are available on the MVAC website.

Jobs Committee: Crystal Bersche/Mark Meadows

The offers at Hire Our Heroes was over-the-top.

Job fairs: April 6th, 8:00am – 2:00pm, seasonal hiring at Vlassic, \$10.00 - \$11.75/hr, \$14.00/hr with bonuses

WCX at Cobo
April 10th - 12th

Macomb Community College
April 18th 4:00pm – 7:00pm
Veterans and Service Members wear a ribbon during the job fair

April 24th
Port Huron Michigan Works
Detroit Police/Wayne County Sheriff Hiring Fair

Every 4th Monday of the month at the Detroit VA, we are offering haircuts and coffee/donuts to our homeless veterans with the chance to sit down with providers just to talk.

Don't forget to send our veterans to the employment boot-camp. There is a lot of hiring going on.

Services Committee: Madeline Habib

Working on the legal flow chart.

Membership Committee: Shaun Taft

Shaun is out today. Laura: membership applications are available and membership is free of charge.

Faith Based Committee: Dr. Rodney Tolbert

No updates.

Education/Employment: Kara Fields

Forever GI Bill training is going on at various schools. This program is still a learning process.

I am working with VCAT and CMVE to create presentations for employment and education. We are pooling our resources to create handouts for higher education.

We are also hosting regional meetings for GI Bill benefit certifiers at education institutions.

September conference is being scheduled.

VII. NEW BUSINESS/IDEAS FOR FUTURE PRESENTATIONS

All meeting minutes through March 2018 and rosters are posted on the MVAC website.

VIII. ROUND ROBIN

Gabriella Barthlow – It is financial education month. It is a good time to meet with me. We are funded until June, 2019 through the new administration.

William Schranz – Last week I met with DIA and we are going to be able to take 20 veterans to DIA for a workshop to create and display their art and a private tour.

877-WARVETS

Online registration is available for MISD.

Darryl Johnson – we deployed a number of Marines lately – next month we have 166 Marines coming home.

For those of you not getting the newsletter, I update the list quarterly so please let me know. We changed the format on January 1st.

Chris Franklin – smoking cessation marches on.

Kara Fields - May 8th Election, Macomb County is asking for a restoration of our millage for Macomb Community College.

Most of the Round Robin speakers do not identify themselves and do not speak loudly or clearly enough to get their information into the minutes.

NEXT MEETING

May 7, 2018 – Suicide Prevention Coordinator is speaking.

ix. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 10:50 am by Laura Rios.

Respectfully Submitted,
Stacia A. Miller