

Macomb Veterans Action Collaborative Minutes
Monday, December 5, 2016
MSU Extension Assembly Room B
21885 Dunham Clinton Twp., MI 48036

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by the Co-Chair, Crystal Kinsman, at 9:05 A.M.

Attendees:

Monica Alderman	MCC	Joe McClellan	Buddy-to-Buddy
Gabriella Barthlow	AFSC/CFPB	Mark Meadows	VAMC
Jason Bruggeman	WDA/Veterans	Charlene Myers	NCOA/DAV
Lisa Marie Duncan- Edwards	Veterans Services	Paulus Obey	SANG Family Support
Jonathan Drake	Retired Navy	Katie Page	Vet Center
Kara Fields	MCCC-Veterans	Julie Patterson	Veterans Services
Gerald Fisher-Curley	VAMC	Laura Rios	Veterans Services
Chris Franklin	AIVOM	Jill Ruehlen	A Place for Mom
	American Red		
Tony Gerheiser	Cross	Troy Schielein	Vet Center
		Yolanda Spencer-	
Sama Harp	Macomb Action	Dandridge	VAMC
Mark Kilgore	CARE of SEM	David Thomas	MVAA
Crystal Kinsman	WDA/Veterans	Sue Walker	Salvation Army
Althea Kyles	VOA		

II. INTRODUCTIONS

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

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Paulus Obey made a motion, supported by Mark Meadows, to approve the November 7, 2016 minutes. The motion carried.

IV. OLD BUSINESS

Brian Webb reported that the Veteran Navigator Program he discussed last month is now official. They will be working with the Buddy-to-Buddy Program. A State Coordinator will be hired to work out of the Ann Arbor office.

V. SPECIAL SPEAKER: DAVID LEONARD- FIELD CONSULTANT, MYVA EXPERIENCE

Dave Leonard was the Detroit Regional Office Director until 6 months ago when he became a Field Consultant with MYVA Experience. He went from being a supervisor in a production environment to a job where he is trying to improve veterans' trust in the VA. His agency priority goal used to be very number driven, instead of customer service driven.

Dave said there are 360,000 employees in the Veterans Administration, second only to the Department of Defense. The healthcare side alone has 320,000. The benefit side has 25,000 and this is where his expertise lies. The remainder work for the National Cemetery System.

MYVA Experience is trying to bring customer service back to the VA and put the needs of the veteran first and no wrong door approach. They've implemented one survey instead of the hundreds that there used to be. According to the survey data, 6 months ago only 46% of vets said that they trust the VA. Today the amount is 64%. The goal is 90%. A lot of the success has been attributed to the VA leadership getting out into the communities via Community Veteran Engagement Boards. Their intent is to partner with groups at the county and state level. The VA also wants to help communities establish collaboratives if none exist. They won't try to run them, but will actively engage with them and provide them with whatever they need from the VA.

It was suggested that the VA should have a more personalized program than TAP currently is. Dave agreed that the program is broken and needs to be fixed. He suggested that we do a pilot in Michigan and create a solution that could be extended nationwide.

Laura Rios explained how TAP used to be done by the State of Michigan Veterans Employment Division and how it was a much better program than the online program currently offered. She explained how after Michigan Works! created the Veterans Employability Boot Camp to try to fill this void.

Dave explained how the DOD and VA are working more closely together now than they ever have. It's currently being required that active duty members sign up for My HealtheVet and eBenefits as they enter the military and Dave believes that when an active duty member leaves the military that where they're going should be put into these programs and somehow transmitted to their future County or State so that the local veterans agency can reach out to them and ensure they're aware of and receiving all of their benefits.

Dave Leonard also suggested Michigan should start an initiative to lure veterans to live here. Mark Meadows informed him that the Governor of Michigan currently has a team that visits different military bases doing exactly this. Dave also suggested that veterans using the GI Bill have a counselor similar to the Voc Rehab program that helps them identify the degrees that are in demand and assist with job placement once their degree is achieved. He believes that if Michigan were to offer something like this that it would be a huge incentive for veterans to move to Michigan. Mark explained that before the TAP Program went National, the State of Michigan conducted it and had a team that traveled around the state to different military installations. Dave plans to attend the next TAP briefing at SANG.

Kara Fields of Macomb County Community College explained the need for the VA to partner with higher education to assist veterans using Chapter 33 benefits.

Troy Schielein of the Vet Center and Dave both shared success stories where MYVA stepped into assist with crisis situations.

Lisa Marie Duncan-Edwards asked about BDD and why nothing is being done in Michigan, but that people are being referred to Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Ohio. Dave acknowledged that this was a gap in service that never occurred to him and he will address it.

Dave answered several questions from the MVAC members about VA policies, procedures, and appeals.

VI. COMMITTEE REPORTS

Benefits/Communication Committee: Laura Rios/Mary Beth Ryan

HSCB luncheon will be held following the MVAC meeting. Nothing else to report at this time.

Jobs Committee: Crystal Kinsman/Mark Meadows

Mark Meadows stated that employment hiring has slowed down due to the time of year. Ford is in the final phases of building the plant that will build the Ford Ranger and is anticipated that recruiting will begin in early January. His program is developing training that will result in employment for the hard to place veterans.

Crystal Kinsman stated the next cohort for the Vets to Ag program starts January 17, 2017, and that they're recruiting interested veterans. She's posted on the information on Podio and requests that if anyone knows of an interested veteran to please let her know. The 12 week program provides 7 different certifications and a stipend is provided. Orientations are being held the next two Fridays and are available to walk in.

Services Committee: Madeline Habib

Madeline Habib was not present. Nothing to report at this time.

Membership Committee: Shaun Taft

Shaun Taft was not present. Laura Rios explained what people need to do to be added to the MVAC roster and get a nameplate. She asked that only new people sign the sign-in sheet and that everyone on the roster check in on the roster.

Membership forms and the roster will be posted on the website <http://mvac.macombgov.org/>.

VII. NEW BUSINESS/ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

No new business.

VIII. ROUND ROBIN

The meeting had to be cut short so a full Round Robin was not held. A couple members made brief announcements.

Katie Page of the Vet Center handed out a flyer for a football party for the Army-Navy game this Saturday at the Vet Center. There will be food, drinks, and SWAG bags for the veterans that attend.

Tony Gerheiser of the American Red Cross handed out a flyer with information about their free smoke alarm program. They also have CNA training available for veterans and their families free of charge.

IX. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be Monday, January 9, 2017 starting at 9:00 A.M. in the Verkuilen Building Training & Conference Center, 21885 Dunham Clinton Township, MI 48036

X. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 10:47 A.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

Julie Patterson, Secretary