

Macomb Veterans Action Collaborative Minutes
Monday, February 6, 2017
Macomb Family Resource Center Training and Conference Room
196 North Rose Street, Mount Clemens, MI 48043

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by the Co-Chair, Crystal Kinsman, at 9:06 A.M.

Attendees:

Bill Browning	Detroit VA Medical Center	Basil Forest	SOS
Gabriella Barthlow	AFSC/CFPB Training and Treatment	Mark Meadows	VAMC
Jeremy Bonka	Innovations, Inc.	Charlene Myers	NCOA/DAV
Lisa Marie Duncan- Edwards	Veterans Services	Paulus Obey	SANG Family Support
Jonathan Drake	Retired Navy	Katie Page	Vet Center VA Vocational Rehab
Kara Fields	MCCC-Veterans	Dean Shunk	Macomb/St. Clair MI Works!
Gerald Fisher-Curley	VAMC Michigan Department of Health and Human Services	Chris Reilly	Office of Congressman Sander Leviv
Stephen Boegehold	VA Work Study	Kyle Pollet	United Way for SEM
Jennifer Georgievski	MDHHS	Shaun Taft	Training and Treatment Innovations, Inc.
Madeline Habib	HSBC/MCCMH	Alysa Wamsler	MVAA
Mark Kilgore	CARE of SEM	David Thomas	DNOM
Crystal Kinsman	WDA/Veterans	Sian Washington	
Althea Kyles	VOA Macomb		
Heather Whited	Community Action Macomb Homeless		
Ellen Palmer	Coalition		

II. INTRODUCTIONS

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

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Madeline Habib made a motion for correction of the minutes: add that the flow charts were presented to the new admin staff at Macomb Homeless Coalition and will be presented at Continuum of Care Meeting. Approved with correction: 1st Madeline Habib, 2nd Kara Fields, AIF.

IV. OLD BUSINESS

Paulus Obey advised the group that he is trying to recruit participants for the Faith Based Committee and will be announcing a meeting date.

V. SPECIAL SPEAKER: Howard Meyer-Blind Vision

The Special Speaker was unable to attend today's meeting.

VI. COMMITTEE REPORTS

Benefits/Communication Committee: Laura Rios/Mary Beth Ryan

Committee Chairs were not present, No Discussion.

Jobs Committee: Crystal Kinsman/Mark Meadows

Mark Meadows report that the Job Fair went well and the employer surveys were mostly positive, only negative was that there was a light turn out. A total of 87 Veterans and 110 civilians registered. Meadows is reaching out to the Veterans to collect their resumes and will make them available to employers that participated. Veterans were easily identified at the event as they wore small flags on their shirts/jackets. 80 employers participated, 30 more were on the waitlist (as they did not register in time) and were unable to participate. The criteria for employers to participate were: 10 or more positions available and they must be Veteran and felon friendly. This was the first ever combined job fair in Michigan that allowed civilians to attend with Veterans.

The Next event, Hire our Heroes and is scheduled for March 18, 2017, hosted by the VA. The committee is reaching out to other Veteran organizations to provide suits to Veterans who are in need of business attire. Suits will be given out at the Masonic Temple on the February 25th, case managers from Veteran organizations can register participants. If enough Veterans are not signed up, the free suits event will be opened up to the public and participants can be registered through MI Works!. A separate event will be held for woman. If you receive an email invitation to register Veterans, advise those clients that they must bring their resume. A person will be reviewing those resumes in preparation for the March job fair. They need at least 20 volunteers for the free suit event. About 400 suits have been collected and the goal is to give every participant a complete outfit.

A Logistics Expo will be held in May (probably third Friday, date is not locked in) at Dearborn Tech Center. It is like a hiring fair but only for Vets interested in Logistics. 80 companies will be at the event, including Penske and McKesson. VA is working with agencies in the community to create outreach and trainings to help veterans overcome barriers to employment.

Services Committee: Madeline Habib

Flow charts have been updated to include information for the financial counselor at Selfridge. Transportation flow charts are in process, smart bus information has been reviewed and approved to use by Fred Barbret. The flow charts will include all transportation options, including taxi & Uber as well as transportation reimbursement information from the VA. Contact Madeline with anything to add.

Membership Committee: Shaun Taft

Shaft Taft advised the group that new members who are not on the roster need to complete a membership form. This will ensure that they are on the distribution list and have a name plate.

VII. NEW BUSINESS/ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

MARCH SPECIAL SPEAKER: JILL RUEHLEN – A PLACE FOR MOM

APRIL SPECIAL SPEAKER: MARIANNE FRAZHO - UBHC

VIII. ROUND ROBIN

Crystal Kinsman: VCAT Region 10 meeting 2/9/17 in Auburn Hills at Baker College, invitations sent via event brite. See crystal if the invitation not received and you want to attend.

Madeline Habib: HSBC Traveling Tours May 17 & 18. It is a free event; participants travel to various agencies and learn about their programs.

Gabrielle Bathlow: Financial Couching is booming, thanked group for referring clients.

Jeremy Bonka: program running low on prevention funds, will be reaching out to other agencies to work together for clients.

Heather Whited: Macomb Community Action in Warren, Mount Clemens and New Haven, can help with eviction prevention, as well as utility shut off prevention. ESG RRH program started 2/1/17 and can help the homeless with move in costs and some short term rental assistance (eligible participants will be literally homeless or in shelter, 30% AMI). ESG RRH can help any citizen and is not limited to Veterans. Paulus Obey asked how the ESG and SSVF assistance programs are changing who they can help, Sian responded that ESG programs can work with other agencies to help Vets, the program helps those with low income but housing must be sustainable, clients can be assisted as long as the participant is within the program eligibility requirements and housing is affordable. Jennifer Georgievski asked what is considered homeless for ESG RRH, gave example of a family living with other relatives; Heather answered that in that situation the person would be doubled up and could be eligible for prevention but not ESG RRH. Paulus asked if this is just for ESG or SSVF, Sian responded that different programs have different requirements and for ESG RRH the person has to be literally homeless and be within eligibility guidelines. Paulus said he is experiencing Vets and servicemen contacting him with different scenarios and different counties have different requirements such as applying with DHHS for assistance first. Sian asked about assistance for old utility bills, Stephen responded that old bills can be added on new address and if it creates an emergency DHHS helps. Sian added that she's paid off old utility bills through SSVF for clients to be able to turn on services at

a new address. Another member asked if any programs are available to help Surviving Spouses, the group answered that ESG funds can help since there is no veteran requirements.

Sian reported the program low on prevention funds but still have RRH funds. Disability Network is moving to 1709 John R Road in Troy Michigan so that the staff can all be housed in one office. A flier will be distributed to the group. Macomb County By Name List Call will happen on February 13th, contact Sian for call in number.

Mark Kilgore reports there are programs at CARE for substance abuse recovery, Vets come but are not happy that it is open to civilians as well. The 1st Annual Sober Bowl Party saw about 260 people and a lot were Veterans, this will become a yearly event. They are looking for a meeting place to host veteran only recovery meetings.

Althea Kyles is a program manager for the Safe Haven GPD; can house men for up to 6 months. Their goal is to connect clients to all housing programs before program exit. Currently there are 4 openings. Vets must be chronically homeless, have an honorable discharge, receive VA services and cannot have CSC on their record. Veterans can apply through VA or by calling 248-727-8327. All agencies are welcome at Safe Haven to present or give information to residents.

Dean Shunk with VRE, works with Veterans with service connected disability for vocational rehabilitation in Macomb County. They provide education and job training and also help with job placements. Eligible Veterans are 20% service connected disabled, some 10% also qualify. Call 586-469-5454 to contact Dean. Kara advised that some of her clients are becoming aggravated that the case manager has not started their vocation rehab, Dean advised that case managers are being moved and replaced and there is a slow transfer of case loads. Shaun asked who to contact to advocate for program expansion, Dean advised that Directors and other higher position makes the decision; another member added that there are periodic meetings that are hosted by the VA to address issues within the system. Another member asked if a person has a diagnoses but no percentage can they apply, Dean replied that anyone with a service connected disability can apply even if they don't have their percentage of disability yet. Kara advised that they have been prioritizing referrals to vocation rehab so those with the most need.

Ellen Palmer reported that the Continuum of Care Meeting is this Wednesday at 9am in Auditorium at the Verkuilen building.

Mark Meadows reports there is always a need for volunteers for a variety of positions. A list will be available for those looking to participate. People can also help by making relationships in the community with other agencies and collaborating to help the Vets in our county. He thanked Chris Riley for helping with Job Fair.

Bill Browning at Community Relations in Detroit: next month they will host an event at the VA medical center where volunteers come in to spend time with hospitalized patients. If anyone wants to volunteer and visit patients please contact Bill 313-576-3332.

Chris Riley: Veteran employment boot camp is starting next week. He advised the group to remind Vets to let staff at MI Works! know that they are Veterans. They do not have any way to find out someone is a Veteran unless that person tells a staff member. Chris also advised that there are job training programs that do not pinpoint Vets specifically but are available to anyone. The training helps prepare participants for jobs and also helps them get hired.

Shaun Taft: MICafe Network is from the Elder Law of Michigan and is a portal and is a one stop shop for people 60 and over to apply for federal and state assistance and benefits. Agencies can get involved by becoming a partner to help complete applications or even just by posting flyers to make the public aware of the services.

Jeremy from VA: Salvation Army still has transitional housing beds available, located in Clinton Twp. Four beds open, developmental disabilities and CSC able to be accepted. VASH being moved to a community directive process, Vets must be on By Name List to receive VASH.

Stephen Boegehold is continuing to work on identifying Vets who are DHHS recipients and making sure that they are referred to veteran services and programs in Macomb County. Gabriella advised that anyone she meets with who reports having problems with DHHS is referred directly to Stephen. Jennifer advised clients can be referred to her directly and she will provide her business cards to those who want it. Sian asked when does the crisis period end for SERs, Stephen advised that it ends in May.

Paulus Obey addressed the group asking for participation for the faith based committee. Those interested can contact him directly. He also advised that a call in option can be available. Shaun suggested putting together a vision statement and goal sheet and send an email blast for participants. Gabriella advised she knows some veterans who may be interested in participating. Paulus also advised the group that he going to a yellow ribbon program and will take any information that is provided to share with those at the event.

John Drake is a Macomb Resident and Veteran discharged in 2014. He started up a catering business, Simply Blessed Catering and Event Services, and is staying involved in the community. He talked about his experience being discharged and signing up for the VA. He said that from his experience he sees that the Vets being discharged do not know what help they need or that there are agencies and groups like MVAC advocating on their behalf.

Monica from Veteran Services Office and Macomb Community College informed the group that a few students are in need of a laptop, but are not a part of vocational rehab. She is looking for a program to donate computers. Mark Meadows advised contacting Google and asking if they can donate a laptop. Other suggestions included asking Veteran owned business, Costco, Best Buy, Micro Center and Computer Repair Companies. She also let everyone know that the free veterinary service program for Veterans are full and cannot accept anymore clients; working to make this a regular event. MCC opened a Vet Space at the south campus so Veterans can talk and get to know each other.

Basil Forest: he works with surviving Army families in Southeast Michigan. He is looking forward to learning more about agencies and programs through the MVAC and has already begun referring clients to organizations represented here. Madeline responded that the Right Connection can also be used to provide clients with referrals and information about other agencies in Macomb County. Basil also works for the Army through Community Services. He can be reached at 586-282-0482 or Basil.a.forrest.civ@mail.mil

Lisa advised the group of free income tax preparation on Tuesday and Thursday, walk ins are helped on Wednesday. Call 586-463-2537 to schedule an appointment. If callers self indentify as a Veteran there are no income limits, free day for Veterans on February 15 and Shelby Township VFW.

IX. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be Monday, March 6, 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 10:51 A.M. by Crystal Kinsman

Respectfully Submitted,

Ellen Palmer, Secretary