

Veterans Administration Planning Workshop

Thursday, 28 September 2023

Present. *(In order by Last Name)*

1. Scott Bennett, Board Member, representing Madison County, Encompass Community Supports (formally known as Rappahannock-Rapidan Community Services), also the Chairman of the Board of Madison Department of Social Services, former Veterans Service Officer for Madison American Legion Post 157, a 28-year Veteran - not yet 100% permanent-disabled,
2. Dan Carlton, Pastor, Culpeper Baptist Church,
3. Janelle Huffman, Community Health Worker (CHW), Director of Programs, of Hero's Bridge (a Veteran-serving nonprofit with a focus exclusively on Veterans 65 and older);
4. Angela Jameson, Community Engagement and Partnerships Coordinator, Suicide Prevention Program, Central Virginia VA Healthcare System, Massaponax CBOC, VISN6, and 15-year Veteran,
5. Andy Johnston, Director of Programs, The PATH Foundation (serving Fauquier, Rappahannock, and Culpeper Counties),
6. Caleb Johnson, Northern Regional Director, Virginia Veteran and Family Support (VFS) Program, Virginia Department of Veteran Services,
7. Steven A. Jones, Sr., Retired Marine Combat Veteran of 20+ Years of Service, former Virginia Department of Corrections Veterans Coordinator,
8. Tammy Keaton, Executive Assistant, Encompass Community Supports (formally known as Rappahannock-Rapidan Community Services).
9. Jim LaGrafte, Executive Director, Encompass Community Supports (formally known as Rappahannock-Rapidan Community Services), Facilitator,
10. Elizabeth Leach, Strategic Planner, Martinsburg VA Medical Center,
11. Kim Marvin, Strategic Planning Officer at the Department of Veterans Affairs, VHA
12. Renee Norden, Executive Director, Mental Health Association (MHA),
13. Tom Pratt, Board Member, representing Orange County, Encompass Community Supports (formally known as Rappahannock-Rapidan Community Services), a 17-year peace-time and war-time Veteran, is 100% permanent-disabled,
14. Jeff Say, Manager of Community Engagement, UVA Health Culpeper Medical Center,
15. Samantha Strong, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Program Coordinator and Community Specialist at UVA Physicians Group,
16. Jennifer Sztalkoper, Ph.D., North Regional Assistant Manager, Virginia Veteran and Family Support (VFS) Program, Virginia Department of Veterans Services, works with Caleb Johnson;

Invited. *(In order by Last Name)*

Ken Allensworth, Medical Center Director, Martinsburg VA Medical Center;
Anthony Barns, Military & Veterans Affairs Director, The office of Congresswoman Jennifer Wexton, 10th District, Virginia;
Dannielle Cullers, Veteran Resource Specialist, Virginia Department of Veterans Services;
Pastor Bradley Hales, Board Member, representing Culpeper County, Encompass Community Supports (formerly known as Rappahannock-Rapidan Community Services);
MacKenzie Heidelberg, District Coordinator, The office of Congresswoman Abigail Spanberger, 7th District, Virginia;
Jennifer Kelley, Community Engagement Partnership Coordinator, Community-Based Interventions-Suicide Prevention Program, VHA Office of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention, Martinsburg WV, VISN5;
Molly Brooks, CEO & Founder, of Hero's Bridge (a Veteran-serving nonprofit with a focus exclusively on Veterans 65 and older);
Elisha Jones, Lead Patient Advocate, Central Virginia VA Health Care System (CVHCS), Richmond;
Elliott Madl, DBHDS Region 1 Navigator for Service Members, Veterans, and their Families (SMVF), serving the Region Ten Community Service Board, Charlottesville, a Marine, having served in Afghanistan;
Stephen Mosher, Chief Engineer, Central Virginia VA Health Care System (CVHCS) in Richmond (works very closely with the Associate and Executive Director to help plan for expansion projects on the local campus or within the community areas. He is also very involved in the Health Care Center (HCC), and the CBOC expansions that are currently planned);
Ann Mullenix, Administrative Assistant, VA Health Care Systems - Martinsburg, West Virginia;
Brandi Jancaitis (Director, Virginia Veteran and Family Support Program);
Ben Shaw, Regional Director, Central Region, Virginia Veteran & Family Support Program;
Anthony Swann, Peer Services Director, Virginia Department of Veterans Services;
Cory Will, Former Director of Peer Recovery Services at Encompass Community Supports (formally known as Rappahannock-Rapidan Community Services).

Minutes

Jim LaGraffe welcomed everyone and introductions went around the table (see Attendance List Above). For those who were joining for the first time, he shared a recap of the purpose of the group which was to pull together the Veterans Affairs/Administration and local vested partners to come up with a plan, form some ideas, and get consensus on bringing and sustaining Veterans Affairs/Administration benefits and services locally to serve our five-county catchment area. Jim shared that he is happy to get this group together but he is very hopeful that someone in the future will step forward to moderate and lead this group.

Some of the barriers Jim spoke about that prompted this effort are:

- People from our district were being requested to go to Charlottesville, Manassas, and Richmond, which based on the geographical nature of this area is very problematic,
- Many relied on going to 1-800 numbers and received less than favorable customer service, or websites which were also problematic due to poor internet services in areas,
- Additionally with calling 1-800 numbers, not being able to get a contact, if there is no follow-up, then the Veteran's ability to go back, have recourse, and follow up on those things is very limited,
- The discrepancy between the experiences our Veterans are having with real local resources is very different than the perception the Veterans Administration would say was available.

Out of the first meeting, two goals emerged;

Goal 1. A long-term goal: The vision of this group is that at a minimum, veterans have local access to primary care and basic mental health (a Community-Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC)), case management/care coordination, and audiology services.

Goal 2. A short-term goal: To make contact with our veterans, is to have a local event in which servicemen and their families will be invited to attend a one-day conference, learn about benefits, access to benefits, services, access to services, and have an opportunity to begin application processes as well as receive information, lunch, and access to various local supports.

The events team met this past Monday. We have settled on a date and location, Saturday, March 2nd, at Germanna Community College the Daniel Technology Center. A tentative concept of how the day would run was developed. Please see the minutes from that meeting for details. Tammy Keaton will send them out along with the minutes for this meeting.

Janelle shared that another good speaker would be Tom Holly, Quantico Benefits Office, Virginia Department of Veterans Services (DVS). He has experience with speaking at various Veteran Summits. Janelle knows him and can coordinate contact. It was suggested to consider him for a breakout session on the benefits side and with the PACT Act (Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics Act), and benefits for veterans of all ages as well as surviving spouses and dependents.

*Please note that anyone may join this group if they want to be part of the event planning efforts, please contact tkeaton@ecsva.org if you'd like to be added to the invite.

Angela shared that she has put together a list of the internal services that they can offer to have at the event which is quite substantial. We may need to assess the venue space to determine if we have to pick a number of the available options rather than have them all be there and there not be enough space.

Jim asked for suggestions on how we would get ahold of veterans and collect information.

- Steven recommended meeting veterans locally where they go; At stores (Walmart, Lowes, Home Depot, the gyms), Attending upcoming service events (this month in October is the Navy's Birthday, and in November there is the Marine Corps' Birthday (IHOP), and November 10th is Veteran's Day, He offered to personally go out and meet Veterans where they are and get the word out as much as he can before the event. (See other Military Dates Appendix B).
- Facebook.
- Newspaper.
- The Ceremony at the National Cemetery (arrange a speaking spot, reaching out to a lot of Veterans that go to that event).
- Local and District level Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFWs) locations and American Legion Posts
- Scott mentioned that the American Legion in Madison has 100+ members and a mailing list, so he can send the information out to every member of this post.
- Conference website and link to Facebook.
- Churches (Pastors mention it and pass out flyers).
- Renee will coordinate with their Veterans Task Force.
- Steven, suggested perhaps reaching out to the VA offices to inquire about posting it on their websites, as many Veterans do look there for updated information. Angela shared that to post on the VA's website, we would use the same email address she posted in the chat at the previous meeting to request a speaker.
- Aging Together, Aging Voice of Experience Newsletter.
- Ask Germanna to also post.

Flyer. There was discussion about creating a flyer/flyers and Jim volunteered to help put the flyer together. If we want people to register, then technically we have a month to get the word out.

Basics. Tom reminded the group that many Veterans he comes into contact with don't trust the government, they don't use the VA Medical System, they don't go to the websites, they don't use computers or Facebook. He encouraged the group to focus on putting together something basic. A card that lists the fifteen or so services where they could quickly write in their name and phone number or address and circle what they are interested in and leave the card in a box to be picked up by an appointed resource who could follow up and make contact. Perhaps it could be a card with a phone number/hotline where a Veteran or a Family Member could call, speak to someone, and let them know what they are interested in, or need (support, medical support, etc.). The support is out there but they may not know what or where it is.

To get to Veterans who are not yet in the system, who are isolated from computers and social media, we may need to appeal to caregivers, family members, local physicians, doctors, dentists, Pastors, and merchants who know the Veteran.

Outreach. Jim asked for other ideas on how to reach or help publicize the event.

- Scott mentioned that he will circulate the information at their upcoming Madison American Legion Post 157 raffle. They have booths set up at Walmart or Lowes and can hand out cards then but the raffle ends in December.
- He also mentioned that many Veterans shop or work at Lowes, Home Depot, a building supplies store, a farm store, or a coop.

- He also knows of people who are willing to sit for a day, and host a table or booth, to get the word out.
- Community partners that are part of this group could help get the word out as well.

Jim offered to work within his organization to have the cards created, get some drafts ready for the group to review, and put a webpage together for the conference. Steven would like to have the cards by Veteran’s Day as he intends to hand them out that day.

Cards. Jim proposed that the card have on the front a check-the-box and on the back a QR code and email address.

<p>Card #1 - To collect.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addressed to the Veteran and or Family Member • Survey • To collect contact information and interests. • On the front check the box • On the back QR code and email address 	<p>Card #2 - To give away.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Addressed to the Veteran or someone who knows a Veteran • Save the date • To publicize the event • To publicize the event, the Conference website, • To register, if possible. Registration would be helpful but is not required. • On the back QR code and email address
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Categories discussed.

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| <input type="checkbox"/> Help with Forms | <input type="checkbox"/> Eligibility |
| <input type="checkbox"/> VA Benefits | <input type="checkbox"/> Enrollment |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Applications to increase benefits | <input type="checkbox"/> Suicide prevention |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Advance Care Planning | <input type="checkbox"/> Caregiver Support Program |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Homemaker Homemade | <input type="checkbox"/> Community Care Program |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Women Veterans Programs | <input type="checkbox"/> Education and Employment |

Note: Add Virginia Values Veterans to the Employment exhibit?

Veterans are given an eligibility of a percent. For the programs that are out there that are eligibility dependent, we want to be able to break it down for them. They may have 10%, 20 %, etc. Or if it’s someone who has 50% or 60% and they need a lot of support. That is when a DVS representative could come in and encourage a Veteran or Family Member to apply to get consideration to increase that %. This is where we will be able to provide care and support for our local Veterans, by giving them these tools, and options, and an opportunity to tap into these resources. Eligibility is a very complex thing. Perhaps we need a breakout session on the overview of the process?

Janelle added that with 70% and above so many doors are opening but below that doors are closed. But there are still things that when doors are closed they don’t look at the percentage (especially with Homemaker Homemade) they look at the physical and the medical need as well as the hospice aspect. Maybe we do need to have something on the card for Caregiver Subject Matter Expert, VA Healthcare, and Non-VA (because within the VA there are specific qualifications like serving for

24 months or more, have an honorable discharge, etc.) and there are quite a few Veterans who for whatever reason (perhaps they were Reserves, National Guard) who have issues. So it would be all-encompassing if we could address non-VA options, topics, and organizations that can assist as well.

We will pick topics that we have a solution to offer, transportation is not one of them because transportation is a state-wide issue. We will need to arrange for an expert to be able to speak to each of these topics. If we have a breakout group, we need an expert to answer questions. Caregiver is one we have solutions for. 'Benefits' is one where, with the older Veterans, when they came home from the Korean War and Vietnam, they had a horrible time getting anything done, and now things have changed and they need to know that.

Jim proposed that instead of the survey, are we at the point where we just pick the top five or six big topic items? The survey might be useful in collecting input or contact information. Angella has listed the ones that most people hear about. We will still do a save-the-date, with date, time, location, and the website for the computer savvy, to see details and if they want to register or help.

Jim worries a little about our name being too much in front with the event because our mandate is publicly funded behavioral health and unfortunately, it has a stigma that may detour people. We are happy to help.

Renee asked if there was a possibility of offering some services there as well. There was mention of possibly doing some basic screenings, blood pressure checks, and VMI. Janelle cautioned that with regard to VA criteria and benefits, these would have to be acceptable to the VA. Samantha will need to ask her practice managers.

Tom back to recommendations for Breakout Sessions ideas

1. Veterans Caregiver,
 2. Veterans Benefits,
 3. Family Members,
 - a. Spouse of a deceased veteran – benefits,
 4. Mental Wellness,
 5. Community Care Program,
- Have Richmond, HBAs (health benefits advisors) on site with a seating area for them to just sign Veterans up. If Veterans bring their DD214 (discharge document) in hand, the HBA could enroll that Veteran into care right there on the spot. Have one from Martinsburg as well. Reverse dishonorable discharge (put these details on the handouts and the website).
 - Have Employment as an exhibit.
 - It was recommended that we gear the event towards supports and services for all Veterans (VA, other, dishonorably discharged, etc.).

Jim offered to send out this list to the group with the names of the Subject Matter Experts for each of these areas. Angela has sent this to Tammy Keaton earlier this week. We will get draft Cards out in the next couple of weeks.

Scott shared that many Veterans were given dishonorable discharge, including reservists and National Guard, because of behavioral issues which many have turned out to be related to PTSD. The Virginia Department of Military Services is working on correcting many of these discharge-related things.

Event Name. There was some discussion about the proposed name for this group and for the event. The group decided to name the event **Service Member, Veterans, and Families Mini-Conference**. Tag line: Serving those who served in our community.

Update on having a local Veteran Resource Specialist. Jim and Caleb Johnson, Northern Regional Director at Virginia Veteran and Family Support (VFS), have been coordinating on some office space options for a part-time resource. Caleb was given a tour of the S.E.E. Recovery Center. The position would be specific to the Veteran and Family Support (VFS) program.

Next Meeting. This group will report back to the larger group on Thursday, October 26, at 10 AM. Status on the Grant. Next steps with CBOC presence.

Adjournment. The meeting was adjourned at 11:15 a.m.

Appendix A - Acronyms List

AAA	Area Agency on Aging (Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services)
CBOC	Community-Based Outpatient Clinic
CHW	Community Health Worker
CSB	Community Services Board (Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services)
CSP	Caregiver Support Program
CVHCS	Central Virginia VA Health Care System, Richmond
DAV	Disabled American Veterans (National with Regional Offices)
DD214	Discharge Document
DEI	Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
DVS	Virginia Department of Veterans Services
FAC	Fauquier Area Council
HBA	Health Benefits Advisors
HCC	Health Care Center
IAVA	Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (National)
IPVAP	Intimate Partner Violence Assistance Program
MHA	Mental Health Association
NCA	National Cemetery Administration (Veterans Affairs)
OFC	Operation Family Caregiver
PACT Act	Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics (PACT) Act (Veterans Affairs)
POA	Power of Attorney
PTSD	Post-traumatic stress disorder
SMVF	Service Members, Veterans, and their Families
SSVF	Supportive Services for Veteran Families (Veterans Affairs/Federal)
V3	Virginia Values Veterans (V3) Program
VAMC	Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center
VBA	Veterans Benefits Administration (Veterans Affairs/Federal)
VCC	Veterans Community Care (VCC) Program, The VCC program is the replacement for the Veterans Choice Program. In order to comply with the MISSION Act of 2018, the VA sunset its Veterans Choice Program, a program that allowed veterans who received their care at the VA to receive services at community-based providers that are not directly linked to the VA system.

VFW	Veterans of Foreign Wars
VFS	Virginia Veterans and Family Services
VHA	Veterans Health Administration (Veterans Affairs)
VISN	Veterans Integrated Services Networks
VSO	Veterans Services Officers
VSO	Veterans Service Organization
VTAP	Virginia Transition Assistance Program
VVA	Vietnam Veterans of America (National with Regional Chapters)
VVFS	Virginia Veterans and Family Services
VWVP	Virginia's Women Veterans Program

Appendix B – Important Military Dates

Important Dates in Military History	Important Military Holidays
October	
10/6 Enduring Freedom Began (Afghanistan War) (2001)	10/13 U.S. Navy (USN) Birthday
10/7 Afghanistan War Began (2001)	(TBD) Military World Games
10/13 US Navy Established (1775)	10/26 Day of the Deployed
10/20 Women's Army Corps Disestablished (1978)	10/27 Navy Day
10/23 Grenada Campaign Began (1983)	
10/24 United Nations Day	
10/27 Navy Day	
November	
11/10 US Marine Corps Established	National Veterans & Military Family Month
11/11 Veteran's Day/WWI Armistice Signed (1918)	Warrior Care Month
11/23 USCG Women Reserve (SPAR's) Est. (1942)	National Family Caregivers Month
11/21 Grenada Campaign Ended (1983)	(Nov. 1-5) National Veterans Small Business Week
	11/10 Marine Corps Day/Birthday
	11/11 Veterans Day
	11/11 Armistice/Remembrance Day
December	
12/1 Civil Air Patrol Established (1941)	12/1 Civil Air Patrol (USAF Auxiliary) Birthday
12/5 Somalia Campaign Began (1992)	(Tues after Thanksgiving) #GivingTuesday
12/7 Pearl Harbor Attacked (1941)	12/7 National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day
12/8 War Declared on Japan (1941)	12/13 U.S. National Guard Birthday
12/11 Germany and Italy Declared War on US (1941)	12/18 National Wreaths Across America
12/15 Official End of War in Iraq (2011)/Bill of Rights Day	
12/16 Battle of the Bulge	
12/20 Panama Campaign began (1989)	
12/31 Official End of WWII (1946)/Kosovo Campaign Ended (2013)	
January	
1/16 Desert Storm (Persian Gulf) Began (1991)	
1/27 Vietnam War Cease Fire (1973)	
1/31 Panama Campaign Ended (1990)	
February	
2/1 National Freedom Day	2/3 Four Chaplains Day
2/2 Army Nurse Corp Established (1901)/Groundhog Day	2/4 USO Birthday
2/3 USO Incorporated	Week of Feb. 12 National Salute to Veteran Patients
2/13 Marine Corps Women's Reserve Established (1943)	2/19 Coast Guard Reserve Birthday
2/23 Iwo Jima Flag Raising (1945)	
2/27 Persian Gulf Cease-Fire Day	
March	
3/3 Star Spangled Banner Day	3/3 Navy Reserve Birthday