



STATE OF WASHINGTON
VETERANS AFFAIRS ADVISORY COMMITTEE
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Meeting Minutes

Meeting attended by (VAAC Member)	Bob Wallace, Robert Garrison, and Joe Jimenez
Date	May 9, 2019
Time	10 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
Location	Fraternal Order of Eagles, 2829 W. Sylvester St., Pasco WA
Call to Order	Meeting called to order by Bob Wallace Invocation by Bob Wallace Pledge of Allegiance led by Bob Wallace
Welcome & Introductions:	Welcome and Introduction – Bob Wallace <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Informed the guests of the role of the VAAC and introduced VAAC members.
Presentations	Community Leader Update – David Milne, Councilmember, District 5 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Welcomed attendees Jonathan M. Wainwright Memorial VA Medical Center and Mission Act – Christopher R. Bjornbert, Director <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Maintaining Internal Systems and Strengthening Integrated Outside Networks Act (MISSION) – The VA's new healthcare system called the Mission Act will kick off on Jun 7, 2019 and the Walla Walla VA Medical Center and staff are preparing for the launch.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Will provide veterans with more options for health care○ Provide more urgent care options○ Helps Veterans get the needed care○ Provide a wider network of providers○ Expanded services not previously offered• Stated the importance with remaining in contact with your providers during this transition.• Stated that the VA is here to serve our veterans. The Mission Act was created to increase services to our veterans. The Choice Program will be going away and will be replaced by the Mission Act.

- Q&A

Question: With new programs there are always hiccups. What are the concerns you have with the launch of the Mission Act?

Answer: Region 4 is not in place yet. Some aspects of the program will not work until Region 4 is online. Due to this, the program will revert back to Patient Centered Community Care (PC3) a program that was in place prior to the Choice Program. The VA is working with TRIWEST to ensure coverage is in place during the transition.

Question: When will the program be fully implemented?

Answer: The goal is to have it fully implemented by 2020.

Question: When will our medical records be converted to electronic records?

Answer: Our network will be the first one to go live and Cerner will be the provider. Seattle and Spokane are scheduled to go live first followed by Walla Walla in Aug 2020. There could be issues if you travel outside of our region because outside areas may not have electronic records.

The DoD will also be switching to Cerner to manage active duty medical records.

Question: Will you be adding more providers to the CBOC?

Answer: Yes, we are working on that.

WDVA Update – Alfie

- **Mission Act:** Madigan will be the first DoD facility to implement the electronic medical record. Life cycle of service member will be connected with this process. There will be hiccups with this launch. We had them when we went to Genesis so be patient as this program is launched.
- **DVA Priorities:** The Executive Team is looking at the future of our agency, specifically towards capacity. Taking an internal look at what we can do and may be turning to outside providers for outreach. Peer to Peer Program is an example of this type of outreach. Our number one priority is connecting our veterans to their benefits with the biggest challenge being are ability to reach out to our rural elderly veterans. We need to develop a strategy on how we can reach them and their families.
- **Emotional Wellness:** we are focused on suicide prevention and awareness. Every 1.4 days, a WA State veterans commits suicide.

- **Focus on Eastern WA:** We have State Veteran Homes in Walla Walla and Spokane. We have one State Cemetery located in Medical Lake and we are planning for a second cemetery near the tri-cities areas, possibly in Sunnyside or Richland. The Yakima Nation has even offered to give the DVA land for this. We are looking for 30 to 40 acres for this cemetery. Additionally, we now have a new Veterans Service Center in Spokane. Cat Nichols is running the center that services the Eastern WA area.
- **The Serving Those Who Served Conference** will be held here in the Tri Cities Area. This is a free to attend. Please register for this conference.
- **Military License Plates** fund our cemetery. \$28 of the fee goes towards supporting our state cemetery.

Employment – Michael Hood, WorkSource Columbia Basin

- Michael Hood is a disabled veteran caseworker and 8 year veteran of the Marine Corps.
- The WorkSource Columbia Basin has a staff of two. Michael works with veterans to get them job ready be that with resume assistance or networking.
- WorkSource priority service for veterans: You are eligible for priority service if you left active-duty U.S. military service without a dishonorable discharge or are a member of the Reserves or National Guard who was activated to federal service under Title 10.

You are also eligible if you are the spouse of a U.S. military veteran who:

- Died as the result of a service-related disability; or
- Is reported as missing in action or a prisoner of war; or
- Has been forcibly detained or interned in the line of duty by a foreign government or power for more than 90 days; or
- Has a total, permanent disability resulting from military service.
- WorkSource collaborates with local employers to find jobs for veterans. Search for jobs on our website: www.worksourcewa.com. You will also find a calendar that provide a listing of employment events in our area.
- The Benton County Veterans Assistance Fund provides assistance to Benton County Veterans, their families, and the families of deceased Veterans, who meet the eligibility criteria for assistance.

Assistance Available to Eligible Veteran:

- Food Vouchers
- Utility Vouchers
- Rental/Deposits/App Fees

- Burial Assistance
- Background check fees for pre-employment
- Hotel/Motel Vouchers for homeless Veterans
- Bus Passes through BFT
- Necessary Safety Equipment required by employer to gain employment
- Dental Assistance
- Childcare Assistance (financial help with childcare)

Minimum Qualifications:

- Must be a Benton County Resident for at least 90 days (unless recently discharged)
- Must be at or below 150% of the poverty guidelines (low-income)
- Must be in need of assistance
- Must be a Veteran

Documents Required for Screening:

- Copy of DD214
- Photo ID
- Proof of income
- Widows or widowers must provide marriage license and Veteran's death certificate

Veterans Cemetery – Rudy Lopez, DVA Cemetery Director

- Burial benefits are rarely discussed when veterans transition from the military and are unaware of their death benefits. This is a critical benefit that serves a family need.
- Highly encourage pre-need registration for burial benefits either at our state cemetery or a federal one. Doing this in advance reduces stress during a very stressful time. We need to see DD 214 member copy 4 to verify character of service. There is no commitment or cost to pre-register for burial benefits.
- Honorably Discharged veterans qualify to be buried at the state/federal cemetery. If the vet qualifies, the spouse automatically qualifies. Eligible spouses do not have to be buried with the spouse and can be buried at any state/federal cemetery. Capital crimes bar veterans from being buried at state/federal cemeteries. Children may qualify as well (this typically occurs when children are active duty dependents).
- Burial benefit shall provide the veteran a plot or columbarium, and headstone. For spouses, there is a \$300 fee for interment.

WDVA Veterans Services Division and Homeless Veteran Services – Steve Gill, DVA Veteran Services Administrator

- Steve primarily works with counties and tribes around the state.

- Works with VSO organizations (VFW etc.)
- Work with veterans to connect them with their benefits.
- **Transitional Housing for veterans without homes.** The DVA has transitional beds for these veterans. We have 40 beds located at our Washington Soldiers Home located in Orting and we have 60 beds located at our Washington Veterans Home located in Port Orchard. This is a two-year program with most veterans only staying for 8 to 11 months and many veterans move on to live independent lives.
- **Veterans Estate Management Program:** supports veterans who cannot manage their own finances and is viewed more as a homeless prevention program. 300 veterans currently are enrolled in this program. Most of these veterans live independently in their community.
- **Veterans Innovation Program:** A grant that can be received to meet short term needs. Typically, this is a one-time grant to help veterans get on their feet. We collaborate with WorkSource with this program (they provide the case management).
- Transition Services: We have staff located at JBLM to assist transitioning veterans.

Behavioral Health and Suicide Prevention/Awareness – Dr. Roberto Valdez, WDVA PTSD Counselor

- Has worked with the DVA as a contracted counselor for the last 12 years.
- Need to have an honorable discharge and a DD 214 to receive counseling services.
- Suicide is a growing epidemic. 60% military veterans from a combat zone will have PTSD. 6 months to a year, some of those veterans will heal on their own; many do not. Some veterans experiences many challenges connected to PTSD that deeply affect them and their families and often will consider suicide. Providing the veteran with hope and grounding is a method of suicide prevention.
- Serves as the areas local provider. WDVA counseling program assists veterans with PTSD in individual or group settings.
- There are 48 providers statewide and you can find a provider at the following link:

http://www.dva.wa.gov/sites/default/files/Combined%20Provider%20List%202019_0.pdf

Peer to Peer Program – Bryan Bales, Veteran Peer Corps Coordinator

- Bryan is a Marine Corps Veteran (served 2005-2010) and has been involved with DVA since 2012.
- The Peer-to-Peer Program is a new program; began one year ago.
- Purpose; to make connections with veterans in their communities and engaging them in activities they enjoy.
- 140 trained mentors currently
- Program involves a 1 day, 8 hour training on building peer relationships.

Tools for Troops – Leonard Murh, WA Chapter of Tools for Troops

- Tools for Troops started in 2014 in Oregon; Leonard Murh oversees the WA State chapter.
- Partners with WorkSource WA to provide free tools for veterans for work or even therapeutic work (i.e. PTSD).
- Stanley Tools is one of their partners as well as with Home Depot.
- Tools for Troops is an all-volunteer organization.
- Tools for Troops supports veterans by freely issuing tools to veterans. Tools for Troops has helped 3,000 veterans by providing them with tools.

VAAC Town Hall Q&A:

Question: What programs exist for women veterans in the Tri-Cities area?

Answer: We have a Womens VAAC and have an increased presence with women serving as our PTSD providers who also address sexual trauma.

Alfie Alvarado-Ramos and Bob Wallace present a Certificate of Appreciation to the Fraternal Order of Eagles for hosting the Pasco VAAC Town Hall.

Meeting adjourned.