

STATE OF WASHINGTON

VETERANS AFFAIRS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

*PO BOX 41150*  *Olympia, Washington 98504-1150*  *360-725-2167*

**Meeting Minutes**

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| **Meeting attended by**  **(VAAC Member)** | Larry Alcantara and Bob Wallace |
| **Date** | March 22, 2018 |
| **Time** | 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. |
| **Location** | American Legion Post 28  276 8th Avenue NW, Ephrata, WA |
| **Call to Order** | Meeting called to order by Bob Wallace  Invocation by Larry Alcantara  Pledge of Allegiance led by Larry Alcantara |
| **Welcome & Introductions:** | Welcome and Introduction led by Bob Wallace  Mayor Bruce Reim welcomed guests to their town and shared the commitment of his office and the city council to work with the community and partners in assisting veterans and their families that lives in the community such as Memorial Day Event, 4th of July, Veterans day, etc.  Commissioner Cindy Carter – echoed Mayor Reim’s comment as well on what Grant County Commissioners are doing to assist veterans and their families that lives in the county when seeking access to their Veterans Assistance Fund. Grant County just recently hired a Deputy County Clerk who has also doing duties as their County Veterans Service Officer, Jerry Gingrich. He will be responsible for providing veterans and/or their families in need with temporary, emergency assistance. A veteran and/or their dependent(s) is eligible to access the fund providing they meet the requirements for being a grant county resident and proving their veterans status. Types of assistance that are available are: rent to prevent eviction, utilities to prevent shut off, food and necessary items for health and hygiene, burial assistance, medical, dental and catastrophic emergencies as determined on case by case basis. Veterans can either go to:  1. American Legion Post 28 at 276 8th Ave NE, Ephrata  2. Vietnam Veterans of American at Grant County Building located at 1525 E. Wheeler Rd, Moses Lake  3. American Legion Post 157 at 31 Coulee Blvd, Electric City  4. American Legion Post 183 at Quincy  5. American Legion Post 209 at 538 W Broadway, Moses Lake  6. Veterans of Foreign Wars at Quincy |
| **Presentations** | **WDVA Update – Alfie Alvarado-Ramos**  WDVA continues to work with our community partners to ensure veterans and their families are connected with their earned benefits. WDVA priorities are:   * Connecting veterans their families with their benefits * Homeless Prevention and Intervention * Veteran employment and Active Duty Transition * Mental Health Care and Suicide Awareness & Prevention * Incarcerated Veteran Service and Prevention * Enhancing internal Agency Capacity   Legislative Updates: Link to veterans and military bills that passed this year: **http://www.dva.wa.gov/about-wdva/legislative-updates**  **Employment – Eileen Boylston – WorkSource**  WorkSource is available to everyone in Grant County [**www.worksourcewa.com**](http://www.worksourcewa.com)  Veterans also may have priority service by Disabled Veterans Outreach Coordinator or Local Veterans Employment Representatives in the Office. They can help reduce barriers to work by helping with transportation, wardrobe, work-required tools or other gear.  WorkSource also partners with WDVA to provide the Veterans Innovations Program and Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program benefits to veterans who qualify. (more info at [**www.dva.wa.gov**](http://www.dva.wa.gov))  Other programs include the YesVets hiring initiative – [**www.yesvets.org**](http://www.yesvets.org)  **Vet Corps – Tony Sandoval**  Vet Corp is funded thru the AmeriCorps grant. Vet Corps members are stations at many colleges throughout the state and the Vet Corps help veterans achieve their higher education goals by:   * Providing training and support to college faculty, staff and administration and increase their awareness of student veterans needs * Providing a peer connection for veterans new to higher education * Helping the college to meet the needs of student veterans * Providing veterans with connections to federal, state and local benefits * Help veterans and their family member navigate Washington‘s higher education and training programs as they adjust from military to civilian life.   **HUD-VASH Rural – Lance Fromm**  US DVA awarded approximately $300 million in grants to 275 non-profit organization through Supportive Services for Veterans Families (SSVF) to help thousands of very low income veteran families who are permanently housed or transitioning into permanent housing. In 2016 nearly 85% of those discharged from SSVF obtained permanent housing.  The National Call Center for Homeless Veterans received more than 128,000 calls and aided over 38,000 veterans and/or their families through homeless chat. (**877-424-3838 available 24/7 7 days a week)**  Over the course of the year, VA staff and community partners hosted more than 350 stand downs across the country.  The **HUD**-**VASH** Program combines the Department of Housing and Urban Development (**HUD**) Housing Choice **Voucher** (HCV) rental assistance for homeless veterans and their families with case management and clinical services provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) at its medical centers and in the community.  **Eligibility for HUD-VASH –** Honorably discharged veterans, continuously homeless for a year or more or at least 4 episodes of homelessness in the past 3 years, needs and agrees to participate in case management. **Priority are given to:** Veterans who are chronically homeless, Veterans who served in Iraq or Afghanistan, Veterans with dependent children, Female veterans, Homeless veterans at high risk. Veteran is referred to VA Medical Center – list of VAMC and participating PHAs on the HUD VASH can be found at: **http://www.hud.gov/offices/pih/programs/hcv/vash**  **WA Veterans Cemetery – Rudy Lopez**  Eligibility for interment in the Washington State Veterans Cemetery mirrors National Veterans Cemetery  eligibility requirements. In general:  • All U.S. Veterans discharged under conditions other than dishonorable;  • Spouses; and  • Dependent Children.  The Washington State Veterans Cemetery serves veterans and other eligible individuals from  Washington and other States.  More information on the National Veterans Cemetery Eligibility Requirements is available at:  **http://www.cem.va.gov/cem/bbene/eligible.asp** or by contacting a WDVA Benefits Specialist directly at 1-800-562-2308.  The State Veterans Cemetery provides for in-ground casket burial sites and cremation interments.  For cremation interments the following options are available:  A columbarium niche that includes an inscribed, granite marker;  An in-ground cremation inurnment that includes an upright inscribed, granite marker;  A scattering garden with a flush-to-ground inscribed granite memorial marker  **Veterans Center Update – Joe Dumlao**  The Vet Center Program was established by Congress in 1979 out of the recognition that a significant number of Vietnam era vets were still experiencing readjustment problems.  Vet Centers are community based and part of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.  In April 1991, in response to the Persian Gulf War, Congress extended the eligibility to veterans who served during other periods of armed hostilities after the Vietnam era.  Those other periods are identified as Lebanon, Grenada, Panama, the Persian Gulf, Somalia, and Kosovo/Bosnia.  In October 1996, Congress extended the eligibility to include WWII and Korean Combat Veterans. The goal of the Vet Center program is to provide a broad range of counseling, outreach, and referral services to eligible veterans in order to help them make a satisfying post-war readjustment to civilian life.  On April 1, 2003 the Secretary of Veterans Affairs extended eligibility for Vet Center services to veterans of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and on June 25, 2003 Vet Center eligibility was extended to veterans of Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and subsequent operations within the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT).  The family members of all veterans listed above are eligible for Vet Center services as well. On August 5, 2003 VA Secretary Anthony J. Principi authorized Vet Centers to furnish bereavement counseling services to surviving parents, spouses, children and siblings of service members who die of any cause while on active duty, to include federally activated Reserve and National Guard personnel. For assistance after hours, weekends and holidays call: 1-877-927-8387.  **Veterans CHOICE Program – Kevin Ginter**  The CHOICE Program is part of Veterans Access. In November 2014, the CHOICE Program began to cover non-VA care for eligible veterans enrolled in the VA Healthcare. Veterans have the option to received non-VA health care rather than waiting for VA Appointment or if specialty care is not available at the VA Facility. CHOICE Program is designed to supplement the care veterans received at a VA Medical Facility, not replace or limit that care. Use of this program is totally voluntary. Any veteran currently eligible for VA care will retain that eligibility even he or she uses a CHOICE program to obtain care in the community. Co-pays – under this program, veterans are required to make co-payments in the same manner they would for care or treatment from the VAMC.  Triwest is the Primary Payer for all CHOICE authorized care.  Services not covered under CHOICE: Nursing home care, hospice, long term acute hospital, homemaker and home health aide services, chronic dialysis treatments, dental care, pediatric services, durable medical equipment to include eyeglasses and hearing aids, orthotics and prosthetics, non-urgent/non-emergent medications, compensation and pension (C&P) exam and emergency room.  CHOICE Line – 866-606-8198  CHOICE Provider: www.va.gov/opa/apps/locator  CHOICE Billing/Collections Issues – 877-881-7618  **WDVA Veterans Services Division – Steve Gill**  WDVA is a full service state agency that assist veterans and their families or survivors. We advocate and aggressively pursues all federal and state benefits earned. Our office is staffed with qualified serviced officer to assist veterans and their families in accessing their benefits earned: VA Disability Compensation Claim, VA Pension or Widows Pension, Aid and Attendance, Health Care Benefits. Using a case management approach, our staff attend to the needs of veterans by providing behavioral health counseling, referral services.  Contact: benefits @dva.wa.gov or 800-562-2308 |