

MULTNOMAH COUNTY OREGON

Multnomah County Veteran Services Taskforce

July 26, 2010 (Monday)

9:00 am – 11:00am

Commissioners Conference Room

501 SE Hawthorne Blvd

Portland, Oregon 97204

MEETING MINUTES

Members:

Commissioner Diane McKeel	Tina Edge, Multco System Reform & Community Placement Coordinator
Andrew Olsen, Policy Analyst	Bobbi Luna, Sheriff's Office
Tina Birch, ECC Readiness Coordinator	Greg Lamb, Veteran Services Officer
Jim Spitzer, Multco Health Depart - Bioterrorism	Fred Lentzer, District Attorney
Marv J. Reinhardt, Juvenile Custody Service Specialist - Intake/Control	Brian Vincent DCS

AGENDA TOPIC / PRESENTER	NOTES
Welcome & Introductions Commissioner Diane McKeel Multnomah County Dist 4	Diane welcomed everyone and members introduced themselves. She then went over the agenda and reminded everyone of the focus of this taskforce - to provide more robust information about Multnomah County services that we offer while best serving our veterans. She wanted to clearly identify what this taskforce was assembled to accomplish.
VA Grant for Justice System Greg Lamb Veteran Services Officer	Greg updated the group on a recent federal grant they received from the VA for the Justice System. They will be using it to hire a Veteran Service Officer to work within the jail population which is a brand new program. Currently, they have 9 staff in the Veterans Service Office and two of their Veterans Service Officers visit the jails once a week. This grant will may or may not be available again next year as the grant period has closed for this year. Greg encouraged taskforce members to visit the VA government website to research what grant opportunities are currently available. Diane suggested the need to explore the Washington County grant and Greg stated he was waiting for data from them and mentioned the grant will be administered by Washington County Department of Community Justice - there were two on the website (VA.gov) with grant listings. She asked if Greg needed assistance in getting data collection - Greg stated he has not had time to follow up and needs financial resources to do so. Diane mentioned they had someone whose job was data collection for LPSCC and may be able to help.
Incarcerated Vets Greg Lamb Veteran Services Officer	Greg provided an overview of the benefit process for vets who are in the justice system. At this time, Vets lose their benefits even if they are not convicted. He did state that the money could be diverted to the family when possible. He has been working with Bobbi Luna to figure out much money would be saved by diverting these vets from the justice system. Currently, approximately 1300 vets are booked into Multnomah County jails a year. On the 61st day of their incarceration, benefits are reduced by 90%. The theory being that once they are incarcerated, they become wards of the county. If, by chance, the VA is not aware of their incarceration and does not reduce the benefits, the vet will be responsible for

	which is hard to recover from. The question of whether a Veteran is identified when they are going through the booking process at a jail or are they identified in some other way. If they are detained there should be some type of system in place to ensure the District Attorney is aware so the benefit reduction can take place. Once the vet is out of jail they need to begin immediately working with the VSO to reinstate their benefits which can be a long, lengthy time consuming process. There is an emergency fund to assist but it runs out within the first week. Greg stated they were in the process for seeking funding for the Vetrospect Program which is a comprehensive data set which would allow for data share with contact information for family and dates of release, then VSO's could develop a program early which would increase the workload for VSO's. The Veteran Service Office currently has a 3 week waiting process and are working to train a staff member who will connect incarcerated Vets to VA to get benefits to the families. It is very important that VSO get incarcerated vet info from Corrections facilities as soon as possible so they can begin to work with families. The question of leveraging diversion money to fund additional staff was asked as well as looking into the possibility of using volunteers and interns were suggested. Diane mentioned she attended the NACo (county lobby group) conference in Reno last week and is a member of the health steering committee. One of their resolutions was advocacy around continuing benefits for incarcerated vets. The incoming president of NACo is convening a taskforce due to issues such as a vet had his home sold out from underneath him while on active duty overseas and he was powerless to take action. Diane is hoping to have OIF or OEF vet to chair committee - please let her know if there is someone who would be a good fit.
Veteran Service Volunteers & Workstudy Intern All	The question of using volunteers and interns was discussed. Greg mentioned they did have a VA work study position funded by the VA available but it was very difficult to fill the position and stated it took more time to train them. The concern over the dependability of volunteers was mentioned as well as having to offer interns a certain amount of hours and wondered about the level of management that would be needed for them. The group discussed the challenges of sponsoring volunteers vs. interns. Tina Edge mentioned they sponsored interns every year in the treatment unit she worked in and it seemed to work very well. There was front end time spent in training and getting the interns up to speed but once that was done, they were very motivated and independent. Many of the interns were 2nd or 3rd year students who were very serious and dedicated to the job. They had to turn interns away in the past due not enough positions for them, so it is evident they are out there and willing to work. Tina stated she would talk with her department's volunteer and intern coordinator, Autumn Ray about the possibilities and report back to the group. There was concern the work needed was low level technician work which may not be accurate as this position will interact, assess, and counsel vets and their families on navigating the VA system and determining what benefits they qualify for so believe there would be some type of social work aspect involved in this position. Many vets have mental health or physical issues that need to be diagnosed to access services. The ultimate goal will be to hire another VSO but in the meantime, research the availability of PSU interns, workstudy interns, and volunteers. Greg was asked for a job description for the work study position (attached).
Veteran Mental Health & Assessments Greg Lamb	Greg stated that vets that are in the VA healthcare system are 50% less likely to commit suicide than those outside the system. Currently, we are not sure of what mental assessments or screenings are done - will need to research with VA hospital.

Veteran Services Officer	
Woman Veteran Identification All	There is a need to identify the women vets in our area as they do not often self-identify and we are unsure why that is. There is a statewide woman vet conference that had 400 female vets attended in Canyon City this year. We may be able to encourage women vets to attend the grand opening of the Portland Vets Medical Women's Clinic that takes place Friday August 6, 2010 at the VA Hospital. This is a redesigned wing for women and is family friendly.
Taskforce Mission & Media Tools Commissioner Diane McKeel Multnomah County District 4	Diane wanted to identify the realistic goals for this group as well as the scope and desired outcomes. She would like to know what departments serve and assist vets. Suggested to have a robust central website that draws all resources together. FACEBOOK was another option which Greg Lamb is researching to reach the populations overseas. The FACEBOOK page would connect back to the Multnomah County website. There was concern that these would have to be tools that did not need to be maintained due to lack of manpower. Currently, the Veterans Service webpage is fragmented and buried down in the Aging & Disability website. Vets have to drill down through webpages until they can locate the webpage and it was extremely confusing because Aging & Disability information is blended in with vet information on the webpage. It was noted even the name of the website does not reflect the support for Veterans as it is named solely "Aging & Disabilities" - Clackamas county blends all 3 into "Aging, Disability, & Veterans Services". Greg stated they were going to put a button on the front page so vets could easily identify the website but he has not seen it done yet. There was a suggestion for renaming Aging & Disabilities to Aging, Disabilities, & Veterans Services but was told that had already been attempted and there was pushback to it. It was noted vets took offense in being lumped in with Aging & Disabilities as the majority of neither of those. Diane stated she will still pursue renaming and clarifying services in regard to the website. She also mentioned they have sent out letters and the VSO brochures to vets thanking them for their service which has increased traffic to the website.
	There will be a workforce conference in Oregon City and Clackamas which happens after every deployment. Greg noted the same vets go to the conference and would be nice to cast a wider net. <u>Taskforce Action Items</u> (some tasks identified after the meeting): - Multco Veteran Service Volunteer - Proposed mission statement for taskforce - Multco Veteran Service Workstudy Intern position - New Multnomah County Veteran Service website draft - Julia Duncan, Multco IT - Status on the new Multnomah County Veteran Service FACEBOOK page - Dave Austin, DCHS - New template for Future Agendas & Minutes - possibly post somewhere for public viewing - Multco Incarcerated Vets - Greg Clark, Medford Transitional Housing Program Coordinator attendance at taskforce meeting - Tri-County Veteran Support Meeting Proposal (which may actually have the potential of turning into a quarterly meeting for all)

Facilitator: Commissioner Diane McKeel

Recorder: Andrew Olsen

Next meeting ...

August 16, 2010 (Monday)

9:00am - 11am

Multnomah Building - Commissioner conference room #635

501 SE Hawthorne Blvd Portland, OR 97204

"The taskforce is comprised of members from various departments throughout Multnomah County who are committed and focused on responding to the needs of veterans while assuring the equitable and effective delivery of services to them and their families."

Veteran Services Work Study Position

The applicant will support Multnomah County Veterans' Service Office located in the Lincoln Building downtown and may engage in veterans services-related activities, including:

1. Fielding telephone inquiries
2. Explaining veterans benefits to potentially eligible veterans services clients
3. Assisting with scheduling client interview appointments with county veteran service officers
4. Developing and managing web based content to include use of social networking tools on an "information push" basis
5. Assisting veterans in filling out the most basic VA applications, for example, the SF-180 (Request for Discharge Documents).
6. Referring veterans and surviving spouses to other federal and state programs for which they are potentially eligible. These programs include Oregon State veterans' benefits. Interns may also be asked to make referrals to general community services as appropriate.
7. Distributing informational material about veterans benefits
8. Preparing benefit claim files and making copies

Who is Eligible?

This position is available to anyone who falls under the following VA programs:

- Post-9/11 GI Bill--(38 U.S.C. Chapter 33)
- Montgomery GI Bill--Active Duty (38 U.S.C. Chapter 30)
- REAP Participants
- Montgomery GI Bill--Selected Reserve (10 U.S.C. Chapter 1606)
- Post-Vietnam Era Veterans' Educational Assistance Program (38 U.S.C. Chapter 32)
- Dependents' Educational Assistance Program (38 U.S.C. Chapter 35)
- Eligible dependents under 38 U.S.C. Chapter 35 may use work study only while training in a State.
- National Call to Service Participants
- Vocational Rehabilitation & Employment Program -- (38 U.S.C. Chapter 31)

How much is the pay?

This is a minimum wage position at this time.

If you are interested or know of someone who might want to apply for this position, please print and complete the attached 1-page application - fax to Veterans Services Office @ (503) 988-5566 attn: Greg Lamb or interoffice Greg @ 167/1/510.

If you have questions, please contact Greg Lamb, Community Information Specialist @ (503) 988-3620.