



Multnomah County Veteran Services Taskforce

September 8th, 9:00am – 11:00am
Multnomah Building, Room 625, 501 SE Hawthorne Blvd, Portland, OR

MEETING MINUTES

Welcome and Introductions

Task Force meeting attended by: Diane McKeel, Sean Files, Pete Pringle, Joe Carbajal, Chelsi Spence, Jennifer Hibbs, Douglas Kuhl, Sarah Johnson, Medina Kurrey, Chris Aiosa, Gabriel Court, Belle Landau, Don Weber, Brook Jenkins, Estanislado Quinones, Javelin Hardy, Darla Darville, Matt Donohue

TOPIC / PRESENTER	NOTES	Action
VA Services for OEF/OIF/OND Veterans Darla Darville, Matt Donohue	<p>Darla provided an overview of this program at the VA and showed a video about returning service members accessing support. Information on this program is available at portland.va.gov. The focus of this program is to do whatever they can to help families access benefits in a wide range of areas. Service members don't need an appointment and can walk into the VA office. Discussed the UniteUS.com website and showed video on youtube (available with a search for "uniteUS"). On September 20th there will be a family workshop for couples learning to communicate better after deployment.</p> <p>In the Portland service area there are 132,822 veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan who are enrolled in VA services. In fiscal year 2013 alone there were 7,165 who enrolled. At this point, 1 in 7 veteran patients at the Portland VA have served in Iraq or Afghanistan. Darla presented on the impact of highest intensity stressors faced by combat veterans, the impact of combat training, and skills to contribute to survival in combat situations. Post-traumatic stress includes flashbacks, anxiety & panic attacks, emotional numbing and avoidance following these experiences. Suicide prevention is a significant issue for this population, and every day 22 veterans commit suicide (one every 1 hour and 5 minutes). 63% of veteran suicides are by those over the age of 50, and 59% are combat veterans.</p> <p>Matt Donohue, a veteran who served in Afghanistan, described his experience after enlisting and during his deployment. Noted that he was wired to react in a certain way, look for certain things, and it was very difficult to adjust when he returned home.</p> <p>Group discussion highlighted reverse survivor's guilt as a significant struggle, where an individual feels guilty after coming home with injury because they are no longer with their team. When asked what people can do, suggestion was to connect with a veteran and help them get out into social situations. Matt described the positive impact of going out, having fun, and the way that social relationships brought a sense of normalcy back to his life after coming back from deployment.</p>	<p>To register for family workshop, visit the uniteus.com website to get more information and sign up.</p>

Updates

All

- Eric Ensley has been hired as the new Supervisor in the County Veterans Services Office and will start in about two weeks.
- Commissioner McKeel reported that the Oregonian recently published an editorial that spoke very positively about the county's commitment to veterans services.
- There will be a training on TBI at Lewis and Clark College on September 26th. More information at returningveterans.org
- Telling Project will have an event at Portland State on September 10th. Combat to Paper will be at the Art Institute later this month. Will send more info when available.
- Art Therapy Project starting at Returning Veterans Project on September 23rd.
- Portland Stand Down is September 11th at Kleiver Armory.
- East County Stand Down is October 18th at the Chapel in Troutdale. Next planning meeting is 9/30 at 10am at the Chapel.
- Mt. Hood CC Job Fair scheduled November 5th.
- Hiring Our Heroes Job Fair at Memorial Coliseum on November 14th.
- Grant Per Diem has two openings right now in program that provides up to three years of housing for women veterans. Contact the Community Resource Referral Center or Transition Projects for more information.
- Lines for Life recently connected with country music star Joe Bachman, who is a big supporter and is doing outreach on behalf of their crisis line and other veterans services.
- Yellow Ribbon event for families on September 13th at the Embassy Suites by the airport.
- The weekend is the opening of the new veterans homes in Lebanon, OR. Warrior 2 Soulmate training at New Heights Church in Vancouver starting September 20th. For more information and to register, visit uniteUS.com. More information will be sent in an email this week.
- School update: Last month the task force discussed developing a program to support military connected children in school. Commissioner McKeel reported that she spoke with the Gresham Barlow superintendent and there is interest in developing a program. Sean has followed up with a contact at the Multnomah ESD and will follow up with the task force members for feedback and an update at upcoming meeting.