



June 27, 2013 Focus Meeting

Present: Kimberly Alexander-Bratcher, Li Fang, Ph.D., Joannette Farmer, Bob Goodale, Angela Harper, John Harris, Matthew Hoh, Hope Jones, Emily Landis, Heather McAllister, Diana Moser-Burg, Michael Rovaris, Catherine Smith, Flo Stein, Doug Taggart, Lucas Vrbsky, and Woody Woodward

Mr. Harris opened the meeting. After introductions, he briefly discussed post-deployment and the need to reintegrate veterans into their local communities in NC. This can be challenging in a state that is largely rural, where veterans may lack the transportation to obtain the services that they need.

Mr. Rovaris has been working with the Education Development Center, Inc., Zero to Three, and Louisiana State University. He is also a consultant with Project Launch, a system of care project. His expertise focuses on the social and emotional development of children; he is particularly interested in the effects of trauma on young children and the importance of understanding military culture. For young children, relationships matter in that children are affected by parental stress and trauma. While military families are strong and resilient, they can experience times of healthy stress, which can become toxic or traumatic if left unaddressed and untreated. He emphasized that providers need to offer help through a trusting, nurturing relationship and guide parents in anticipating change (e.g., new skills, homecomings, transitions). Providers need to work with the family to determine what the stressors are. Little acts of kindness/affection do matter.

Mr. Vrbsky announced that the Durham VAMC is hosting its annual homeless summit on September 17.

Mr. Harris is continuing to work with Fayetteville State University on its HRSA-funded Institute for veterans. They are working with Fort Bragg Command SGT MAJ to inform the Fort Bragg community about the Institute's free services for servicemembers, veterans, and their families. Dr. Cannon will be presenting on the evidence-based practice model in July at Focus. Mr. Harris also noted that he is involved in the project to certify veterans as peer support specialists through BHRP. They have trained 30 veterans thus far.

Mr. Goodale reported that the National AHEC is conducting CSSP trainings through Greensboro AHEConnect. 21,000 individuals have completed the training so far.

Mr. Taggart said that they are meeting in August to discuss the Interstate Children's Compact, which facilitates an easier educational transition for children. He also noted that House Bill 767 is a Troops to Teachers bill that would make it easier for veterans to become school teachers. Leadership and instructional roles in the military will be considered as part of meeting requirements. They are also trying to facilitate student teaching stipends so they can complete student teaching in order to finish the licensing program.

Dr. Fang presented on results for a survey that she and Ms. Stein administered to community colleges. Of the 58 community colleges, at least 38 responded. Nine additional respondents did not self-identify. About 12,039 student veterans attend community colleges; about 12,292 attend four-year colleges. The most common services and supports were an assigned Veterans Coordinator (39 schools), counseling center (36 schools), and office of student veteran services (22 schools). Seventeen community colleges offer veteran-specific individual counseling; four offer group counseling. For those schools that provide training on veterans-related issues, the most common topics were PTSD (9), military culture (7), anxiety disorders (7), TBI (7), implications of military service on student veterans and their peers (7), community integration (6), depression (6), and mood disorders (5). They desired the following resources: fact sheets on specific veteran-related topics (39), online training (38), workshops (37), website with downloadable resources (37), and examples of what other community colleges are doing (36). They identified the following topics as training needs: PTSD (13), transition to academic life (9), military culture (3), depression (3), TBI (3), and community resources (2).

Ms. Harper stated that NC had received 190 HUD-VASH vouchers this year.

Ms. Moser-Burg, Cardinal Innovations, said that they have launched initiatives to support child welfare agencies in the area of trauma-informed assessment and treatment. Ms. Stein praised the website which she thought was welcoming to veterans.

Mr. Hoh said that they are offering free speech therapy services for veterans. They are working with VAMCs to identify veterans that may need these services. They are also working with Wags4Tags to match correction system-trained dogs with veterans. So far, they have developed 15 veteran-dog partnerships.

Mr. Woodward said that his organization has raised \$4.5 M to put 2500 veterans in 5-7 day Outward Bound courses. They have just raised an additional \$1.6M for another 600 veterans and are starting programs with spouses (they will be offering sea kayaking in the Outer Banks in August). He is responsible for public education and is working with a variety of agencies. They have programs all over the country, and their staff is nearly all veterans.

Ms. Alexander-Bratcher said that the NCIOM is developing a rural health plan for the state and taking it to eight rural areas. They are also reaching out to veterans as part of this initiative.

The VA has revised its deadline for the Rural Veterans Coordination Pilot from July to September 19 (<http://www07.grants.gov/search/search.do?&mode=VIEW&oppld=236274>). The purpose of this grant is to assist veterans and their families who are transitioning from military service to civilian life in rural or underserved communities.

The next Focus meeting will be on July 25, from 2 to 4 pm at the NCIOM. The August meeting has been canceled due to a scheduling conflict.