



part of the medical history. The modules will facilitate the military cultural competence of the physicians. Old North State Medical Society was the impetus behind the project when they asked why they should include a military history if there was no incentive.

The Focus (Families OverComing Under Stress) Program started with marines and then the army. This program helps families on bases during and after deployment by teaching coping, communication, and parenting skills. UNC is currently heading a Focus initiative in the state. The next step is to take it into communities for the reserve component.

Dr. Kudler reported on the mental health summits that each of the 153 Veterans Affairs Medical Centers (VAMCs) hosted this past summer. Over 4000 individuals participated. The Durham VAMC is responsible for preparing the report. An initial finding is that respondents are less optimistic in terms of helping military families. The VA is taking this finding as a reason to begin focusing on military families. About 20% of all Americans are veterans or veteran dependent.

Dr. Kudler announced that he is retiring at the end of the month, but plans to continue with the VA without compensation. Thus, he will continue working with Focus in his new capacity.

SGT MAJ Haswell reported that the NC National Guard has added more behavioral health staff. There are also 10-12 staff in the Education and Employment Center; and they have been responsible for increasing the success rates of veterans finding jobs.

Ms. McAllister said that the Governor's Institute has updated the training page on the Focus website. The website asks visitors to sign up for the biweekly newsletters and to register as a military-friendly provider on [www.warwithin.org](http://www.warwithin.org). She is working with the Division to organize trainings for the Veteran Points of Contact (VPOC).

Mr. Pantano is continuing his quest to make the State the most veteran friendly state in the country. He is garnering support for this initiative from the Governor as well as state and community-based organizations, agencies, and companies. The Governor has indicated that he wants to attend a meeting in 2014. Mr. Pantano went around the room and asked attendees which organizations or agencies are missing from the table and came up with the following list: active military, vocational rehabilitation, criminal justice (e.g., veterans court, Mark Teachey, AOC, law enforcement), Vet Centers, Department of Higher Education, Laura Yates from Department of Corrections, VFW, DAV, chaplains and faith communities in veteran heavy communities (e.g., NC Council on Churches), providers (e.g., social workers, child workers), Reserves, NCNG family programs, military children in schools, prevention services for substance abuse and domestic violence, how to address suicide in military, DMA, librarians (My Health Vet portal, section for military kids), family medicine, pediatrics, DMV (e.g., Coaching into Care video screens, licenses for military drivers), public health, rural health, American Indians, and regional groups.

Mr. Goodale suggested that regional groups be organized and that the Focus could serve as a model even though it is at the state level. Currently, there are regional groups in Charlotte (formerly CART but now the Charlotte Bridge Home serves as the organizer), Fayetteville (Community Blueprint), and Wake County (Military and Veterans Resource Coalition).

John Bigger of the Southern Regional AHEC sponsors a program on military families, *Forward March*, annually. Perhaps we could invite him to participate in Focus.

Also discussed was the location of the meetings. Because the meetings are always in the Triangle with a limited number of call-in lines, perhaps we could utilize the virtual video conference center at NC Central University in Durham or at CISCO. SGT MAJ Haswell said that the NCNG has the capability for virtual meetings and could possibly host the Focus meetings. The community colleges and AHECs also have this capability.

Issues that need to be addressed include:

- Spouses need education about TBI and other health issues. Even though there are many existing resources such as Yellow Ribbon, families are not using them.
- Health literacy
- Increase the visibility of the Focus website and what it offers
- Educate about child neglect and child abuse, which are high in counties where military are based (child welfare workers and social services workers need training on military issues to become culturally competent)

SGT MAJ Haswell said that NCNG J-9 programs include programs such as family programs, behavioral health, Yellow Ribbon, survivor outreach services, suicide prevention, and military sexual trauma (MST). While there are countless programs, websites, and toll-free numbers, people are still having trouble accessing services. Somehow even though there are more services than ever, things seem to be worse.

The next Focus meeting will be held on January 23. Operation Recovery will be presenting.