

The Coalition to Prevent Veteran Suicide

Meeting Agenda

July 25th, 2023

1. Introductions

Jennifer Thomas	Carroll County Coalition for Public Health- Substance Misuse Prevention Coordinator
Emily McArdle	Carroll County Coalition for Public Health
Gary Bent	Veterans Case Manager for Service Link for Carroll County and Belknap County
Jennifer Walton	Retired Navy Hospital Foreman Chief
Mark Allen	Commander of VFW
Justin Moeling	Social Worker and Partnership Coordinator for Suicide Prevention with Manchester VA
BJ Parker (Zoom)	Town of Conway Welfare Director
David Dube (Zoom)	Social Services Coordinator at Huggins Hospital
Lindsay Pratt (Zoom)	Social Worker at Conway VA
Rachel Vose (Zoom)	Social Worker at Visting Nurse Home Care & Hospice of Carroll County
Joseph Vano (Zoom)	Partnership for Public Health

2. Purpose of meeting

The first meeting of the Veterans Coalition for Carroll County. Jen will facilitate meeting, but it's driven by the population/members

3. Brief overview of goals and objectives

Overall goal: Prevent veteran suicide, decrease social isolation of veterans, and support veterans and their families.

Other goals/objectives: Determine what the short-term and long-term needs are in the community and determine ways to address those needs. Determine what policy changes are needed and reach out to Senator Shaheen and Congressman Pappas for policy changes.

4. Determine appropriate name

Group agreed on Carroll County Veterans Coalition.

(Putting "suicide prevention" in the name could limit which veterans join)

(Add Rapid Response logo to bottom of flyer- full NH number while 988 is still fixing area code issue)

Please invite anyone who is interested

5. Develop mission statement-

6. Determine best day and time to meet and best way to meet

Group agreed on fourth Tuesday of the month at 10am

- Where- Gary will talk to Service Link in Tamworth about using their conference room and David will talk to Huggins Hospital about using their space
- Hybrid- Stick to hybrid to allow more people to join

7. General discussion- Areas of concern or need

- Major Concerns:** Lack of support available for veterans, lack of support for young veterans, lack of transportation for healthcare and socialization, isolation, communication issues with veteran groups/supports, and lack of support for female veterans.

- Gary- Concern: Not enough people helping veterans, not enough support for young veterans, communication issues, access to care, potential contacts-** In MA every community has a Veterans Department (351), VSOs, NSOs, 500 people advocating for veterans- involved with suicide prevention, disability applications, helping buy homes, Dr. appointments, etc. Communication issues in NH- no response when calling services. Need more groups helping veterans, especially young veterans. Lack of communication from veteran groups to veterans. Only 3 people per county are helping veterans in NH. Important to get political people involved, many claim they will help but are not involved after they are elected. Making good contacts is important. Swim with a Mission- great organization with lots of resources, would come to the meeting if invited, hosting Pets for Vets Gala. Delta Dog- another great organization. NH has lost 90 troops in combat, 900 to suicide. Not enough people in NH for veterans to reach out to (many go back to MA).
- Justin- Concern: Need more support/people-** Veteran Service Organizations have VSOs (veterans service officers) but they are overworked- they must find veterans in the community, get them connected, do risk assessments. Access to care is very important. Need more support in NH.
- 988 is good but needs to follow through with veterans for care (long term follow-up).
- Gary-** Some veterans not even in VA healthcare because they didn't know they qualify, has been helping them sending out applications and following through with them.
- Jen-** Ask the Veterans Campaign to help spread the word.
- David: Potential contact-** Invite Humble Grunt Work in Center Harbor to this meeting- new grassroots group that does fundraising events, transitional housing for veterans, suicide prevention. Contact Carla Taylor (603) 986-1488.
- Lindsay: Concern- Transportation issues and isolation-** Works in primary care and case management- Concerns: Lack of transportation in area, many veterans isolated

- and don't have family to help them. Veterans with appointments in Portland and Manchester (for specialists), but no transportation to get to them. This ties into suicide prevention because people need access to care. Isolation- Veterans don't have ties to communities or people that check in on them- those are the veterans that feel most hopeless about their situation.
- **Jen-** Ideas for transportation at least for Carroll County/ North Conway, putting out flyers for volunteer drivers.
 - **Justin-** Need transportation not just to appointments but to anything, like transportation to community events, socializing. VA/CDC- came up with national suicide prevention plan- best practices- including access to care, reducing social isolation, screening for risk, supporting and following through people in crisis, transitions in care, lethal means reduction- 70% of veteran suicide happen by firearm- need to improve culture of safety and manage firearms safely- engage with local gun shops (they can hold on to firearms until person is in better place). Opposite of suicide is hope and reducing stigma, supporting people and networking.
 - **Gary- Coffee social and upcoming event-** Coffee social in Madison- at one point had up to 30 veterans involved, some mentioned transportation issues so they created a transportation list, veterans picking each other up to come. For some veterans the coffee social is the highlight of their day to come out and socialize and tell stories. Upcoming Event: Black Hawk helicopter coming to Madison on August 5 at 10am- trying to get veterans and kids to come. The goal is to make more events that will draw veterans out. Can help with reaching out to people, finding funding for the group. Will talk to the woman running the Coffee Social about joining this group.
 - **Jen-** Trying to find activities to bring people together- coffee social, BBQ, etc.
 - **Mark-** Find veteran owned businesses to help.
 - **Jennifer: Concern- Female veterans-** Even worse situation, people assume women aren't not veterans, healthcare issues- can't get appointment for months because the VA is forcing a women's care provider for any health issue. Need to do outreach for women, there are no women's veterans groups/coalitions around here.
 - **Justin-** Women were only formally allowed in combat 20 years ago, so now the first round of women is retiring. In NH female veterans one of the fastest growing groups, in Carroll County veterans are on the older side and the percentage of the population in Carroll County that are veterans is greater than in other parts of the state.
 - **Gary-** Agree, need more groups for women veterans.
 - **Justin-** Working on project for state-wide coalition for women's veterans, looking for hosting facilitator- Jen in Carroll County? Many places don't have capacity right now for a new group.
 - **Lindsay-** There will be changes to the clinic, working with providers for services for female veterans.
 - **Jennifer-** That is great, but haven't seen changes yet, some people don't have other healthcare options- beholden to VA and the 24 hours a month that there is a female healthcare provider there.

- Justin-** There are some female veterans with MST (military sexual trauma) and PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder), must figure out best way to handle each veteran individually.
- David-** David is the only person that helps veterans at Huggins. He was a training officer for VSOs in MA. David would like to talk with Gary.
- Lindsay- Potential contacts-** Two VSOs to approach for this coalition: Ken McGovern- American Legion (Gary has info), State VSO- Bill (603) 624-9230 ext. 301- goes to scheduler. Jill at Gibson Center- involved in Veterans groups and puts on veterans' groups at Gibson. (Jen reached out, Jill will try to be involved if possible).
- Justin-** Some people jump on board later as things get started; some people want to see if the meetings actually happen.
- David- Potential contact-** State Vet Director is William Gaudreau at (603) 624-9230 ext. 302
- Justin-** Some places have a veterans community center- place for veterans to socialize.
- Gary-** NH politician had said they would open a veterans' center in Concord, but it never happened.
- Jennifer- Concern: Female veterans-** People asking for women veteran contacts/groups in NH, wanting to connect. Some women hesitant to join groups created/run by men.
- Gary-** MA- created women's division/department of veterans' services, every state should have one
- Justin-** peer support also important, for example, people who can come to ER with veteran, etc. Franklin NH Easter Seals Military and Veterans Campus- trying to create housing, services and support- Lakes Region Veterans Coalition will be involved, along with Delta Dog, equine therapy.

Outcomes we would like to see-

Possible activities, trainings, or speakers?

Jen- Would like to do suicide prevention training for the group, such as Psycharmor- an online training that takes a couple hours.

Justin- If the group prefers in-person, he knows of 3 suicide prevention coordinators that could help, can be connected.

8. Develop logic model

- Concerns/related behaviors
- Risk and protective factors
- EBI-Empty for now
- Short term outcomes
- Long term outcomes

9. Next actions before next meeting

- Jen

- Research best practices regarding veteran mental health and suicide ideation
- More outreach, find best practices for suicide prevention
- Suicide prevention training for the fall?
- Reach out to people for more ideas, coffee or BBQ, have space available
- Will try Ossipee library, or Service Link conference room in Tamworth or David can arrange room at Huggins Hospital if needed
- Jen- Try to reach out to more people in Wakefield
- Next meeting: August 22 at 10am- will still be hybrid to accommodate everyone