



VETERANS RURAL HEALTH ADVISORY COMMITTEE

October 5-7, 2020

Zoom virtual meeting

October 5: 11 am – 3:00 pm (ET); October 6: 11 am – 2:30 pm (ET); October 7: 11 am – 2:30 pm (ET)

NOTES

Attendees:

Committee Members Present:

Deanna Lamb, Chair
Francisco Ivarra
Graham Adams
Andrew Behrman
Brenda Moore
Angeline Bushy
Michael McLaughlin
Stephanie Birdwell
Joe Parsetich
Lonnie Wangen
Keith Mueller

Travis Lovejoy
Nancy Dailey
Sheila Robinson
Vincent Arrington
Wilbur Woodis
Travis Hoffmann
Marylene Cloitre
Jeff Moragne
Karyn Johnstone
Kelly Lora Lewis
Matt Vincenti
Meggan Thomas
LaTonya Small
Janice Garland
Anthony Achampong
Jeff Moragne
Zavian Cooper
Rich Huang
Marie Abow
Andrea Martinez
Jessica Bonjorni
Lynda Davis
Laura Moore
Amy Beckstead
Melissa Paulson Conger
Ryan Sharpe
Traben Pleasant
Bret Hicken
Byron Bair
Derek Chatham
Keith Myers
Kimber Parry
Kimberly Stenner

Ex-Officio Members Present:

Rich Davis
Tom Morris
Ben Smith

Department of Veterans Affairs Staff Present:

Thomas Klobucar
Judy Bowie, Designated Federal Officer
Ernest Moy
Steven Lieberman
David Carroll
Michelle Mengeling
Aimee Sanders
Carolyn Turvey
Jay Shore
Sarah Ono
Samantha Solimeo
Sergio Romero
Bret Hicken

Melissent Zumwalt
Chris Turner
Phil Welch
Derek Atkinson

Consultants Present:

Stephen Miles
Robert Derby
Beth Schwartz
Jasmine Williams
Scott Bledsoe

Public Attendees:

Cindy Goss
Theresa Wrzesinski, Policy Assistant,
U.S. Senate
Ellen Milhiser, Synopsis, Newsletter
Editor
Marren Grant
Mary Sell
Pennie Hartley

Shauna Rust, Staff Member, U.S.
Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs
Cari Lee
Ashley Walton, Senior Congressional
and Political Affairs Manager, American
Society of Anesthesiologists
Michael Fallahkhair, U.S. Department of
Health and Human Services
Emily Olearczyk, Congressional and
Political Affairs Specialist, American
Society of Anesthesiologists
Sam Solley, Revelations Counseling &
Consulting
James Moss, Veterans of Foreign Wars
Rene Campos, Senior Director of
Government Relations, Military Officers
Association of America
Sharon Hodge, Vietnam Veterans of
America
Stephanie Deer, Cerner Corporation
Diane Hara

Meeting Objectives

1. VRHAC will gain increased understanding of VA's health care programs supporting enrolled women and minority Veterans.
2. VRHAC will gain increased understanding of the Office of Rural Health's current programs and research initiatives.
3. VRHAC will develop recommendations for the VA Secretary.

Monday, October 5, 2020

Welcome, Introductions and Meeting Overview

Deanna Lamb, Chair, Veterans Rural Health Advisory Committee

- Chair convened meeting, conducted introductions, and reviewed agenda.

Webinar Tools & Instructions

Robert Derby, Strategic Planner, DCG Communications

- Reviewed Zoom functions.

ORH 2020 Highlights

Thomas Klobucar, Executive Director, Office of Rural Health, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

- Discussed VA COVID-19 pandemic response and provided latest statistics regarding VA testing, diagnosis, and telehealth visits.
- Reviewed VA Fourth Mission efforts to provide care to both Veteran and non-Veteran populations during COVID-19.

2019 Fall Meeting Recap

Sheila Robinson, Deputy Director, Office of Rural Health, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

- Reviewed 2019 Fall VRHAC meeting and discussed key takeaways from presenters, roundtable discussions, and Women Veterans' Health Perspectives panel.
- Previewed Fall 2020 meeting theme, content, and format.

Presentation: Health Equity and Rural Veterans

Dr. Ernest Moy, Executive Director, Office of Health Equity, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

- Reviewed Office of Health Equity's research, informational tool development, and dissemination efforts.
- Discussed Office of Health Equity COVID-19 support, including data analysis, communication coordination, and improvement of testing and outcomes.

Presentation: COVID-19 and Rural Women Veterans

Dr. Steven Lieberman, Acting Deputy Under Secretary for Health, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

- Discussed VA emergency management efforts in response to COVID-19 including clinical practice review, personnel and protective equipment/supplies allocation, clinical staff recruitment, and increased telehealth visits.
- Discussed VA COVID-19 response efforts in rural areas and efforts to improve rural women's' health through health education, care coordination improvement, and outreach.

Presentation: Mental Health Challenges and Solutions

Dr. David Carroll, Executive Director, Office of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

- Reviewed suicide prevention, women's mental health, and telemental health services programs.

Panel Discussion: Rural Women Veterans and Trauma

Dr. Jay Shore, Director, Telemedicine, University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus

- Discussed healthcare disparities and rates of PTSD among rural women American Indian (AI) Veterans and shared trauma and care access data.
- Discussed care challenges and access barriers for rural AI Veterans during COVID-19 and related program work.

Dr. Michelle Mengeling, Affiliate Investigator, CADRE, Office of Rural Health Veterans Rural Health Resource Center – Iowa City, Iowa

- Discussed attrition issues and access to purchase care impacting rural women Veterans.
- Discussed importance of examining women Veterans' preferences for telehealth and noted women Veterans have interest in VA-sponsored activities that facilitate bonding.

Dr. Aimee Sanders, Physician Educator, Women's Health Services, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

- Reviewed women's health designation training program targeting rural primary care providers and nurses.
- Discussed development of a rural outreach arm of the Women's Health Transition Training Program for FY21 targeted at rural women Veterans.

Wrap Up & Close

Deanna Lamb, Chair, Veterans Rural Health Advisory Committee

Robert Derby, Strategic Planner, DCG Communications

- Committee reviewed highlights, concerns, and outstanding questions regarding the day's presentations.

Tuesday, October 6, 2020

Welcome, Introductions and Meeting Overview

Deanna Lamb, Chair, Veterans Rural Health Advisory Committee

- Chair reconvened meeting and reviewed agenda.

Webinar Tools & Instructions

Robert Derby, Strategic Planner, DCG Communications

- Reviewed Zoom functions.

Review of Relevant ORH Programs

Thomas Klobucar, Executive Director, Office of Rural Health, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

- Played video message from VA Secretary Robert Wilkie.
- Provided background information on enrolled rural Veterans, history of Office of Rural Health, organizational functions, enterprise-wide initiatives, and functions of Veterans Rural Health Resource Centers.
- Discussed key enrolled rural women Veterans demographics and provided overview of ORH initiatives.

Presentation: Workforce Development

Jessica Bonjorni, Chief, Human Capital Management, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

- Discussed VHA workforce statistics – including rural employee statistics and demographic breakdown. Discussed turnover rates, facility growth, and workforce programs and strategies for rural facilities.
- Discussed workforce recruitment strategies and programs targeted at rural sites including loan repayment, scholarships, and salary and work schedule incentives.

Presentation: Supporting Rural Veteran Communities

Dr. Lynda Davis, CXO-Chief, Veteran Experience Officer, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

- Provided overview of VHA Outpatient Survey data for rural Veterans and discussed questions and feedback solicited in surveys.
- Highlighted and discussed recent narrative feedback from rural Veterans in both the “compliment” and “concern” categories regarding mail order prescriptions and telehealth visits.

Panel Discussion: Education and Training Programs for Rural Women Veterans

Dr. Travis Lovejoy, Clinical Director, Office of Rural Health Veterans Rural Health Resource Center – Portland, Oregon

- Discussed substance use disorders in rural areas and impact on women Veterans. Highlighted lack of specialty care in rural areas to treat substance use disorders.
- Discussed project work focused on analyzing primary care services in context of MISSION Act, rural Veteran access to Community Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs) and non-VA primary care clinics, and barriers non-VA primary care clinics face in becoming MISSION Act providers.

Dr. Carolyn Turvey, Clinical Director, Office of Rural Health Veterans Rural Health Resource Center – Iowa City, Iowa

- Reviewed purpose, goals, and outcomes of Rural Quality Scholars Program.
- Discussed collaborative efforts with Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) to enhance screening and identification of rural Veterans. Emphasized use of measurement-based care to track patient progress, outcomes, and identify gaps in care in rural areas.

Dr. Marylene Cloitre, Associate Director, VA Health Care Services – Palo Alto, California

- Discussed purpose, goals, functions, and outcomes of collaborative effort with ORH on web-based treatment program for women Veterans who experienced Military Sexual Trauma (MST) and have subsequent PTSD and depression symptoms.

Wrap Up & Close

Deanna Lamb, Chair, Veterans Rural Health Advisory Committee

Robert Derby, Strategic Planner, DCG Communications

- Committee reviewed highlights, concerns, and outstanding questions regarding the day's presentations.

Wednesday, October 7, 2020

Welcome, Introductions and Meeting Overview

Deanna Lamb, Chair, Veterans Rural Health Advisory Committee

- Chair reconvened meeting and reviewed agenda.

Webinar Tools & Instructions

Robert Derby, Strategic Planner, DCG Communications

- Reviewed Zoom functions.

Panel Discussion: Health Disparities Among Rural Women Veterans

Dr. Sarah Ono, Operations Director, Office of Rural Health Veterans Rural Health Resource Center – Portland, Oregon

- Discussed complexities of examining Veteran health issues through intersectional lenses of race, class, and gender.
- Reviewed telehealth initiative to assist transgender Veterans undergoing gender reassignment treatment.

Nancy Dailey, Operations Director, Office of Rural Health Veterans Rural Health Resource Center – Salt Lake City, Utah

- Discussed development of telehealth program for elderly Veterans and emphasized importance of leveraging community-level connections.
- Discussed current assessment of outreach programs to minority women Veterans.

Facilitated Discussion, Part 1

Thomas Klobucar, Executive Director, Office of Rural Health, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Robert Derby, Strategic Planner, DCG Communications

- Reviewed brainstorm methodology for facilitated discussion. Discussed lateral thinking and four phases it encompasses.
- Facilitators guided Committee members through four phases of lateral thinking.

Facilitated Discussion, Part 2

Thomas Klobucar, Executive Director, Office of Rural Health, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Robert Derby, Strategic Planner, DCG Communications

- After completing lateral thinking exercise, Committee members generated draft list of potential recommendations to VA Secretary.
- Facilitators reviewed voting procedures with Committee members.
- Committee members voted in favor of reviewing draft list of recommendations for 24 hours. Members agreed to submit final votes by COB Thursday, October 8.

Wrap Up & Close

- Chair thanked Committee members for their work and adjourned meeting.

Public Comment Period

Dr. Thomas Klobucar, Executive Director, Office of Rural Health

Deanna Lamb, Chair, Veterans Rural Health Advisory Committee

- No public comments