

**Department of Veterans Affairs Advisory Committee on Women Veterans
Meeting Minutes
Lafayette Building, Room 819
811 Vermont Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20420
February 27 – March 1, 2007**

Advisory Committee Members Present:

COL Shirley Quarles, USAR, Chair	Brenda Moore, USA
SFC Gwen M. Diehl, USA, Retired	COL Jacqueline Morgan, USAF, Retired, Vice-Chair
Velma Hart, USAR	Lupe Saldana, USMC
CPO Kathleen Janoski, USN, Retired	CMSgt Sara A. Sellers, USAF, Retired
Marlene R. Kramel, USA	Celia Renteria Szelwach, USA
Mary Antoinette Lawrie, USAF	Joanna Crosariol Truitt
1SG Pamela Luce, USA, Retired	

Advisory Committee Member Absent:

Virgil Walker, ANG

Ex-Officio Members Present:

COL Denise Dailey, Military Director, Department of Defense (DoD) – Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services (DACOWITS)
Cheryl Rawls, Director, VA Regional Office, Huntington West Virginia

Ex-Officio Members Absent:

Cynthia Morrison, Department of Labor, Veterans' Employment and Training Service

Advisors Present:

Lindee Lenox, Director, Memorial Programs Service, National Cemetery Administration (NCA)
CDR Lucienne D. Nelson, Program Manager, Critical Infrastructure Protection for Healthcare and Public Health Sector, Department of Health and Human Services
Linda Piquet, VBA, Program Manager for Women Veterans Outreach Program

VA Staff Present:

Center for Women Veterans	Dr. Irene Trowell-Harris, Director Dr. Betty Moseley Brown, Assoc. Director	Desiree Long Chanel Bankston-Carter Michelle Terry
Center for Minority Veterans	Lucretia McClenney, Director Earl Newsome, Deputy Director	Renee Allen, Juanita Mullen Alejandro Ramos
VHA	Dr. Patricia Hayes, Acting Chief Consultant, Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Women Veterans Health Strategic Healthcare Group (WVHSHG)	Meri Mallard, Deputy Field Director, VHA WVHSHG

Guests:

Fredrick Burns, Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States (VFW)
JoAnn Cronin, American Legion Auxiliary
Pamela Gilley, American Legion Auxiliary
Yanira Gomez, VFW
Delores Leon-Saldana
Shannon Middleton, The American Legion
Teresa Morris, VFW
Michelle Saunders, Department of Labor

Tuesday, February 27, 2007

Meeting was called to order by the Chair. Items discussed included:

- o Introduction of Members & Visitors.
- o Agenda review.
- o Subcommittees' Status Report.
- o Approval of October/November 2006 Advisory Committee meeting minutes.
- o Site visit selection.
- o Capitol Hill visit.

**Briefing: Overview of VHA Initiatives, Michael J. Kussman, M.D., MS, MACP,
Acting Under Secretary for Health**

- o OEF/OIF care.
- o Organizational challenges- consistent care nationwide.
- o Budget (accountability/operation using business model).
- o Performance Measures – effectiveness/tertiary care tracking.
- o Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), Polytrauma, mental health, PTSD in women, VISN rehab.
- o Challenges faced by VA.
- o VA Medical Center, Washington, D. C. developing breast surgery clinic.
- o Develop good cadre of healthcare providers with expertise in women's health.
- o Relationship with Department of Defense (DoD) and flow of information.

**Update: Veterans Benefits Administration, Bradley G. Mayes, Director,
Compensation and Pension Service (C&P)**

- o Discussed recommendations pertaining to veterans' benefits and rationale for VBA response to 2006 ACWV report recommendations.
- o VETSNET (Veterans Service Network) is a new VBA corporate repository that includes information on denials; previous applications/software did not have denial information.
- o Conducting work measurements study (work measurement studies conducted every 3 years) involving sexual trauma. Process will be included in the sample.
- o C&P Systematic Technical Accuracy Review (STAR) samples claims rating for accuracy.

- Discussed ways to get information from those who are not computer savvy.
- Discussed outreach to family members of reservists during family weekend.
- Discussed Transition Assistance Program (TAP)/Disabled Transition Assistance Program (DTAP) briefings.

Briefing: Lisa Pape and Mary Rooney, Homeless Program/Incarcerated Veterans Re-entry Initiative

- Notice of Funding Availability/call for proposals released in February for women veterans with children.
- Discussed 20th year Anniversary of Homeless Program Services (1987).
- Nationwide, approximately 4-5% of homeless are women veterans, according to some studies.
- Incarcerated veterans outreach program. Each state has representative to enroll vets before release from prison.
 - 21 VISN re-entry specialists.
 - 125 stand downs nationally.
- Discussed special needs funded by community providers.

Update: 2006 Advisory Committee Report, Dr. Irene Trowell-Harris, Director, Center for Women Veterans (CWV)

An update status of the 2006 ACWV report was given.

- Report was submitted to the Office of General Counsel for review and was cleared.
- The report was submitted to the Secretary on February 9, 2007 for approval and signature.
- The report will be distributed to members of Congress, VA medical centers, VA Administrations, State Departments of Veterans Affairs, veterans service organizations, and other veteran-related organizations.
- The report will be published in 2007 and posted to the Center's Web site.

Update: Summit 2008/Center Activities, Betty Moseley Brown, Associate Director, CWV

- Provided a summary of the Center's activities.
- Provided information on outreach activities.
- Discussed VA's strategic goals and the Center's performance measures.
- Discussed 2008 Summit.
 - Friday, March 2, 2008 will be the first Summit conference call.
 - Group will come up with breakout session and discussion items.
 - Targeted number is approximately 350-400; target audience is those who have an interest in women veterans.
 - The Summit will be held June 20-22, 2008 in Washington, D. C.

Wednesday, February 28, 2007 - Room 819, Lafayette Bldg

Meeting called to order by the Chair. Items discussed included:

- Capitol Hill Visit – Informal discussion of CWV mission activities, as well as ACWV mission/activities and areas of interest.
- Next ACWV Site Visit, June 3-9, 2007.
- Discussed proposed dates for fall meeting. Meeting will be timed with Women in Military Service for America's 10th Anniversary, if possible.
 - October 8-13, 2007.
 - October 22-27, 2007.
- Discussed 2008 Summit.
- Discussed Washington Post Article regarding Rise in Homeless throughout the nation.

Update: Overview of VA Initiatives/Remarks: The Honorable R. James Nicholson, Secretary of Veterans Affairs

- Group photographs with Secretary Nicholson and Committee.
- Overview of VA initiatives/legislation.
- Discussed 2008 budget.
- Every OEF/OIF veteran seeking healthcare will be screened for Traumatic Brain Injury.
- Discussed stats on women veterans.
- Stressed the importance of the Advisory Committee on Women Veterans.

Briefing: Women Veterans Health Strategic Healthcare Group (SHG), Patricia M. Hayes, PhD, Acting Chief Consultant

- Discussed stats on women veterans.
- Overarching priority is to serve each woman veteran by providing the best possible care and service within the most optimal time and in a secure and dignified environment.
- Mental Health priority is provided to veterans with disabilities to the greatest extent possible and to improve the quality of their lives and that of their families.
- Primary Care priority is to ensure smooth transition for veterans from active service to civilian life.
- Quality of Care priority is to assure that the veteran is receiving the highest quality of care available in America.
- Research and Development Priority is to continue to support research which informs on highest quality care, best practices and effective treatments for women veterans.
- Discussed health system and policy.

Discussion: Women Veterans Health Program, Meri Mallard, Deputy Field Director, Women Veterans Health SHG

- Discussed annual plan of care and clinical inventory.
- Discussed 3rd fiscal year data collected.
- Discussed a web-based tool whereby only the Women Veterans Program Manager can enter, edit, and submit information.
- Over 1000 community based outpatient clinics.
- Discussed privacy issues.
- Discussed network performance plan.

Discussion: Possible Workgroup Recommendations for 2008, Report/Options for Site Visit, Dr/ Shirley Quarles, Chair, ACWV

- Discussed proposed sites.
- Subcommittees (Health/Benefits) began to work on the 2008 Report.

Thursday, March 1, 2007

Meeting was called to order by the Chair. The following items were discussed:

- Site visit.
- Subcommittees met to discuss 2008 Report.

Update: Status of Fee Program, Ralph Charlip, FACHE, FAAMA, Director, VA Health Administration Center

- The purpose of the Fee Program is to support VA patients, VA staff, and non-VA care providers in the timely access to medically necessary services.
- Fee care should be arranged in advance. However, in case of medical emergencies, VA should be notified within 72 hours of admission. Fee is not a permanent authorization.
- Use of Fee services is based on individual needs, capability of the VA system, and other factors (such as the special needs for women veterans).
- Discussed claims process with regards to eligibility, authorization and payment through Vista Fee System.
- Will provide stats (drill down) of types of payments.
- Discussed challenges in retrospective non-VA hospitalization.
- Discussed billing issues related to Fee care.
- Discussed improvements in development.
- Discussed how to improve access and reduce costs.

Briefing: Overview on Center for Minority Veterans, Lucretia McClenney, Director, Center for Minority Veterans (CMV)

- Discussed Congressional mandate/Public Law. Public Law 103-446 (November 1994) required the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to create the Center for Minority Veterans and establish the Advisory Committee on Minority Veterans.
- CMV acts as a resource center for information, publicize and encourage medical research, conduct and sponsor demographic research, track complaints and analyze data on minority veterans.
- The Director, CMV serves as the principal advisor to the Secretary on the adoption and implementation of policies and programs affecting minority veterans.
- CMV's responsibilities includes identifying barriers to access, conduct outreach, site visits, town hall meeting, educational forums, veterans stakeholder conferences and meetings, promote the use of VA benefits and services, develop statistical data base, and propose and encourage medical research.
- The Center services four minority groups: (1) African Americans, (2) Asian Americans, (3) Hispanic Americans, and (4) Native Americans, American Indians, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders.
- Discussed Center for Minority Veterans' outreach components.
- Minority Veterans Program Coordinators (MVPC's) Interdepartmental program (Approximately 300 coordinators collaterally assigned within VHA, VBA and NCA).
 - Support and initiate activities that educate and sensitize internal staff to the unique needs of minority veterans.
 - Target and participate in outreach activities, educational and informational forums utilizing community networks.
- The Advisory Committee on Minority Veterans advises the Secretary and Congress on VA's administration of benefits and health care services. They meet with VA officials, veteran service organizations, and other stakeholders to assess the Department's efforts in providing benefits and outreach. Additionally, they make periodic site visits and conduct town hall meetings with veterans to address their concerns.

Briefing: New Psychosocial Rehabilitation and Recovery Services Program, Robert Gresen, Ph.D., Associate Chief Consultant

- Discussed Comprehensive VHA Mental Health (MH) Strategic Plan.
 - Reduce stigma, promote recovery, ensure equal access and reduced variability of care, provide culturally competent care to veterans of all ages, races, ethnic groups, and genders.
 - Be veteran and family-centered, and ensure collaborative care models are used in primary care team structure.

- Promote research programs based on recovery, employ evidence-based population approaches.
- Transforming the VHA MH system into a recovery-oriented, family and consumer-driven system will require:
 - Leadership/champions at all levels of the organization.
 - Active involvement of veterans and veteran advocates in all aspects of this transformation.
 - Culture change, program changes, education, family involvement, and peer support services.

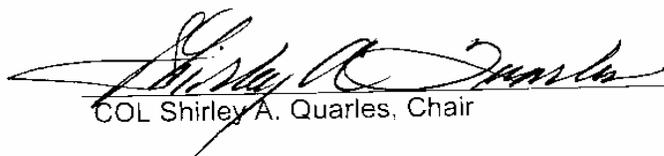
Briefing: Domestic Violence, Rachel Kimerling, PhD, National Center for PTSD, VA Palo Alto Health Care System

- Discussed the definition of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV), its prevalence, and consequences.
- Discussed how to detect IPV and the disclosure of current and past IPV.
- Few data for prevalence of IPV among women veterans
- Resources for IPV in VA common to almost all VA facilities: Directives according to The Joint Commission standards for IPV.
- Lists and contacts for local community resources, staff training regarding IPV, VA clinicians experienced in treating trauma, and adherence to state reporting requirements (38 states).

Discussion: Review of Committee Initiatives and Report recommendations, Dr. Shirley Quarles, Chair, ACWV

Breakout of subcommittee groups.

Meeting Adjourned


COL Shirley A. Quarles, Chair


Irene Trowell-Harris, RN, EdD, Designated Federal Official