

**Department of Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service (VAVS)  
National Advisory Committee (NAC) Executive Committee (EC) Meeting**

**Thursday, October 26, 2023 - 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.**

**Call to Order:** Joseph Dooley, National Representative, United Veterans Services, and EC Chair called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

**Invocation:** Charles Gallina, National Representative, Knights of Columbus, provided the invocation. A moment of silence was observed for Christopher Slawinski, who passed away on June 26, 2023. Sabrina C. Clark, Ph.D., Director, VA Center for Development & Civic Engagement (CDCE) and VAVS NAC Designated Federal Officer (DFO) read a resolution in memory of Mr. Slawinski.

**Pledge of Allegiance:** John Kleindienst, National Representative, Disabled American Veterans (DAV), led attendees in the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Roll Call:** Vicki Sarracino, National Representative, Soldiers' Angels, and EC Co-Chair performed the roll call. Executive Committee attendance was duly recorded as follows:

	<b><u>Present (P)/ Absent (A)</u></b>	
American Gold Star Mothers	P	
American Legion	P	
American Legion Auxiliary	P	
AMVETS Auxiliary	P	
Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks	P	
Disabled American Veterans	P	
Disabled American Veterans Auxiliary	P	
Forty and Eight	P	
I.B.P.O. Elks of the World, Inc.	P	
Knights of Columbus	P	
Marine Corps League Auxiliary	P	
Military Women Across the Nation		A
National Society Daughters of the American Revolution	P	
Paralyzed Veterans of America		A
Project Healing Waters Fly Fishing, Inc.	P	
Soldiers' Angels	P	
Sons of the American Legion		A
United Veterans Services	P	
Veterans of Foreign Wars Auxiliary	P	
Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S.	P	

**VA and Other Staff Present:**

Amy Palmer, Soldiers' Angels, Chair, Recommendations Subcommittee  
Ann Glende, DAV Auxiliary, Treasurer, James H. Parke Memorial Scholarship Board  
Anthony L. Love, Senior Advisor to the Director, VHA Homeless Programs Office

Candace Jones, Senior Partnership Specialist, Veterans Affairs Office of Partnerships  
Christina Hackerman, Senior Partnership Specialist, Veterans Affairs Office of Partnerships

James Leyva, AuD, MBA, Health Systems Specialist, High Reliability Infrastructure, VHA High Reliability Enterprise Support

Jeff Moragne, Director, VA Advisory Committee Management Office

John "Saint" Langford, CEO, Project Healing Waters Fly Fishing, Inc.

Karen O'Neal, Chief, Erie VA Medical Center, Co-Chair, Partnership Subcommittee

Kevin Stanford, DHA, Outreach & Strategic Partnerships, VA CDCE

Marcena C. Gunter, Chief, Public Affairs & CDCE, VA St. Louis Health Care System, St. Louis, MO, NAC Planner

Mitra Gobin, Administrative Officer, VA CDCE

Nathan Witt, Program Analyst, VA CDCE

Prince Taylor, Ed.D, Deputy Director for Operations, VA CDCE, Alternate Designated Federal Officer, VAVS National Advisory Committee

RimaAnn O. Nelson, Assistant USH for Operations

Sabrina C. Clark, Ph.D., Director, VA CDCE, Designated Federal Officer, VAVS National Advisory Committee

Tyrone Green, Program Analyst, VA CDCE

Virginia (Ginny) Hoover, Program Analyst, VA CDCE

Wesley Walls, Communications Specialist, VA CDCE

William Ball, Chief, CDCE, Palo Alto, CA & VA CDCE Field Advisor

**Meeting Agenda Overview & Call for Revisions:** Ms. Sarracino, EC Co-Chair, outlined the meeting's agenda.

**Host Welcome:** Mr. James Moss, National Representative, Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S., welcomed attendees to the VFW Memorial Building in Washington, D.C.

**Additions/Revisions to E.C. Minutes from the 77th Annual VAVS NAC (4/26/2023):**

Mr. Dooley, EC Chair asked for a review and approval of the minutes from the last meeting of the Executive Committee, which took place in conjunction with the 77th Annual NAC meeting on April 26, 2023, in Denver, Colorado.

Ron Rolfes, National Representative, Forty & Eight made a motion to approve the minutes from the spring 2023 NAC meeting. John Kleindienst, National Representative, Disabled American Veterans, seconded the motion. Chair Dooley asked for discussion.

Larry Kelly, National Representative, Project Healing Waters Fly Fishing, Inc., and Treasurer for VAVS Partners, Inc. noted the need to change the amount collected in refreshment sponsorships in the Treasurer's Report from \$9,000 to \$8,900. Mr. Dooley stated the change would be made. Ron Rolfes, Forty & Eight made a motion to approve the minutes from the spring 2023 NAC meeting. John Kleindienst, Disabled American Veterans, seconded the motion. The minutes were approved without opposition or abstention.

**VHA's Journey to High Reliability:** James Leyva, AuD, MBA, Health Systems Specialist, High Reliability Infrastructure, VHA High Reliability Enterprise Support, gave a presentation on High Reliability Organization (HRO). He highlighted three objectives: to define the HRO Pillars, Principles, and Values; understand VHA's Journey to High Reliability; and understand the impact of volunteers on the Journey to High Reliability.

High Reliability Organizations (HROs) experience fewer than anticipated accidents or events of harm, despite operating in highly complex, high-risk environments. Mr. Leyva noted that 1 in 20 people in the United States are exposed to preventable harm in medical care. Three pillars of HRO can help combat this statistic: leadership commitment, a culture of safety, and continuous process improvement. Out of five HRO principles, Mr. Leyva highlighted two: a preoccupation with failure and reluctance to simplify. He also discussed seven values within VHA HROs:

1. It's about the Veteran
2. Support a Culture of Safety
3. Commit to Zero Harm
4. Learn, Inquire, and Improve
5. Duty to Speak Up
6. Respect for People
7. Clear communications

Mr. Leyva explained that Veteran health can be a bit more complicated than the general population due to factors such as toxic exposures, PTSD, and combat-related injuries. VHA cannot make this journey alone, which highlights the importance of partnerships and volunteers. In addition to the two HRO principles that he highlighted previously, Mr. Leyva presented three more that volunteers can demonstrate in their daily work: sensitivity to operations, commitment to resilience, and deference to expertise. He stressed the importance of talking to volunteers and getting their input to help recognize any problems and see what needs to be done.

### **Advisory Committee on Homeless Veterans – FACA Cross Committee**

**Collaboration:** Anthony Love, Senior Advisor to the Director, VHA Homeless Programs Office, presented on the Advisory Committee on Homeless Veterans and FACA Cross Committee Collaboration. The sole purpose of the Advisory Committee on Homeless Veterans is to analyze data and provide recommendations to the Secretary on the best way to mitigate and eventually end homelessness among Veterans. The FACA Committee has cross-collaborated with several other advisory committees. As a result of collaboration with the Veterans Engagement Board Advisory Committee in 2018 a joint recommendation was issued to the Secretary to ensure that HUD-VASH vouchers stayed in a specially funded category. There have been talks with other advisory committees to look at joint recommendations or to find ways to collaborate on increasing funding opportunities for those Veterans who face homeless. Mr. Love said that the purpose of today's discussion was to look for opportunities where advisory committees can collaborate on recommendations, ideas, volunteer opportunities, employment opportunities, et cetera. Mr. Love is also seeking to explore an increase in

both stand downs and opportunities for Veterans to participate in those events across the country.

The NAC recessed from 10:51 a.m. to 11:08 a.m.

**Voter Registration Initiative:** Kevin Stanford, DHA, Outreach & Strategic Partnerships, VA CDCE, presented the Voter Registration Initiative. Dr. Stanford explained that under Executive Order (EO) 14019 there is a plan to expand voting access and services available to Veterans, their families, and caregivers. Furthermore, this EO allows VA to study and conduct surveys to find barriers to voting that Veterans may be facing. This is part of an effort across all of government to make voting easier and more accessible and ensure Veterans can exercise the right to vote that they fought to defend. Dr. Stanford said they wanted VA facilities to become National Voter Registration Act designated facilities, which would allow them to appropriately monitor how Veterans are doing and how facilities are participating in Veterans' voting systems. In order to help Veterans register to vote, VA is providing an online resource, [va.gov/vote](http://va.gov/vote), an All-Veteran survey on voting habits and barriers to voting, partnership with state governments to register Veterans in VA facilities, and discussions to establish pilot programs (with MI, NM, HI, KY, and SC).

Dr. Stanford noted that everyone can help this effort by encouraging Veterans to complete the survey at [va.gov/vote](http://va.gov/vote), encouraging Veterans to check their voter registration status at [vote.gov](http://vote.gov), and share how VA is helping Veterans and service members vote while sharing best practices. He shared an update on pilot voter registration sites. Three Michigan VA locations are serving as pilot voter registration sites: Detroit VAMC, Detroit Regional Office (VBA), and Saginaw VAMC. Dr. Stanford shared quotes from leadership that support this initiative, including the Michigan Secretary of State, Jocelyn Benson, and Acting Deputy Secretary of Veterans Affairs Guy Kiyokawa. This effort is crucial to afford Veterans every opportunity to vote.

**CDCE Communications Update:** Wesley Walls, Communication Specialist, presented the CDCE Communications update. During Fiscal Year 2023, he noted that 914 national media clips were relevant to CDCE. These included quotes from CDCE staff, organizations, and Veterans and volunteers at events. Community organizations support a wide range of CDCE events including drive-thru food banks, homeless Veteran stand downs, PACT Act outreach, and recreational activities. Mr. Walls highlighted three opportunities for collaboration: GovDelivery, emergency communication, and photos. GovDelivery is an email subscription service. Mr. Walls said that he would like to put something together bi-monthly to start with, but he will need email addresses from organizations that are local, state, and regional. An informational email that goes out on a more frequent and regular basis could be developed thereafter. Mr. Walls shared his email, [Wesley.Walls@va.gov](mailto:Wesley.Walls@va.gov), and asked Committee members to send organizations' email addresses directly to him. He also said he would pull volunteers' emails from the CDCEP HUB and add them to the email list as well.

Mr. Walls spoke about the importance of having volunteers from organizations during emergencies, especially in medical centers, and noted this is a relevant topic with facility leadership at VAVS Committee meetings. Mr. Walls gave an example of how sending volunteers home negatively impacted operations during the pandemic. Volunteers can help during emergencies such as weather events and in supportive preparation efforts such as active shooter training events. He challenged everyone to come up with volunteer assignments targeting improved emergency communication given emergency communications requires 24-7 support and volunteer assignments can span 24 hours a day. Mr. Walls noted if there are volunteers who want to serve during late shifts there are opportunities to help on evenings and nights. Mr. Walls asked that anyone having photos from external events to please email them to him as he is always collecting photos for products such as the annual report.

Mr. Walls discussed updated resources including the 2023 Federal Benefits Guide, which is newly released and available for everyone, and a new website aimed at reducing fraud located at [www.va.gov/VSAFE](http://www.va.gov/VSAFE). There are scams that affect everyone, and the website is shared for educating Veterans and includes an option to report any attempts to defraud the public.

The CDCE Centenarian Recognition Program, which began in November 2020, is a special initiative to honor American Heroes who are turning 100 years old. Anyone can nominate a VA-enrolled Veteran through their local CDCE office, and the Veteran will receive a Secretary letter and coin. The process usually takes about four weeks from the requested date.

Mr. Walls advised everyone that if they have a centenarian enrolled in their organization, this is the information needed for them:

- Veteran's Name
- Date of Birth
- Veteran's Address
- Veteran's Phone Number
- Military Branch
- Military Occupational Specialist (MOS)
- Year of Service
- Period of Service
- Interesting Facts

Local CDCE offices will coordinate the collection of information and will enter the request into the LEAF system where it will be reviewed. After that, it will go to the Secretary and then to the Veteran with a letter and commemorative coin. This is a great way to showcase good news and can involve local media coverage. Mr. Walls shared three videos that were great examples of good news pieces and publicity to gain more volunteers, donors, and strategic partners.

## Subcommittee Reports:

Volunteer of the Year: Mr. Dooley, EC Chair, reviewed the guidelines and requirements for nominating someone for the VAVS NAC Volunteer of the Year award:

- Nominees for this award must participate in established VAVS assignments, serve as a regularly scheduled (RS) volunteer, and meet one of the following criteria:
  - Volunteer with hospitalized Veterans;
  - Volunteer with Veterans at outpatient clinics;
  - Volunteer with Veterans in Community Living Centers;
  - Volunteer with Homeless Veterans;
  - Volunteer with Veterans and Veterans groups in the community;
  - Host Veterans' functions in their respective Lodge, Post, Chapter, etc., for events such as Memorial Day, Fourth of July, Veterans Day observances, etc. that qualify as a VAVS assignment;
  - Host Veterans' functions outside the Lodge, Post, Chapter, etc., i.e., fishing trips, day at the races, sporting events, etc. that qualify as a VAVS assignment;
  - Visit Veterans confined to their homes as a VAVS assignment;
  - Adopt-A-Veteran.
- Those eligible for the award are: NAC member organizations with emphasis on VAVS Representatives, Deputy Representatives, members who visit the VA Medical Centers, Community Living Centers, etc. or work at Lodge, Post Chapter for Veteran functions either within or outside the Lodge, Post, or Chapter. Nominees must participate in established VAVS assignments and serve as an RS volunteer.

Mr. Dooley encouraged everyone to send in a nomination. The nominations received last year were of great quality, but limited quantity. Nominations are due December 31.

Mr. Dooley suggested that it might be time to rethink the concept of Male and Female Volunteer of the Year and asked if they should consider one Volunteer of the Year regardless of gender. Other considerations included whether to select a "Service Organization of the Year" and whether to give a NAC Chair "Eagle Award" to a NAC Member or Organization that has significantly contributed to the mission of the VAVS NAC. These concepts would not be implemented before next year.

Recruitment: John Kleindienst, Disabled American Veterans shared the VA Volunteer Data Comparison for FY22 and FY23:

- The regularly scheduled (RS) volunteers are up +11.63%.
- RS Hours are up +9.3%.
- Occasional Volunteer Episodes are up +45.94%
  - Occasional Volunteer Episodes is not a count of unique individuals, but rather a count of the number of occasional volunteer episodes. One person may have served multiple times in this figure.

- Occasional Hours are up +29.34%
- Total hours from FY22 and FY23 are up +10.64%

Mr. Kleindienst stated that it's good to see a trend that is similar to numbers pre-COVID. He then shared data on growth for new versus reintegrated volunteers:

- Volunteers new to VA CDCE: there was an increase of +129% from FY22 and FY23.
- Volunteers re-onboarded – previously inactive who returned to a VA volunteer assignment: there was an increase of +12.4% between FY22 and FY23

Mr. Kleindienst said these results were trending in a good fashion and asked that each organization and the VAVS NAC continue to recruit and encourage people to volunteer. He then thanked everyone for continuing to do their part in attracting volunteers.

Membership: Mary Morgan, Benevolent & Protective Order of Elks, shared the Membership Subcommittee report. Ms. Morgan noted there is a new member of the subcommittee, Karlene Beams, VFW Auxiliary.

Ms. Morgan presented the plan to continue to engage and reconnect with current NAC members. They will continue the Committee's strategy of personal phone calls to NAC member organizations, particularly organizations that have missed the last one or two meetings. This helps to gauge their interest in continuing membership and identify any barriers to their participation. They will also work on tracking planned attendance at the upcoming NAC meeting using registration data and follow up with those organizations that don't have anyone registered to attend. Personal phone calls are received well, and they help to update records and contact information.

Currently, eight organizations have missed the last 3 VAVS NAC meetings:

- Service Member Organizations
  - Korean War Veterans Association
  - Marine Corps League
  - Military Women Across the Nation
  - National Society Sons of the American Revolution
  - Vietnam Veterans of America, Inc.
- Associate Member Organizations
  - National Society United States Daughters of 1812
- Donor Member Organizations
  - Bowlers to Veterans Link, Inc.
- Strategic Engagement Members
  - YMCA of the USA

Some of these organizations will qualify for honorary membership, and the committee plans to reach out to those organizations to see if they are interested in reconnecting to the Committee.

The next focus is to recruit new members. Ms. Morgan noted that recommendations for membership can come from anybody and are welcomed at any time. The new members can be organizations that they partner with locally, Veterans Advocate Groups and organizations seen in the news, organizations from VAVS Quarterly Meeting attendance, or other organizations in the community. Ms. Morgan asked members to please spread the word stating the subcommittee is happy to take contacts and start conversations.

#### New Membership in Progress:

- Status of Applications to Review
  - Mission BBQ
  - Operation Gratitude
- New Organizations to Review
  - K9s for Warriors
  - Folds of Honor
  - American Coalition for Filipino Veterans
  - National Association for Black Veterans
  - Homes for Our Troops
  - Operation Appreciation
  - Semper Fi & America's Fund
  - Combined Arms Institute
  - Freedom Sings

#### Review of Timeline for New Member Recruitment:

- Introductory phone call with interested organizations.
- Sharing of membership paperwork.
- Committee reviews completed application for membership and determines whether criteria are met.
- Application sent to 15CDCE for final processing review.
- Final step: The vote to accept by NAC Executive Committee members.

Recommendations: Amy Palmer, Soldiers' Angels, shared the Recommendations Subcommittee report. There was one recommendation submitted this round and it was prepared by the Partnership Subcommittee.

- Title: Center for Development & Civic Engagement (CDCE) Chief Performance Plan Standards
  - Recommendation: The NAC membership recommends the Secretary of Veterans Affairs approve the mandate of inclusion of standards in CDCE Chiefs' performance plans that will assist in meeting the Secretary's priorities and the Network Director's Performance Plan.

This recommendation was determined to be valid and necessary for the changing times. Ms. Palmer said that it was a great recommendation which could give VACO better oversight of local programs. The Recommendations Subcommittee is in favor of this recommendation.



Partnership: Karen O'Neal, Chief, Erie VA Medical Center, shared the Partnership Subcommittee report. She explained that they are in the process of recruiting two more CDCE Chiefs from the field to serve on the Partnership Subcommittee. Ms. O'Neal presented the EC with the following recommendation:

- The NAC membership recommends that the Secretary of Veterans Affairs approve the mandate of inclusion of standards in CDCE Chiefs' performance plans that will assist in meeting the Secretary's priorities and Network Director's Performance Plan.

Ms. O'Neal noted that the initial intent of the recommendation was to put verbiage in the Network Director's Performance Plan. After looking at the Plan and speaking to a Deputy Network Director and a Network Director, they felt that it should apply to the CDCE Chief level, as the goals are more global and specific services are not identified. The intent is to bring CDCE's impact to the forefront. The recommendation received endorsement by the EC without opposition or abstention.

### **Additional Reports:**

NAC SOP: Patricia Kranzow, American Legion Auxiliary, addressed the NAC SOP noting:

- Page 5, two paragraphs from the bottom, "All service member organizations of the VAVS National Advisory Committee represented on 125 or more local VA facility VAVS committees shall be represented on the executive committee for a one-year term." This was discussed last year and was not changed, but Ms. Kranzow brought it back for review. She noted that the American Legion Auxiliary is now represented on 95 VAVS Committees, and they are either at the top or very close to it. She added that Nathan Witt, Program Analyst, VA CDCE, continues to work on data integrity of these numbers. Ms. Kranzow said it was up to the committee to leave it this way or make a change. Charles Gallina, Knights of Columbus, said it was best to leave it until next meeting which allows 15CDCE additional time to work on data integrity.
- Page 14, Partnership Subcommittee, "The subcommittee will develop background material and prepare strategic level recommendations for submission to the Recommendations Subcommittee to process for deliberation and consideration by the Executive Committee before presenting to the entire National Advisory Committee." Ms. Kranzow noted the Partnership Subcommittee has been presenting recommendations when this should be routed through and presented by the Recommendations Subcommittee. After discussion, Mr. Dooley stated that Partnership Subcommittee may still present recommendations, but the Recommendation Subcommittee will present the discussion/proposal, and the recommendations will go through the Recommendations Subcommittee. No objections to this were made.

Mr. Dooley said that if there were no objections, reports were accepted as written. There was no objection or abstention.

VAVS Partners, Inc. Treasurer Report: Larry Kelly, Treasurer, VAVS Partners Inc., and VAVS National Representative, Project Healing Waters Fly Fishing, Inc. presented the Treasurer Report. Mr. Kelly presented the income statement as of September 10, 2023. The income statement consists of income, supplies, travel, bank charges, accounting fees, 77th VAVS NAC expenses, total expenses, and net profit. Mr. Kelly pointed out an error in the income statement: the total income should be \$14,283.26, instead of \$14,283.30. Mr. Kelly also noted for the record that the net profit should be \$11,120.49 to the negative. Mr. Kelly next presented the balance sheet as of September 10, 2023. The numbers were confirmed to be accurate from the balance sheet. The balance as of 4/17/2023 is \$67,057.14, income is \$14,283.26, expenses are \$27,800.90, and the balance as of 9/10/2023 is \$53,539.50.

Mr. Kelly commented that he believed they were in decent shape financially, and he recommended that the next VAVS NAC should have a higher conference registration fee by about \$10 to put them in a better financial position. Mr. Kelly presented the Form 990 EZ IRS e-file Signature Authorization for a Tax-Exempt Entity for 2021, which was \$41,466. Mr. Kelly informed the Committee that the Community Bank of the Chesapeake, which holds the VAVS Partners, Inc. account, became Shore United Bank as of September 10, 2023. Mr. Kelly commented that he has not received the new electronic versions of their statements yet and that as soon as he receives them, he will begin filing Form 990 for 2022. Mr. Kelly made a motion that the financial statement be approved, with the changes that he noted.

Mr. Kelly made a motion to accept the report. Patricia Kranzow seconded the motion. The motion passed without opposition or abstention.

James H. Parke Memorial Scholarship Board Update and Treasurer Report: Ann Glende, DAV Auxiliary, presented the James H. Parke Memorial Scholarship Board Update and Treasurer Report. Ms. Glende noted that since Mr. Slawinski passed away, she will be taking on treasurer duties. As of June 30, 2023, there is \$1,446,922.88 between the cash sweep accounts and mutual funds. In January 2023, the account started with \$1,338,110.01, and cash withdrawn through June 30 totaled \$8,220.61. There was a change in the value of +\$117,033.48. Currently, there is \$13,872.16 in cash sweep accounts and \$1,433,922.88 in mutual funds. Ms. Glende said that all scholarships have been paid out this year. She added that Mr. JP Brown confirmed that the scholarship application for 2024 has been distributed. The applications will be returned to a specific mailbox and Mr. Brown will be working with select members of the EC to request recommendations for the judging committee.

Ms. Glende said that she reached out to their Wells Fargo financial advisor and set up a Zoom meeting to get a better handle on the scholarship fund accounts. She stated she plans a more comprehensive financial overview for EC members once more information is available.

John Kleindienst, Disabled American Veterans, made a motion to accept the report. Patty Davis, DAV Auxiliary, seconded the motion. The motion passed without opposition or abstention.

Impactful Volunteer Programs – Revision of CDCE and American Spirit Awards: Tyrone Green, Program Analyst, VA CDCE, spoke about the two award segments, the CDCE American Spirit Awards and CDCE Leadership Awards. There are approximately 15 possible awards, but Mr. Green noted that the process needs to be revamped to recognize the best in class and excellence. This year, there are 9 awards that are open for, rather than 14 with this consolidation better reflecting current operations and priorities.

- CDCE American Spirit Awards:
  - Youth Leadership & Civic Engagement Award
  - Community Partnership Award
  - Innovation Award\*
- CDCE Leadership Awards
  - Volunteer Supervisor Award
  - High Reliability Organization Award\*
  - Communications and Marketing Award
  - Executive Leadership Award
  - Strategic Partnership Excellence Award
  - CDCE Excellence Award

\*New award

The applications must be electronically submitted to the CDCE Awards Portal, which opens on November 1, 2023, and closes on December 31, 2023. Mr. Green suggested the creation of a Living Legend Award. He noted that there are always people who have worked for the organization for a long time but do not qualify for certain awards, and it would be good for their hard work to be recognized. Mr. Green asked the Committee to consider this idea.

The NAC recessed from 2:37 p.m. to 3:01 p.m.

**VA Center for Strategic Partnerships – Partnership Due Diligence:** Christina Hackerman, Senior Partnership Specialist, VA Office of Partnerships, presented a due diligence overview. Ms. Hackerman defined due diligence as the research and analysis of an organization before entering a partnership that involves evaluating the risks and benefits of the potential partnership. It is an internal VA tool, used at all levels (from VACO to the field, or national offices to frontline staff), which standardizes and streamlines the vetting process, helps ensure VA is working with responsible and credible partners, reviews and reports on potential partners' business operations, provides cover and confidence for staff, and is not all-inclusive. Due diligence is not a "certification" of an organization, does not imply VA "endorsement or sponsorship" or provide any kind of official VA "seal of approval," and is a dynamic process. Ms. Hackerman explained the two types of due diligence, programmatic and business.

There are two levels of business due diligence; the low level (Level 1) generally involves publicly available demographic information such as name, location, contact information, mission, goals, et cetera. The high level (Level 2) is more in-depth research around organizational background and leadership information that is publicly available: for example, finances, leadership background, legal issues, et cetera.

Due diligence is completed on all new and renewal non-monetary public-private partnerships, attending Non-Governmental Organizational (NGO) events in a participatory role, exchange funds (grants, contractors, vendors), and others as appropriate. Due diligence is conducted because VA needed a way to ensure potential partners were conducting business in a generally acceptable practice as defined by their specific sector. She noted that due diligence leads to responsible and productive partnerships.

**CDCE Portal Update:** Mitra Gobin, Administrative Officer, VA CDCE, presented the CDCE Portal Update. Mr. Gobin noted that Virginia (Ginny) Hoover, Program Analyst, VA CDCE, was going to speak on the CDCE Portal Update but was unavailable at the time, so he was presenting in her absence. Mr. Gobin explained that the system is going through updates and deployments as new features are developed. There will be another new release that is coming next month. One of the things that will be fixed is an administrative piece that impacts certain records. The work that is being done now will help to minimize errors and maximize success when people are entering data. The FY24 funding is guaranteed at \$4.49 million for ongoing developments for the CDCEP, and to continue advancements, fixes, and reintegration of systems. Mr. Gobin said that they will need an additional \$4.687 million for FY25. Funding will come from VRM, which shifted money from other VR applications to pay for it. He then spoke about how the system is making a difference and supporting multiple priorities such as HRO and the PACT Act. Their goal is to get the system to be efficient and effective for everyone.

**VAVS NAC Organization Data Review:** William Ball, Chief, CDCE, Palo Alto & VA CDCE Field Advisor, and Nathan Witt, Program Analyst, VA CDCE, presented the VAVS NAC Organization Data Review. Mr. Ball began by explaining his focus on networking with VISN liaisons across the different networks, supporting accountability and communication. The goal is to work with networks to foster more engagement and communication. He recently asked the liaisons to query their facilities on the challenges that face. Mr. Ball said that out of 18 liaisons, 12 responded. His objective was to see what the facilities are currently doing and provided an overview of challenges noted. Mr. Witt explained he wanted to continue working with VAVS NAC National Representatives and Deputies who would like to improve data captured for their organizations. Mr. Witt noted a strategic pause in the revamp of the Annual Joint Review so that rollout can coincide with CDCEP Hub enhancements. He emphasized the importance of opportunities for constructive feedback and input about how CDCE can better engage organizations. Mr. Witt thanked everyone for their feedback and asked them to look at the data provided in hardcopy EC reports so that they can continue to make improvements that reflect the true impact being made by VAVS NAC organizations.

**Review of Unfinished Business:** There was no unfinished business. Chairperson Dooley recessed the meeting at 4:41 p.m.

**Friday, October 27, 2023 - 9:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.**

**Recall to Order:** Mr. Dooley, National Representative, United Veterans Services, and EC Chair called the meeting back to order at 9:00 a.m. Chair Dooley presented Mary Morgan, Benevolent & Protective Order of Elks, Chair, Membership Subcommittee, with a crystal gavel in recognition of her service as past EC Chair.

**VHA Update:** RimaAnn O. Nelson, Assistant Under Secretary for Health for Operations, provided a VHA update. Ms. Nelson provided some of her personal background and expressed her belief that the Veteran must be at the center of everything VHA does. Putting this into practice takes work and time, but it is extremely important for continued advancement of care and services. VHA's Whole Health program supports Veterans' health and well-being but centers around what matters most to the Veteran, based on their values, needs, and goals. Ms. Nelson encouraged everyone to use the Whole Health program and trained health coaches to have these conversations. She emphasized that funding does not drive VA's mission and will not be used to prioritize work.

VHA is working to recruit more high schoolers as volunteers as a means of developing a talent pipeline. Ms. Nelson shared the administration's key priorities, including:

- To hire faster and more competitively
- To accelerate the journey toward a high reliability organization
- Providing the soonest and best care
- To enroll Veterans who have not been enrolled
- To look at the exposures Veterans may have and what benefits may be available
- Continued focus on Veteran suicide

VA's infrastructure needs to be updated to close gaps that could lead to quality and safety issues during the transition. Ms. Nelson sought VAVS NAC feedback on the issues she discussed and stressed the importance of their continued collaboration.

**CDCE Leadership Update:** Sabrina C. Clark, Ph.D., Director, VA CDCE, and DFO for the VAVS NAC presented the CDCE Leadership update. Dr. Clark shared an executive summary explaining how she requested data and information from the eighteen (18) CDCE VISN Liaisons across VHA. This is done to identify overarching challenges, successes, and trends. She presented a chart on CDCE Workload and Trends that included an explanation of rises and falls in key data points. This information was shared with VA medical center directors and VISN directors to see if it would be valuable to them, and the team made changes based on their responses. Directors noted they wanted to see a comparison across VISNs as well as data for all facilities, rather than the total by VISN. Directors were asked to identify key accomplishments from their VISNs, and CDCE went through a similar process internally to supplement a

report for the Office of the Secretary. Dr. Clark presented a slide that mapped programs and activities to VHA priorities from Ms. Nelson's presentation. This type of information is helpful to medical center directors, who are challenged to meet performance measures that linked to VHA priorities. They also asked directors to think about FY24 strategic goals, the priorities they are linked to, metrics to measure success, a timeline for completion, and key success factors and strategic enablers.

Dr. Clark highlighted several CDCE efforts that were linked to legislation, including the Voting Registration Initiative, the Health Care Talent Academy, and a new work group on mental health infrastructure. Another work stream has emerged around decedent affairs, supporting families after Veterans have passed away. While this effort is still in the early stages, they are beginning to think about how to utilize volunteers and community partners. The community can also play a role in offering drop-in childcare services to Veterans who come in for appointments. As CDCE has taken on that project they have begun to think about what success looks like, what they expect community partners to do, and where they can find more partners. Dr. Clark noted that everything will not work easily, and partners must be ready to anticipate and mitigate potential risks on the front end. She reiterated Ms. Nelson's point that it is about the Veterans and highlighted the communications element of CDCE and its importance for telling Veterans' stories. She noted that the VA CDCE program office needed to expand their team to include a deputy of operations, deputy of programs, and a communications arm, and that they needed to recruit and incentivize differently to adapt to the current workforce.

**NAC Meeting Planners Update:** Mitra Gobin, Administrative Officer, VA CDCE, provided a NAC Meeting Planners update. The committee initially chose Columbia, South Carolina as the primary location for the 2024 78th Annual VAVS NAC meeting, with backup locations of Nashville, Tennessee, and Washington, D.C. After further discussion, they decided on Orlando, Florida, during the week of May 14-16, 2024. Dr. Clark and Mr. Gobin reiterated that EC input is vital to determining the geographic location of annual meetings, but with VA taking on pieces of planning to mitigate risk to VAVS Partners, Inc. this meant that locations will ultimately be chosen at the convenience of the government. EC leadership will be kept informed as progress moves towards contract award for the location of the 78<sup>th</sup> Annual VAVS NAC. Mr. Gobin also shared the pros to having a flat fee for registration and Parke Luncheon instead of separate fees which unintentionally decrease the critical networking that occurs at the annual meeting.

John Kleindienst, Disabled American Veterans, made a motion to accept the proposed location for the 78th VAVS NAC meeting noting understanding of the fluid nature of government contract award. Evelyn Joppa, Marine Corps League Auxiliary, seconded the motion. The motion passed, with Larry Kelly, Project Healing Waters Fly Fishing, Inc., Treasurer, VAVS Partners, Inc., opposing the motion.

**EC Composition & Organization Rotation:** Mr. Dooley suggested extending membership for one year to all current organizations serving on the EC based on discussion from the previous day. Mr. Dooley asked the Membership Subcommittee to work with him in terms of developing a succession plan for the EC. There was no opposition or abstention.

**Q&A | Good of the Order:** Mr. Dooley shared highlights from the meeting, including the HRO presentation, and requested they participate in the 78<sup>th</sup> Annual VAVS NAC. He said it would also be valuable to have representation from VA Senior Leaders. He briefly commented on the concurrent process for recommendations and hopes for response before 78<sup>th</sup> Annual VAVS NAC. Mr. Dooley challenged each member of the VAVS NAC to submit one recommendation on areas for improvement. Although not formalized, Mr. Dooley recognized the first Living Legend Award should be bestowed on Colonel Charles Gallina, Knights of Columbus, as it is his last year serving as a VAVS National Representative.

Mr. Dooley, EC Chair, adjourned the meeting at 11:36 a.m.

---

Sabrina C. Clark, Ph.D.  
Director, VA Center for Development & Civic Engagement  
Designated Federal Officer, VA Voluntary Service National Advisory Committee