

MINUTES

JOINT COMMITTEE ON KANSAS SECURITY

October 17, 2011
Room 144-S—Statehouse

Members Present

Representative Mario Goico, Chairperson
Senator Jay Scott Emler, Vice chairperson
Senator Anthony Hensley
Senator Tim Owens
Senator Allen Schmidt
Representative Stan Frownfelter
Representative Judith Loganbill, Ranking Minority Member
Representative Peggy Mast
Representative Connie O'Brien

Member Absent

Senator Carolyn McGinn

Staff Present

Jill Shelley, Kansas Legislative Research Department
Dennis Hodgins, Kansas Legislative Research Department
Amy Deckard, Kansas Legislative Research Department
Aaron Klaassen, Kansas Legislative Research Department
Doug Taylor, Office of the Revisor of Statutes
Scott Wells, Office of the Revisor of Statutes
Amy Thompson, Kansas Legislative Division of Post Audit
Ann McMorris, Committee Assistant

Conferees

Major Robert Stinson, Inter-Service Family Assistance Committee (ISFAC)
Lieutenant Colonel (Retired) Steve Rexer, Kansas Resiliency Program
Laura Snow, OEF/OIF/OND Program Manager, VA Eastern Kansas Healthcare System,
Topeka
Lieutenant Colonel Christopher Zielke, Commander, Wounded Warriors Battalion, Fort
Riley
Dr. Briana Nelson Goff, Director, Institute for the Health and Security of Military Families,
Kansas State University
Michelle (Sheli) Sweeney, Advocacy and Member Services Coordinator, Kansas
Association of Community Mental Health Centers; and Legislative Chair, National
Guard Association of Kansas
Robbin Cole, Executive Director, Pawnee Mental Health Services
Reverend Dave Fulton, Sedgwick County for Veterans Coalition
Marilyn Schrock, Outreach Specialist/Program Development, Corner House, Emporia

Ruth Owens-Jurgens, Executive Director, Corner House, Emporia
Rick Cagan, Executive Director, National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Kansas
Timothy Sanders, The Quincy House-Veteran/Homeless Ministry

Others in Attendance

See attached list.

Morning Session

Chairperson Goico opened the meeting of the Joint Committee on Kansas Security at 9:00 a.m. He noted the main purpose of this interim meeting is to gather and consider all details on the veterans and mental health programs in Kansas.

Staff Review of Committee Charge, Background Materials, and State Budgets Related to Veterans and Mental Health

Jill Shelley, Principal Analyst, Kansas Legislative Research Department, reviewed the charge for this joint committee.

Amy Deckard, Assistant Director of Information Management, Kansas Legislative Research Department, provided and reviewed a spreadsheet on the History of Mental Health Funding from FY 2002 through FY 2011, and budget requests for FY 2012 and FY 2013 (Attachment 1). She answered various questions from Committee members.

Dennis Hodgins, Principal Analyst, Kansas Legislative Research Department, reviewed background statistics and feature articles on veterans and mental health (Attachment 2).

Workforce Support / Inter-Service Family Assistance Committee (ISFAC)

Major Robert Stinson, Chief, Workforce Support, Adjutant General's Office, detailed the entities involved in Workforce Support and their functions, before, during, and after deployment. He concluded by providing the recommendation to establish a county/regional system that is internet-based to consolidate the statewide resources that have been created to support Kansas veterans, service members, and their families. He also provided basic information about the Inter-Service Family Assistance Committee (ISFAC), a private entity with Department of Defense support, which seeks to coordinate services to veterans and their families (Attachment 3).

Major Stinson answered Committee questions regarding the challenges of the various branches of the services having different programs and procedures; coordination with the Kansas Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services (SRS), the Behavioral Sciences Regulatory Board, the Kansas Commission on Veterans Affairs, and community mental health centers; contacts with family members when the service member is deployed with a unit based in another city; getting information to service members and their families who do not live near urban areas; the effect of duty status (whether the service member has been mobilized) on jurisdiction over domestic abuse; and challenges in funding needed services. Committee members requested a letter be drafted to the Secretary of Defense or another appropriate party on the issue of integrating services to members of the Reserve forces.

Kansas Resiliency Program

Retired LTC Steve Rexer, Administration/Training Management, Kansas National Guard, provided background information and reviewed the current functions of the Resiliency Center Program (Attachment 4). The Center's program teaches service members the traits and skills to cope with, and overcome stressors. In addition to Kansas, the Center has provided programs in many other states. Mr. Rexer answered Committee questions regarding funding and continuation of the program.

Eastern Kansas Healthcare System, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Topeka

Laura Snow, Operation Enduring Freedom/ Operation Iraqi Freedom/ Operation New Dawn (OEF/OIF/OND) Program Manager, provided information about the mental health services currently offered at the Veterans Health Care Administration facilities in Kansas, and the implementation of new services (Attachment 5). In response to questions from Committee members, she said that coordination with SRS is just beginning and that veterans often take more than a year and a half after returning from deployment to reach a point where psychological services are needed. She also outlined the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) system for ensuring each veteran is contacted at intervals appropriate to that specific veteran. She stressed the need for providers of services to veterans to understand military culture. It was requested she provide the Committee, through Committee staff, with an update in a few months on VA coordination with SRS.

Afternoon Session

Chairperson Goico called the meeting back to order at 1:15 p.m.

Fort Riley Warrior Transition Battalion

Lt. Col. Christopher Zielke, Commander, noted the Warrior Transition Battalion (WTB) is a special unit where wounded, injured and ill soldiers who have complex medical needs can be assigned to heal. WTB is composed of three components: regular Army, Reserve, and National Guard. He presented the challenges facing soldiers and their families and stated the Battalion's goal is to ensure soldiers become self-sufficient. He noted the WTB has been in existence approximately four and a half years (Attachment 6).

Kansas State University, Institute for the Health and Security of Military Families

Dr. Briana S. Nelson Goff, Director, Institute for the Health and Security of Military Families, Kansas State University, briefed the Committee on the background and objectives of the Institute, its academic coursework and programs, and the ways it interacts with service members, their families, and the communities in which they live. She stressed the critical importance that public health and public service needs facing military service members, veterans, and their families be addressed. She described an upcoming couples retreat, modeled on a public/private program in New Mexico, aimed at treating post-traumatic stress disorder and encouraged the Committee to look at ways to fund additional such retreats

(Attachment 7). She suggested the Committee work further in efforts regarding coordination and collaboration among service providers.

Kansas Association of Community Mental Health Centers

Michelle Sweeney, Advocacy and Member Services Coordinator, Association of Community Mental Health Centers of Kansas, Inc., addressed the issue of returning veterans dealing with mental health, substance abuse, traumatic brain injury, and other injuries that are not visible but very real. She provided the report of the Governor's Military Council Task Force of 2010, which listed three issues that needed to be addressed at the State level: creating a repository of information about services; identifying training for mental health and substance abuse providers to orient them to the needs of veterans and their families; and disseminating training and referral information to as many interested individuals and organizations as possible. She presented recommendations made by the Association: a legislative resolution urging the VA to contract with community mental health centers where the VA has little or no community presence; having the Kansas Commission on Veterans Affairs include in its briefings and handouts information on where a veteran, the veteran's family, or both may turn for assistance with mental health and substance abuse issues; creating a network to connect information on all veteran-related resources available, such as the Network of Care; establishing a position responsible for coordinating outreach, collaboration, and information dissemination; and a legislative resolution urging the TRICARE military health care program to provide substance abuse treatment, regardless of whether the program participant has a mental health diagnosis (Attachment 8).

Robbin Cole, Executive Director, Pawnee Mental Health Services, a licensed community mental health center and licensed substance abuse treatment center serving ten counties in north central Kansas, noted Pawnee's mission is "to enhance and strengthen the wellness of our communities by providing quality mental health and substance abuse services." She reviewed the center's functions to the various services they provide and the problems they encounter. She noted that TRICARE will not approve substance abuse treatment unless the provider is "free-standing," and she requested the Legislature urge Congress to change the rules surrounding who may provide substance abuse treatment for TRICARE beneficiaries. She said the closest TRICARE-approved in-patient treatment center is located in Lincoln, Nebraska (Attachment 9).

Sedgwick County for Veterans Coalition

Rev. David Fulton, Pastor of St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Wichita, a retired Air Force chaplain (a Colonel), and member of the Sedgwick County for Veterans Coalition, reviewed veterans initiatives and opportunities in Sedgwick County. He stated that the divorce rate among those who have deployed is up to 75 percent, and families are paying very high prices for a member's military service. He discussed projects being developed and opportunities for assistance in legislative areas that would be helpful to veterans, such as identifying veterans on driver's licenses, training sessions for those who work with veterans, mentoring with veterans, and veterans' dockets within courts (Attachment 10).

Corner House, Emporia

Marilyn Schrock, Outreach Specialist/Program Development, and Ruth Owens-Jurgens, Executive Director, shared their concerns on how to best serve Kansas homeless women

veterans. Corner House is the only facility in Kansas for homeless veteran women with or without children. Her presentation provided service information and testimony from some of their clients. Corner House has provided substance abuse treatment for more than 35 years ([Attachment 11](#)).

Kansas Association of Addiction Professionals

Sarah M. Hansen, Executive Director, stated the Kansas Association of Addiction Professionals' support for enhanced treatment services for Kansas veterans. She urged the Committee and the Legislature to take action to support veterans across Kansas by implementing and funding additional measures to assure referral, timely access, and provision of quality services by specialists in mental health and substance abuse treatment ([Attachment 12](#)).

National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)

Rick Cagan, Executive Director, NAMI Kansas, a statewide grassroots organization dedicated to improving the lives of individuals with mental illness, reviewed the scope of problems faced by veterans with mental illness in obtaining treatment. He provided a list of resources and opportunities specifically for military service members and veterans, and discussed the "Joining Forces" curricula to give non-military medical professionals and others better awareness of the issues veterans face. He presented statistics on the prevalence and cost of mental illness and urged support of community mental health centers ([Attachment 13](#)).

Rev. Timothy Sanders, Faith and Truth Ministries, Inc., Topeka, voiced his concerns for the veterans returning from war or leaving the service who have need for assistance with their physical and mental health problems. He urged that these veteran issues not be ignored and suggested special court proceedings for veterans and training for law enforcement officers regarding mental illness ([Attachment 14](#)).

Written testimony was provided by James Stuart Bushey, Staff Sergeant (Retired), state representative to the NAMI Veterans Council ([Attachment 15](#)).

Discussion and Recommendations

Staff of the Legislative Research Department provided a listing of recommendations received by the Committee from various conferees ([Attachment 16](#)).

Representative Loganbill moved, seconded by Representative Frownfelter, that a letter from the Committee be sent to the Board of Healing Arts, which oversees the licensing of doctors and certain other medical professionals for the state of Kansas; to the University of Kansas Medical Center; and to other providers and regulators of medical services making them aware of the Joining Forces curriculum and other resources to enable better services for veterans. Motion carried.

Senator Schmidt noted that many organizations are willing to help but there is not sufficient corroboration, and that facilities and services need to be identified and work together.

Representative Mast moved, seconded by Senator Schmidt, that the Joint Committee on Kansas Security endorse the Kansas National Guard Resiliency Center's programs to prepare soldiers and their families for what they face upon deployment and upon their return. Motion carried.

Representative Mast moved, seconded by Representative Loganbill, that the Committee introduce a concurrent resolution to start in the House, urging that TRICARE provide substance abuse treatment in all areas of the state of Kansas. Motion carried. Staff were asked to research this service and gather information on current policies.

Representative Mast moved, seconded by Representative Frownfelter, to report the Committee's support for the establishment of a county or regional internet-based database service to consolidate information on resources statewide that support Kansas veterans, service members, and their families, and to request that any such database include services to homeless women veterans. Motion carried.

Representative Mast moved, seconded by Representative Frownfelter, to include in the Committee's report a restatement of the Kansas Legislature's commitment to use 2.0 percent from lottery gaming facility revenues for treatment of alcoholism, drug abuse and other addictive behavior, as stated in the statutes distributing net electronic gaming machine income and establishing the Problem Gambling and Addictions Grant Fund (KSA 74-8747 and 79-4805). Motion carried.

Senator Hensley moved, seconded by Senator Emler, to report that the Committee urges the Senate and House Judiciary committees to investigate separate veterans dockets within the district court system, as suggested by Rev. David Fulton and Rev. Timothy Sanders. Motion carried.

Representative O'Brien recommended that the Legislative Research Department distribute to the Committee information received on Military One-Source and coping strategies.

Prepared by Ann McMorris
Edited by Jill Shelley

Approved by Committee on:

November 18, 2011
(Date)