



SARATOGA COUNTY
VETERANS SERVICE AGENCY
152 West High St., Ballston Spa, NY 12020

SC-VSA

March 29th, 2013

Executive Summary, Saratoga County, Veterans' Service Agency (VSA)

Subject: Events and Activities Summary for March 20th through March 29th 2013.

Executive Summary Intent: The purpose of this document is to provide situational awareness and understanding to subordinate and adjacent leaders and staff of the Veterans' Service Agency (VSA). This document does not by itself dictate official policy or decision.

Mission: The current mission of the VSA is to assist Veterans and their families with securing earned benefits and services through quality customer service and advocacy. We will consider adopting the mission statement of the US Department of Veterans Affairs.

"To fulfill President Lincoln's promise "To care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan" by serving and honoring the men and women who are America's veterans."

The most essential portion of our mission is to ensure that our Veterans, especially those we come in contact with, are treated professionally with dignity and respect.

Summary:

1. Onboarding and integration of new director. I, Felipe C. Moon, reported for duty 8:45AM and was received by Robert Hartman, from Safety and Security. Mr. Hartman gave me a quick tour of the building and dropped me off at his new office.
 - a. Daily Team Huddle. We established this 15 minute meeting to reoccur every day at 3:00pm. The intent of this meeting is to synchronize our efforts and make sure that our daily actions are supporting our weekly goals.
 - b. We will develop individual, team and county goals. The focus will quarterly, yearly, three years out, and five years out. (NLT: Monday, 04/08/2013)
 - c. Frank has developed a training plan for me in order to ensure that I am accredited and capable of acting as the Veteran's Service Officer, if Frank is unable.
 - d. We will focus energy to gain as many accreditations as possible in order to strengthen our credibility and rapport. Both the VA and the New State Division of Veterans Affairs encourage this initiative. This will provide Frank (VSO), Josie (Accredited Member) to view any Veterans' Claim Status and provide the ability to select which organization can better serve our Veteran.
 - e. We discussed the monthly "Deceased Veterans Ceremony" and that Josie will staff, coordinate the ceremony as she has for the last 11 years. We worked with Mary Ann to schedule the make up ceremony for May. April's ceremony will be for the Mechanicville Veteran. We'll push the other ceremonies to the right by one month.

f. Josie requested and received a "Blue Card" for Her and I in order for us to utilize vehicles from the county fleet instead of our own privately owned vehicles. The nature of this office is to travel to Veterans' events and activities; utilizing county owned vehicles will limit the wear and tear of privately owned vehicles.

g. We rearranged the office in order to have Josie sit "upfront" and allow Frank to attend to his clients with minimal distractions. We were also concerned with the potential of compromising confidential information.

h. Team Meeting with Drivers. We established this 30 minute meeting to reoccur every Wednesday at 3:00pm. The intent of this meeting is to discuss any issues that arise and ensure the drivers are receiving the proper guidance in order to ensure the initiative continues successfully. Josie will co-lead this meeting with me. Our first meeting well and the following topics were discussed:

1) Frank will coordinate with CDTA for Star transportation to serve those veterans that are unable to utilize the county van.

2) Josie will continue to screen potential passengers for either "home pick up" or "link up point pick up." Previous to this decision the team was experimenting with a "link up point pickup" policy.

3) Josie or Frank will secure the spare van key in order to allow the drivers to retain a key.

4) Frank will review the policy and prepare an article for the Saratogian discussing the Veterans Transportation initiative.

5) I need to review the current policy and procedures of the van.

6) The van has a little controversy. The drivers feel that this initiative provides a needed service for disenfranchised Veterans. members of the team believe that the service does not provide enough benefit to out way the cost of the service. In coordination with Mary Ann and Spencer; we decided to maintain the van service for our Veterans.

i. Work Schedule. I spoke to them regarding their work day schedule and attendance and that they need to be at work from 0900 - 1700. Josie has been reporting to work at 0800 and leaving a 1600 daily. Frank has been leaving on some days around 1615 in order personal reasons.

1) I will honor Frank's request to allow him to work every Monday from 0800 to 1600. I informed Josie that I will grant her one day to report to work at 0800 and leave at 1600. (Cleared this with Jack and Mary Ann)

2) I let them each know that if at any time I receive a complaint regarding their time cards they will both lose the privilege of those flexible work day schedules.

3) I also emphasized to them both that they will need to stagger their lunch schedules and that when they take their lunch they need to leave the office to eat, read a book, exercise, etc. They need to do something rather than work, or sit at their desk. This will encourage them to make constructive use of the remainder of their work day.

j. Face Book and LinkedIn. We are going to develop these accounts in order to inform the county and to stay informed from organizations outside the county in order to establish a transparent and inclusive team. (First look NLT: Wednesday, 3/27/2013)

2. Peer to Peer. Amy Hughes introduced the program to me on March 19th, 2013. Since that time, I learned that to make this program successful we will need to solicit and develop partnerships with various organizations throughout Saratoga County.

a. On March 27th, 2013 we were informed that an additional \$185K was secured to continue, and expand this important program that is helping veterans in Saratoga County.

b. On March 28th, 2013 we met with Hans Lehr, Director of Mental Health and his finance team. I was briefed that the program falls under operational controls of the Veterans' Agency and is fiscally administered by Mental Health. We discussed three purchases Amy has requested to begin her program and discovered that we need to develop a set of spending guidelines in order to allow the program to work outside normal county policies and procedures. We are meeting with the County Auditor in order to develop the peer to peer spending guidelines. In the interim, we will seek approval for the current needs from Spencer.

c. On March 29th, 2013 we met with Charles Van Vorst, the Military Outreach Specialist at Empire State College (ESC). He and ESC will host our next peer to peer training on April 12th, 2013. ESC hosted the last training event and ensured its great success.

d. We are planning to attend a Peer to Peer Mentorship training seminar offered by the VA in Albany in order to gauge to our progress and utilize the VA's program as a benchmark.

e. VETHELP Meet and Greet. Amy Hughes, Program Coordinator, Saratoga County Veteran's Peer to Peer Mentoring met with VETHELP in order to become familiar with their program and capabilities. We mentioned are willingness for both groups to reach out to veterans and there was interest with both groups to establish a monthly catch up. We mentioned our ability to provide trained mentors as an extra resource for the veterans in your program. Amy may be able to speak to one or more of the groups that VETHELP are involved with. Word of mouth may be our strongest recruiting tool. Those present were:

- Leslie Carroll, Employment Specialist
- William May, Employment Specialist
- Jonathan Parsons, Employment Specialist

3. Veterans Outreach.

a. Honor our Deceased Veterans. Josie is the point of contact for the program and carries the bulk of the load to ensure its success over the course of eleven years.

1) She re-schedule March's cancelled ceremony (Corinth) and adjusted 2013 schedule. She forwarded a note to the Supervisors with the new the schedule.

2) She completed the staffing of the April ceremony for the City of Mechanicville, Dominick DePaul.

b. American Red Cross (ARC). We will be meeting with the ARC 'Service to Armed Forces (SAF)' representative in verify current services offered to Veterans in Saratoga County. This may encourage us to develop a partnership with the ARC SAF in order to integrate their programs into Saratoga County.

c. Veterans Business Outreach Center (VBOC). We are scheduling a meeting with Amy Amoroso, Veterans Business Advisor with the VBNOC in order to verify if the VBOC is able to offer the Veterans of Saratoga any services and possibly plan mutually support initiatives.

d. In coordination with VETHELP, New York State, Veterans Affairs and other affiliates we will develop a “Veterans’ Employment Needs Assessment Survey” in order to plan for a future “Veterans’ Hiring Conference.”

e. We are planning to conduct an initial meeting with the leadership of VETHELP and Soldier On in order to gauge where the three organizations can collaborate and develop integrated solutions.

f. Saratoga County Veterans Transportation.

1) Josie created new van sheets that will include daily basic preventative maintenance checks to be conducted by the drivers.

2) We revised the current policy with additional guidance regarding Alzheimers/Dementia riders to be picked up at home with a person to person handoff.

3) Frank researched CDTA STAR Service, in order to verify eligibility and ability to facilitate enrollment for Veterans. He scheduled a meeting with CDTA STAR staff to discuss alternate transportation for Veterans who need Accessible service.

4) Frank coordinated CDTA for alternative transportation for Mr. Delorme, a Veteran who is physically unable to use the County Van and requires more accessible service.

4. Veterans Service Officer Actions.

a. Frank processed 7 new claims at an average of 1.75 hours per claim.

b. Frank conducted 19 open claims follow up engagements at an average of 1.26 hours per engagement.

c. The team scheduled 7 claim appointments at average of 1.42 hours per scheduling.

d. The team served 16 walk-in clients at an average of 15 minutes per visit.

e. The team processed 67 phone call inquiries at an average of 4.92 minutes per inquiry.

Conclusion: Next step is for the Veterans’ Service Agency Team is to continue to assess our current operating procedures and seek ways to become more proficient, efficient and predictable. We are going to place emphasis on being an inclusive organization that embraces transparency.

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