

**Military and Veterans Service Alliance (MAVSA) of The Lowcountry,
South Carolina**

www.mavsasc.org

Tuesday, April 30, 2019 Meeting Summary

Meeting Time: 1100am-12:30pm

Meeting Location: AMVETS Post 70, 1831 Ribaut Road, Port Royal, SC 29935

Participants: Ben Boswell, Connie Hipp, Craig Hysell, Fred Leyda, Fred Pasley, Michael Weiss, Michael Lee, Rob Bridgers, Sarah Eliasoph, Suzi Oliver, Tamra Avrit, Walt Field, Rick Rhinehart, Tonya Wilson, Dale Dietz, Harold Murray, Jose Casey, Angela Barnard, Bill Jackson, Vanessa Lowery, Wade Bishop, Katie Godowns

Time	Activity
1103	Rob Bridgers, Chair, called the meeting to order. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.
1105	<p>Each meeting participant provided a self-introduction.</p> <p>Rob Bridgers highlighted the MAVSA progress since the last meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revised mission, vision, guiding principles; • Secured Executive Board members; • Updated website and drafted the Partnership Agreement; and • Planned this meeting to be dialogue and action-focused. <p>Tamra Avrit, MAVSA Facilitator, will electronically send out the Partnership Agreement again to ensure that all received to sign and return. When the agreement is received, the website will be updated as appropriate.</p> <p>The meeting facilitators were then introduced (Wade Bishop and Katie Godowns). They oriented the group to the meeting activities of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats for MAVSA; • Setting three goals for the group in 2019; and • Ensuring that MAVSA understands what must be addressed now; soon; or later. <p>Rob Bridgers stated that the lens on the planning dialogue focused on the true north of veterans and active duty needs in Beaufort County (versus individual agencies or programs). He also stated that we should strive to have MAVSA collaboration efforts achieve measurable results.</p>
1120	SWOT Analysis - Each participant contributed their thoughts via post-it note, and the facilitators categorized the input into the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

	<p>Once all input was captured, the group identified common themes across all thought contributions. The following summarizes the noted themes which emerged.</p> <p>Strengths: Education, We want to be the workers, Funding to support collaborative efforts, Broad scope of services, bypass bureaucracy, NAMI offers free mental health education for Military, Caring and compassionate, goal oriented, Job training, professional data research team that is able to focus on local data, Criminal Justice services available to military, National Cemetery, Connections, Veterans sitting on this coalition are an asset, Community sees the importance of our Military and their families.</p> <p>Weaknesses: Lack of support and careers for military spouses, Homelessness, housing resources, talk and no action, stretched too thin, lack of focus, Giving mental health presentations to military in psych ward at BMH, Ability to reach target audience, Military doesn't refer to outside mental health services, need more players to connect the dots, community outreach opportunities, lack of funding, Problems identifying vets that are eligible for services, lack of goals, response time, lack of influence over federal decision making, limited staff and transportation, lack of communication with the military, great people but we work as silos.</p> <p>Opportunities: Networking events & be sure to network on an impactful level, seat on house veterans affairs committee, coordinate services, Partner with Gold Star families to ensure their loved one is remembered, MAVSA is already an established group with great participants, We already have a large population of vets- we just need to tell them what resources are available to them, To educate the public on mental health and how it is just as important as physical health, already events in the community for Veterans Day & Memorial Day, etc.</p> <p>Threats: Lack of cyber security, overload of duplicate services, Re-allocation of military assets/ budget, same services but different forms of assisting vets with it, military transitioning without the knowledge of available resources, outside organizations coming in to "fix" what we already have in place, apathy, old school thinking, and the group is perceived boring.</p>
1150	<p>Wade Bishop and Katie Godowns then facilitated the participants in a discussion about setting goals for MAVSA. The participants identified the following MAVSA goals for 2019:</p> <p>1.) Create a Resource Guide for Military to use when exiting the Service and transitioning to civilian lifestyle- (Fred Leyda (lead); Rob Bridgers, Connie Hipp, Walt Field, Bill Jackson, and Tamra Avrit.). The guide would be based on "military life moments" which integrates not for profit / helping organizations and County, State, Federal local resources to be used by military, veterans, spouses and families.</p> <p>a. Contact the Military and the United Way to see if they already have an existing one that can be used to pull from.</p>

- 2.)** Also, create a subcommittee that picks and chooses what community events that the coalition takes part in (Parades, Health Fairs Etc.).
- a. Set up Meetings with Colonel and Sgt. Major of the Bases to inform them about this coalition and ask how you can work alongside of them to bridge the gap of transition.
 - b. Use already existing gatherings and individual agencies events to distribute guides, e.g. key holidays, such as:
 - Memorial Day;
 - July 4th; and
 - Veteran’s Day.
 - c. Set up a meeting with the VA Director-to help distribute the guides that get created.
- 3.)** Sub divide the coalition into working teams that are created by agencies or non-profits that do similar work- That way you can network better and not duplicate services.
- One of these groups may be a “Community Allies” Group that consists of Veterans looking to give back or mentor. This would be a way to let veterans and current military connect with the transitioning process. The volunteer group could be trained on how to use the directory and navigate the directory to do a warm handoff. The intent would be trying to move the veteran upstream from the VA and get the help at the grass roots level. The Sun City 1,100 veterans could be very helpful in such an endeavor.

Additional notes /recommendations from meeting:

- The Community Services Organization Collaborative uses Charity Tracker to track indigent housing clients who can be referred between organizations. The Tracker is used similar to an automated case management solution across organizations to partner the organizations together. Military/veteran focused agencies could use a similar approach to share resources to address client needs.
- Participate in events to build awareness about available military, veteran and family resources, such as military appreciation day, kids fest, chamber eblast, Veterans Day, Memorial Day, July 4th. Consider how social media and member organizations can distribute and share information.
- MAVSA-affiliated organizations may form a work team to share their information regarding how to integrate the information and synergy for impact – e.g. everybody could partner for background checks, CPA services, etc. Seek to build affinity groups within MAVSA to partner/network on initiatives.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define measures for MAVSA initiatives, e.g. local suicide rate. The measures need to be defined for each goal area, e.g. suicide rate could be affiliated with the health/wellness efforts, whereas there is a different measurement for education/employment and community outreach/engagement. • Other topics discussed at this time included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The benefit of starting a speakers bureau to share the guide; ○ Fred Leyda stated, “The key to collaboration is what each organization is able to GIVE – everyone benefits from the giving to each other and contributing to the pie;” ○ Could a lead agency within Beaufort County be identified for ‘life need’ issues, and then the other agencies/organizations who have similarly related missions would be included in the solution. Need to find a way to help the veteran navigate the system upfront vs. having them call 10 agencies which can offer similar services. ○ The need to ensure that agencies are conducting service delivery in a way that reaches today’s service member, e.g. text messages vs. written, mailed letters. ○ Fred asked that the mission statements of the participating MAVSA organizations be gathered and then analyzed regarding how they may network with each other. ○ Suzi Oliver mentioned that the “Circle of Hope Fellowship” will open homeless veteran housing soon in Beaufort County. The shelter will be able to house both men and women.
1155	<p>Action Items and MAVSA Next Steps</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convene action group for resource guide development – Fred Leyda to lead • Conduct outreach to military installation points of contact regarding collaboration touchpoints/needs (Jose to provide POC information to Tamra) • All MAVSA organizations to submit mission statements to Tamra. Based on the mission statements, sub-groups will be formed for further work on partnership/collaborative opportunities. • Tamra will send the membership point of contact listing and the MAVSA mission, vision, and guiding principles via email to all of today’s meeting participants. <i>(Note: the mission, vision, and guiding principles are available on the MAVSA website at MAVSASC.org).</i> • Tamra will send the Partnership Agreement to all partners.
Noon	The meeting adjourned at 12:30pm.

MAVSA 2019 Meeting Dates (locations TBD):

- July 23, 2019
- October 22, 2019