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Washington State Legislature Joint Committee on Veterans' and Military Affairs

Executive Committee:
Representative Barbara Bailey
Senator Steve Conway
Representative Tina Orwall
Senator Pam Roach

Meeting Minutes October 3, 2012

Members present: Klippert, Finn, Conway, Rolfes, Becker, Swecker, Bailey, Roach, Hudgins, and Orwall

Members absent: Hobbs, Carrell, Shin, Hope, McCune, and Sullivan

The meeting was called to order at 11:10 by co-chair Conway.

The meeting minutes of the June 29, 2012 meeting were approved.

The committee heard a presentation on health care and medical benefits from the following panelists:

- Joan Lamb, Health System Specialist, TRICARE Regional Office West;
- George Cargill, Vice President of Northwest Operations, Tri-West Healthcare Alliance;
- Glenn Gray, Director, Congressional Relations and Priority Programs, Tri-West Healthcare Alliance;

Mr. Gray discussed the role of Tri-West as the contractor for the TRICARE program. Mr. Gray began with an overview of the TRICARE system as a whole. TRICARE is a component of the Department of Defense's Military Health System implemented in the mid-90's. TRICARE is not an insurance program. TRICARE is a military entitlement program. Mr. Gray provided a [PowerPoint](#) to assist during his presentation.

In Washington state there are approximately 357,000 eligible beneficiaries although not all of these individuals are utilizing the program. Rep. Bailey requested demographics on the 26 year-old dependent coverage. This is a new aspect of Tri-Care as a result of the Affordable Health Care Act. Mr. Gray will follow up with this information.

Mr. Cargill discussed the beginning of Tri-West and current field operations. There are 10 TRICARE service centers in Washington.

Ms. Lamb discussed benefit additions and changes in fees. Tri-West will no longer hold the service contract and the transition takes effect April 1, 2013 to United Health. The contractor is changing but the benefit will not change.

The Committee broke for lunch at 12:40.

The Committee reconvened at 1:10.

The Committee discussed Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) treatment options for veterans. The Committee heard from Kristine Reeves, South Sound Regional Director for Senator Patty Murray. Ms. Reeves discussed the changes in the national perspective around PTSD. The issues surrounding access to behavioral health have evolved greatly in the past decade. The Department of Defense and the Federal VA are in the process of hiring between 1200 -1600 behavioral health specialists to assist soldiers, service members and veterans. There is still a stigma surrounding PTSD and behavioral health in society.

The next presentation provided an overview of services provided at the state and local level related to PTSD. The Committee heard from:

- Tom Schumacher, PTSD Director, Washington Department of Veterans Affairs;
- Keith Meyer, MS, LMHC;
- Adrian Magnuson-Whyte, Ph.D., LMHC;

Mr. Schumacher provided a [PowerPoint](#). Mr. Schumacher provided maps for the members to see where veterans are congregated throughout the state. Throughout the course of the decade-long war on terror, 2.4 million individuals have served in the military. Of those who have served, 1.4 million are eligible currently for VA services.

Senator Conway asked about the state role in PTSD treatment. The change to the law that allows soldiers to receive confidential treatment from licensed professionals helps enormously. A soldier no longer needs to worry that his or her career will be negatively impacted by seeking treatment. Funding programs that allow soldiers and veterans to receive treatment are vital. Community outreach is key.

Mr. Magnuson-Whyte provided information about an individual he treats to illustrate the complicated nature of PTSD and how state and federal collaboration help with treatment options. Washington state provides 1.2 million in funds for the PTSD program. Forty-seven other states do not provide funding.

The committee heard from representatives of non-profits who are treating PTSD sufferers. The panel consisted of:

- Randi Jensen, MA, LMHC, CCDC, Director, The Soldiers Project;
- Dorothy Melcer, Psy.D., Associate Director, The Soldiers Project;
- Jason Alves, Vet Corps;
- Mark Fischer, Vet Corps;

Ms. Jensen spoke about The Soldiers Project which provides free, confidential, unlimited services to anyone who has been in the service since 2001. This also includes anyone who has been impacted by the war on terror. Family, friends and employers are all able to receive services.

The number one reason people do not seek treatment is stigma. The second most common reason is active duty personnel are afraid they will not be able to be deployed or will suffer damage to their career.

Vet Corp saw 31,000 people last year. Vet Corp is an Ameri-Corp related program and relies on peer mentoring. Vet Corp members are veterans and bring their shared experience to break the first barrier with fellow veterans.

The meeting concluded at 3:05 pm.