



**Montgomery County Commission on Veterans Affairs
Meeting Summary Minutes
October 17th, 2017**

I. Call to Order & Introductions

Dan Bullis, Chairman, welcomed everyone to the meeting of the Commission on Veterans Affairs (CVA). Dan asked for all present to stand for the Pledge of Allegiance and to remain standing for a moment of silence for all of those who have given their lives and those who have been wounded for our country in the different conflicts in which our country has been engaged. A POW/MIA Empty Chair is placed at all official meetings of the Commission as a physical symbol of the thousands of American POW/MIAs still unaccounted for from all wars and conflicts involving the United States of America.

II. Approval of Minutes

A motion was made to approve the September 2017 Meeting Summary Minutes. The motion was seconded. A vote was taken and the September 2017 Meeting Summary Minutes were unanimously approved. Approved minutes are available online at www.montgomerycountymd.gov/cva.

III. Serving Veterans in the Court System – Robert Green, Director, Department of Correction and Rehabilitation, and Dr. Raymond Crowel, Chief, Behavioral Health and Crisis Services

Data prepared by Staff from Montgomery County Local Behavioral Health Authority and community partners.

Veterans seen/calls for behavioral health referral (10/12 /2017):

Access to Behavioral Health – FY 18 – 26 clients reporting they are veterans. 1st QTR.
FY 17 – 88 clients reporting they are veterans.
FY 16 – 68 clients reporting they are veterans.

Clarksburg VA Justice Outreach Worker – 3-5 veteran's clients seen per month.

Clinical Assessments and Triage Services at Clarksburg – FY 18 – 17 veterans screened 1st QTR.
FY 17 – 41 veterans screened.
FY 16 – 47 veterans screened

Crisis Center VA Homeless Outreach – 8-12 veterans seen per month.

Cohen Veterans Clinic – Opened in early September 2017 -initially 8 clients per week. Week of 9/25/2017 they saw 22 clients. (Count includes veterans and family)

Local Behavioral Health Authority – FY18 – 7 veterans assisted with behavioral health referrals 1st QTR.
FY17 – 40 veterans assisted with behavioral health referrals
FY16 – 26 veterans assisted with behavioral health referrals.

Maryland's Commitment to Veterans – 1-2 non-VA, 2-3 VA calls per month for a total of 3-5 calls per month.

Mental Health Court – 2 veterans served since inception in December 2016

Serving Together – 10-15 calls per month for behavioral health.

Silver Spring Vet Center – 160-180 veterans seen per month totaling 430 visits per month.

1. How do we identify justice involved veterans?

All individuals are screened for veteran status when they enter 7 Locks or Clarksburg. At 7 Locks they will be assessed by the Clinical Assessment and Triage Services team whereby treatment planning is initiated in preparation in case individuals are bonded out. If the veteran will be sent to Clarksburg to await trial, then staff reach out to Karen Carrington who is the DC VA Justice outreach worker. Karen will work with the veterans while they are at Clarksburg and will conduct aftercare planning and follow-up. Karen utilizes both VA resources and community resources.

2. *What circumstances get them deflected or diverted?*

STEER (Stop, Triage, Engage, Educate, and Rehabilitate) – If a veteran is involved in a minor non-violent offense, (the list of charges is previously approved by the State Attorney’s Office), while under the influence, the police has the option to avoid charging them (deflection) in lieu of a referral to treatment. Police and crisis intervention team are being trained in deflection.

CATS (Clinical Assessment and Triage Services) – Incarcerated veterans are recommended for release in lieu of detainment (post booking diversion) if they meet clinical criteria, accept services available in the community and are approved by the Pre-Trial Services Unit (not a threat to the community and likely to appear in court for care disposition).

CORP/MHC (Comprehensive Re-entry Project)/ (Mental Health Court) – These programs can engage the CJIS (Criminal Justice Information System) on behalf of veterans who are amenable to behavioral health services and have their pending charges dismissed in lieu of successful participation in treatment. The States Attorney’s Office is involved in approving the charges that are appropriate for diversion as they must first meet certain criteria (i.e. – not predatory behavior, threatening to the community, or sexual in nature).

3. *What programs and services in the community are available?*

There are a range of Veteran services programs in the County. For behavioral health there is the Silver Spring Vet Center; the Cohen Veterans Clinic in Silver Spring which is free to all veterans and families as well as to guard/reservists and families; Aspire Counseling in Gaithersburg that accepts Tri-Care; and All Day Medical Care in Gaithersburg which also accepts Tri-Care. There is a veterans Safe Havens shelter, and we have VA homeless outreach staff who have hours at the Crisis Center on Monday and Wednesday mornings. Some veterans with serious and persistent mental illness are eligible for services in the public behavioral health system. These services include outpatient mental health treatment, residential crisis services, targeted case management services, assertive community treatment, psychiatric rehabilitation, and supported employment. Further, the County offers a range of safety net services such as jail based addiction services, adult behavioral health services, and case management services which are also available to veterans. Services also include addictions treatment at Avery Road as well as a range of addictions treatment services by non-profit providers in the County. There is a Veterans Services Officer at Montgomery College in Rockville who can assist veterans with claims issues; and Montgomery College offers the Combat 2 College program for veterans entering/re-entering college after military service. Combat 2 College provides a range of services and supports to help veterans readjusting to academic life. For employment assistance there is the Maryland American Job Centers and the Veterans Staffing Network at Easter Seals. Further, the DC Veterans Affairs Medical Center plans on opening a Community Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC) in December 2017 in Gaithersburg. The CBOC will provide somatic, behavioral health, and supportive treatment and services to the VA eligible veteran community.

Dr. Crowel stated that the first goal in behavioral health is deferring individuals from getting into the correctional and system. The second goal is getting them into the services and supports that they need.

Very few Veterans are being seen in the mental health court ay this time. Every individual who goes through HHS is asked a question about their military status – whether they are a Veteran, if they served in the Armed Forces, or if they have an immediate family member who served. That information is tracked. (Please note in a discussion between Betsy and Justice for Vets after the meeting, it was suggested to ask if a person has ever served in the US military/ reserves/national guard)

Mike Subin, Commissioner, passed around a notebook that was a compendium of any and every kind of service that is available to Veterans. It is currently in draft form and will be finished within the coming months.

Director Green noted that DOCR employs 569 individuals, many of whom are Veterans. He reported that the current Commander of the Federal Bureau of Prisons is two-star General Mark S. Inch. His focus has been assisting Veterans re-entering local communities through local jails.

Every individual who is arrested or incarcerated goes through the Central Processing Unit (CPU) at Seven Locks and every individual is asked if they are a Veteran. 71% of all the individuals arrested (approximately 11,000) are released back into the community. Montgomery County has a very strong criminal justice community which involves the District Court, the Circuit Court, the State's Attorney's office, public defenders, HHS, DOCR, and other providers. State's Attorneys know in advance if an individual going to court is a Veteran. As part of the process, they go to a bond review before a District Court judge. They are also given a pre-trial assessment involving seven case workers before they meet with the judge and are given a general assessment for services. Those pre-trial workers inform the Judge about the services the individual is receiving and Judges take that information into consideration. After the bond review, individuals with acute issues such as mental health, substance abuse and crimes of violence, stay in the jail. The rest are screened out and are managed in the community. Licensed clinical treatment is available inside the jail.

DOCR works closely with State parole and probation. They will assist Veterans transferring to Vet Centers across state lines if those facilities have an open bed available. DOCR also has Federal Benefits Specialists in place to assist individuals in connecting to entitlement and Federal benefits.

Two years ago, DOCR began using the VA's Veterans Re-entry Search System (VRSS). Montgomery County was one of the first 50 jails to sign up with the VA. Every week, DOCR runs the entire incarcerated population in Montgomery County against VRSS. Occasionally, an individual who did not self-identify will pop up in the report. As of today, there are 15 Veterans in the jail system - all our male, 11 are African-American, and 4 are Caucasian. Director Green noted that it is important to track these statistics to ensure the services being provided are culturally competent. They review every demographic detail to connect them to the appropriate services. DOCR offers their data online in the form of a dashboard report that provides quick links and views of the Department's Data Analysis on Community Corrections, Detention Services, Management Services, Procurement/Contract and Budget Data as well as pertinent County Public Safety Data: <http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/COR/DataDashboard.html>.

Director Green reported that the County has spent the last three years designing a new facility based on the restoration center model. They have reviewed various models across the country. The facility would help stabilize an individual and get them back into the community system without arrest. The pre-release population is at about 1,600 currently being managed in the community with case supervision and case modeling. Approximately 40% of calls with the case manager are not about community service or the pre-trial issue, but with seeking assistance for other issues. Those that are sentenced can complete community service programs and there is an intervention program, run in cooperation with HHS, for substance abusers in lieu of incarceration.

Mike added that the average process time for individuals who go through CPU used to be 2-3 hours. The average process time is now average 12+ hours. This allows staff more time to engage with the individual, make a clearer assessment, and provides an opportunity to catch the person when they are at their low point. Case management and intervention are available at various points during a person's journey through the criminal justice system.

It was noted that in the 1960s and 1970s the idea of deinstitutionalisation was introduced. The idea involved replacing long-stay psychiatric hospitals with less isolated community mental health services for those diagnosed with a mental health issue or developmental disability. Unfortunately, the availability of community health services did not meet the demand. Montgomery County has invested a lot of money for services. The average length of stay in a state psychiatric hospital is 9 days. Across the country, jails are becoming the default place for psychiatric help. State and County judges are pushing the State to open psychiatric hospitals at the state levels. Currently, all state hospitals are forensic hospitals and only individuals who are in the criminal justice system can be admitted.

Jails were not meant to be treatment facilities. The [Justice Reinvestment Act](#) passed by Maryland in 2016 and enacted this October 1st includes a requirement to increase the number of treatment beds. The court ordered treatment waiting list used to be 99 days. The State has reduced that to about 40 days. Under the law treatment must be provided within 21 days. There is a strong focus to reduce money in the jails and prisons and to redirect those funds to community programs and treatment.

The County manages and pays for 50,000 drug and alcohol tests per year. That number does not include parole and probation. There are various levels of community supervision in pre-trial: phone reporting, electronic monitoring

(ankle bracelet), and having to report three days a week for drug and alcohol testing. If the individual relapses or shows problematic behavior, that will prompt DOCR to have the judge incarcerate them. Currently, there is less than a 2% failure to appear rate. 67% are completing the program and staying connected to community services, their families and their jobs.

The floor was opened to questions.

What is the data on Veterans in the criminal justice system regarding war eras and age? There is still a mix of younger, middle age, and older Veterans. Across the country there is an increase in Veterans who did not serve in a conflict or war. Data suggests that Veterans from previous wars are declining due to death or maturing. There is a natural process of maturing out of crime if mental or behavioral health issues are not persistent.

What diversion programs are available for individuals to complete their community service? There are about 130 programs in the County from the non-profit world to community work crews. DOCR is still in active conversations with Warrior Canine Connection and how they can help with socialization. The average length of stay in the jail system for a Veteran is 33 days. Those with serious and persistent mental health issues are staying a bit longer.

What are you doing for those dealing with substance abuse issues? Dr. Crowel noted that while they can encourage an individual to go into treatment, the individual still retains the right to refuse. Unfortunately, this may set them into a position to cycle back through the system and for some individuals it may take a few times before they engage in treatment. It is easier to stabilize an individual who has mental health issues than for an individual who has substance abuse issues.

Is a DUI considered a jailable offense? A DUI under .08 alcohol level is a ticketable offense. A DWI is a jailable offense. DOCR conduct a validated risk assessment and if that individual is determined to be a risk, they they will be held within the jail.

What is the veterans docket piece of the mental health court? There is no separate veterans docket or track within the mental health court. Director Green refers to the wrap-around services that are provided to veterans as 'veterans informed'. A veteran who goes before the court has received a tailored plan that links them to various resources. The court system knows if the individual is a Veteran and has received recommended treatment options for that individual. Mike noted that there are no more than two Veterans at a time going through the mental health court and they cannot justify a separate veterans docket. It was suggested that a presentation be made to the Military Officers Association of America (MOAA) to clarify the veterans informed initiative and its role in the mental health court.

Is there is a Veteran peer support component in the mental health court similar to the Veterans treatment courts that are available throughout the country? There is nothing in place now, but Director Green is very interested in the idea of a peer support mentoring program and said the program could be included in DOCR as well as in the court system. While case coordination does provide monitoring and follow-up of individuals, it would be beneficial to have the addition of peer support.

IV. Discussion on Planning Off-Site Commission Meetings – Randy Stone, Vice-Chairman

Randy asked Commissioners for ideas of where to hold future off-site Commission meetings. When considering locations, please keep in mind meeting space, audio/visual availability, and advertising. In the past, the Commission has held a meeting in the Olney area as well as at Leisure World. It was suggesting holding a meeting at the Community-Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC) after it opens or at Warrior Canine Connection. Suggestions can be e-mailed to Randy Stone.

V. Chairman Report

Dan Bullis, Chairman, encouraged Commissioners to attend a local Veterans Day event. The City of Rockville, City of Gaithersburg host events as well as the Veterans Day program at Wheaton Veterans Park hosted by VFW Post 2562. Mike Subin will be the key note speaker at a Veterans Day event being held in Bethesda on November 10th.

The permits for the Community-Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC) were pulled last week and is on schedule to open in December.

VI. Announcements

Mike will be meeting with the head of Montgomery Parks and the Office of Public Information to discuss the new Vietnam Veteran Memorial.

Anna Towns, Montgomery County National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), reported that the Montgomery County NAACP Veterans Affairs Committee will be sponsoring a Veterans open house on November 13 from 5:30 pm to 7:30 pm at the Executive Office Building, 101 Monroe Street, Lobby Auditorium, in Rockville. The event will feature special guest County Executive Ike Leggett.

Stan Seidel, Maryland Veterans Commission, reported that the Greenbelt American Legion, Post 136 will be hosting a District 4 Veteran's Breakfast and Listening Session on November 4th from 9:00 am to 11:00 am. Special Guest will be The Honorable Chris Van Hollen, United States Senator. Location: 6900 Greenbelt Road, Greenbelt, MD 20770. Stan also reported that a National Desert Storm War Memorial has been approved and will be located near the National Mall. The [Maryland Veterans Trust Fund](#) currently has \$180,000 available in the fund. The fund provides grants and loans to veterans and their family members who are in dire financial situations, or to private organizations that help veterans (homeless programs, substance abuse programs, etc.). All funds go directly to the provider. The Federal Bar Association will be hosting a free Wills for Veterans initiative on November 9th. Octavia Dixon, Commissioner, reported that the VA is collecting donations for Puerto Rico.

Adjournment: 7:30pm

Next Full Commission Meeting: Tuesday, November 21st, 2017 from 6:00pm to 7:30pm at Health & Human Services Building, 401 Hungerford Drive, 1st Floor 1A Conference Room, Rockville, MD 20850

Respectfully submitted:

Carly Clem, Administrative Specialist I

Betsy Luecking, Community Outreach Manager