

Macomb Veterans Action Collaborative Minutes  
Virtual Meeting  
Monday, January 4, 2021

I. **CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order by Laura Rios at 9:04 am.

**Attendees:**

Laura Rios	Sharon Urban	April Clipper
Courtney Tweedale	Christy Koons	David Hannum
Dr. Gerald Curley	Elizabeth Sergent	Gabriella Barthlow
Gerald Thomas	Heidi Heck	Janet Smith
Jeff Arnold	Jennifer Kimm	Jennifer Manning
John Gardner	Joyce Moultrie	Julie Hintz
Kara Fields	Katie Carroll	Katie Page
Kevin Hrit	Madeline Habib	LisaMarie Duncan-Edwards
Mark Kilgore	Mark Meadows	Paul Salcepuedes
Stephn Boegenhold	Moses Coleman	Ryan Engle
Kathy Koths	Elizabeth Sergent	Mark Kilgore

There were phone numbers listed on the Participants' page with no names attached. The attendees listed above are those whose names appeared on that page. The chat box names were also included in the above list.

II. **INTRODUCTIONS:** Laura asked all virtual attendees to enter their name in the chat box.

III. **AGENCIES UPDATES:**

A. Updates from Veteran Home – Jennifer Manning

Construction should be finished in 3 weeks. A soft opening will take place April 5, 2021. There will be tours before the soft opening. The facility has 128 beds, long term care, skilled nursing and skilled therapeutic services, clinical nursing care, PT and OT on site. Eligible veterans, their spouses and Gold Star families can be housed there. Veterans from Marquette and Grand Rapids will be housed first. Courtney Tweedale is the Nursing Director for this facility.

B. How has the Covid-19 pandemic affected your agency? How has it affected the way you assist veterans?

Chris Reilly stated (by email) the Macomb/St. Clair Michigan Works! System is open for service but the career centers remain closed. They are providing assistance remotely/virtually.

Kevin Hrit from Senator Peter's office gave his contact information: 248-678-9129  
[Kevin\\_hrit@peters.senate.gov](mailto:Kevin_hrit@peters.senate.gov)

Laura Rios stated she is ramping up for the start of the Vita Tax Program. She mentioned that the 2020 stimulus checks are not taxable but are considered income but unemployment if taxable. She will also check the status of the Eisenhower Center at Selfridge. The Veteran Services office assists clients by face to face; by phone; virtual and drop box.

Stephen Boegehold from DHHS is working from home; they have a skeleton staff working in the offices. He believes it is working well. The MiBridges Dashboard has been updated for veterans. When a person identifies as a veteran additional resources come up.

Katie Page stated the Battlefield Acupuncture is by appointment and it is up and running. The yoga and meditation sessions are now virtual.

IV. **AD HOC SUBCOMMITTEE UPDATES:** The committee members will be meeting soon and will give an update at the next meeting.

- A. **Marketing**
- B. **Education/Outreach/Communication**

V. **COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

A. **Benefits/Communication**

Laura stated Bladder Cancer, hypertension and the three (3) other conditions are still pending as to whether they will be added to the Presumptive list.

B. **Employment**

Paul Salcepuedes stated Veteran Employment Services continue to work closely with MWA partners to assist veterans. We also have been doing virtual outreach with community partners that have been successful with veteran referrals.

Mark Meadows stated that there are a lot of jobs out there but it is difficult to get the veterans connected to them. They have put 85 veterans back to work full time since the pandemic.

C. **Services**

Madeline Habib is retiring. We will need to select a new Chair for this committee.

D. **Membership**

We are still in need of a chair for this committee. Laura has been handling this committee – Gabriella Barthlow has committed to Chair this committee.

E. **Faith Based**

There were no updates.

F. **Higher Education**

Kara Fields stated all legislative COVID changes were extended through December 2021. This means that schools can make exceptions so that online courses can count toward the full housing payment BUT the schools are all making independent decisions. Post 9/11 GI Bill users should contact their school certifying official to determine if his/her registered courses will count for a full housing payment.

GI Bill users with questions about housing payments and courses that apply for the full housing payment should check with their schools. Voc rehab approval processes is causing textbook funding delays. If an MVAC member needs help figuring out a situation for their veteran related to education benefits, please work directly with the veterans' school or call my office 586-445-7999, #7 or email me (fieldsk61@macomb.edu).

**VI. VCAT UPDATE/ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:**

Kara Fields stated events have been online using Zoom. The 2021 dates will be posted to Facebook as soon as they determined. VCAT started a new Google email group. For more information contact: Lori at [secretary.mr10vcat@gmail.com](mailto:secretary.mr10vcat@gmail.com). She also suggested to check Facebook for updates and to connect with the Motor City VCAT (region 10) <https://www.facebook.com/Region10VCAT>

Julie Hintz stated that MCA received SSVF funding for this year. The SSVF monies help prevent homelessness for our veteran communities. If you know of a veteran that needs help with housing or homelessness please have them call 586-463-6314.

Gerald Thomas from the Dearborn Vet Center, VA entity, has had no visitors on site. He has also noticed a decrease in veteran services due to the pandemic. He has been working closely with the VVA.

**NEXT MEETING**

March 1, 2021 virtual meeting at 9:00 A.M.

**VII. ADJOURMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 10:30 A.M.