

Veterans AmeriCorps Meeting

Nov. 9, 2011 – 11:30 a.m.

Serve Rhode Island Office – 655 Broad St., Suite 202, Providence, RI 02907

Present: Jeff Angelo (Tri-Town); Vin Marzullo (RI CNCS); Paul Salera and Jeanne Gattegno (West Bay CAP), Audrey Field (EBCAP), Joanne Gregory (CCAP).

Staff: Bernie Beaudreau, Marisa Petreccia, Cathy Doyle

Consultants: Dan Cahill, Kathleen Perreault

Dan presented summary finds and recommendations of their month-long inquiry on the matter of an AmeriCorps program by and for veterans. The discussion that followed highlighted several points:

- Community Action Program (CAP) sites intake needs to be receptive to veterans. For example, if a client indicates “yes” to veteran question, then need to refer to an AmeriCorps veteran on site.
- The CAP site veteran AC member should be a specialist in benefits and also able to mentor, coach and accompany veterans in need through the benefits access process.
- Veterans may need transportation help and services expanded to their families, spouses and children. For example, the National Guard Family Service Center has 26 people on staff.
- The importance of services to the families of veterans was underscored.
- CAP agencies should consider having a Vet Center in a corner of their office or intake area.

All present endorsed the program development recommendations presented by Dan Cahill. These included the following:

Outreach and Referral Service: The primary emphasis for Serve RI (SRI) for veterans programs can be a new outreach and referral service based in a network of social service providers, such as the Community Action Program (CAP) network. The program will give preference to AmeriCorps members who are veterans. Presently eight CAP agencies statewide provide up to 50 direct services and a referral for other services with well-established staff. While assessing service needs during the intake process the CAP agency currently inquires about vet status.

Service Projects: A key element of an AmeriCorps project can be implementation of **service projects**. Experience elsewhere, including the Washington State Conservation Corp project, has shown that team projects with a visible product are helpful to vets for elevating pride and dignity as well as organizational action. These projects could take the form of park and recreation improvements, Narragansett Bay shore cleanup or other similar events. As the year progresses, vet clients could be invited to participate in such projects.

Career and Skills Improvement: While some skills will be learned on the job, other skills can have a particular focus, perhaps in a concentrated period at the end of the service period. Transitional assistance from an AmeriCorps experience should include life skills, employment counseling,

Promotion and Marketing: Marketing the AmeriCorps veterans' referral service will be an essential element of the program. Marketing and outreach should include: client intake at the agency level, use of the RONA system, advertising, and outreach at community focal points including points of service with the VA.

The meeting ended with participants endorsing the idea of developing an AmeriCorps program by and for veterans. West Bay Community Action executive director, Jeanne Gattegno, indicated their intent on submitting an AmeriCorps application for the 2012 competitive round.

The meeting ended at 12:50 PM.