

AmeriCorps Program for Veterans Meeting  
September 29, 2011  
12:00 Noon  
At Serve Rhode Island, 655 Broad St., Providence, RI 02907

Meeting Notes

Attending: Jeffrey Angelo - (Tri-Town & South County CAP); James Boardman - (VFW); June Daniel - (Federal Hill House); Sherry Diaz - (CCAP); Dan Evangelista - (RI Div Veterans Affairs); Stephen Kavanagh - (Governor's Office); Andrea Lewandowski - (Nickerson Comm Center); Nina Pande - (Federal Hill House); Mary Ellen Panzini, volunteer; Dennis Roy - (EBCDP); Paul Salera - (WBCAP); Steve Usler - (Sen. Jack Reed); and, Johanne Washington - (RI Veterans Action Center). Serve Rhode Island staff: Marisa Petreccia, Janice Pothier Pac and Bernie Beaudreau

Purpose of the Meeting: To discuss the need and purpose of a viable AmeriCorps program that would serve veterans and military families utilizing veterans as AmeriCorps members/volunteers.

Agenda:

1. Introductions & purpose of meeting
2. Why AmeriCorps/why veterans & military families?
3. Service needs of veterans/military families
4. Veterans as AmeriCorps members
5. Concept/design of an AmeriCorps program for veterans; focus & sponsoring organization
6. Next Steps

Discussion:

Bernie and Marisa opened up the discussion with information about AmeriCorps and the veterans and military families priority area. Dan gave some background on the conversations with Bernie and others since last January about the need for the outreach efforts that an AmeriCorps team could bring to improving services to veterans. He mentioned the VA healthcare benefits as an example of services being underutilized by veterans because of the lack of information and outreach. Dan suggested that the AmeriCorps members themselves could be a combination of veterans and/or families' members (a spouse or child) of veterans and a team of 10 members might benefit from the mix. The key is to have a team of AmeriCorps members that veterans will be comfortable relating to, including close family members of veterans.

Dan suggested that a team of ten AmeriCorps (AC) members out posted throughout the state's CAP agencies might be an ideal way to reach more veterans. The AC members would be trained by Dan and others to be "veterans benefits counselors". They would know enough about the array of programs and services available to veterans to be able to make effect referrals and assist in the process of gaining access to the services.

Discussion followed which generally reinforced the idea of such a program. Steve Usler reference his work with older WWII and Korean War veterans and the multiple needs they often have, from VA benefits, to heating assistance. Steve also suggested that the unmet needs of more recent combat veterans represents a “tsunami of needs” that will eventually put great demands on the system. James described his work reaching veterans who may have injury claims that could benefit them. Paul spoke of a client advocate model that WBCAP has developed with the Probation Officers at the Kent County Court House where individuals can be referred by the POs to receive supportive services. Nina reinforced the idea that children & spouses of veterans can be very effective outreach advocates for veterans. Nina indicated interest in learning more about matching fund requirements and resources needed to run an effective AmeriCorps program.

Bernie suggested that Serve Rhode Island would assist in developing an assessment of veteran’s services and needs in the state to further document the needs and provide further design elements for an AmeriCorps program for veterans. Paul suggested Dan Cahill, a program development consultant, as someone who might help with the assessment.

Next Steps: Serve Rhode Island will work with Dan and others to further develop the needs assessment and program design. Paul (WBCAP), Nina (Federal Hill House) and others will look into the possibility of a collaborative AC application. A follow-up meeting will be scheduled for mid-October.

Notes by B. Beaudreau 9/30/11