



NEW JERSEY NATIONAL GUARD
PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE
101 EGGERT CROSSING ROAD
LAWRENCEVILLE, NEW JERSEY 08648

NGNJ-PAO

09 May 2018

MEMORANDUM FOR Brigadier General Jemal Beale, The Adjutant General,
Department of Military and Veteran Affairs, 101 Eggerts Crossing Road, Lawrenceville,
NJ 08648

RE: Senate Budget Hearing Follow-up Questions from DMAVA

1. The following are responses to two questions from Senator Cruz-Perez.
2. Senator Cruz-Perez:

- a. *How effective is the Interagency Council, the department, and the regional veterans' services network? Are they working together to improve the services that we offer to our veterans in the State? How many veterans have been identified by the council who are in need of services and are receiving services?*

Answer: The Interagency Council in question is a council overseen by the Department of Community Affairs to address homelessness. Mr. Al Bucchi, former Director of Veteran Services who recently passed away, was a representative on the council for the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs (DMAVA) to provide information regarding homeless veterans. Our records indicate that the last meeting that was held was April 2016. To our knowledge, a report was produced and forwarded to the previous administration. Given that DMAVA was not the lead agency of this council, additional information cannot be obtained.

- b. *How effective is the Vet2Vet Hotline with regard to suicide prevention, crisis management, and improvement in mental illness? What type of mental health services are callers seeking when they make their calls? Please provide the Vet2Vet program statistics offered during the hearing.*

Answer: The Department of Military and Veterans Affairs operates the Vet2Vet Helpline in conjunction with Rutgers University. Vet4Warriors was originally a national program sponsored by the Department of Defense (DOD), and then terminated by DOD. Over the past two years, The NJ Department of Health and Human Services provides state funding to Rutgers University to maintain the continued operation of Vet4Warrior. DOD now funds "Be There" which replaced "One Source" which replaced "Vet4Warrior".

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The NJ Vet2Vet Helpline is a toll-free helpline and is available 24-hours a day, 7 days a week for Veterans and their families. Services were originally funded to include: Veteran peer support, family support, clinical assessment, case management, referrals to a network of mental health providers, web-based peer support, and live chat. However, overtime services changed to provide: overall support in answering questions about Veteran's benefits, services, navigating the US Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) system, employment, state benefit questions, peer support referrals and coordination with state Veteran Service Officers (VSOs) for counseling. A substantial amount of peer support follow-up is maintained and proves significant with this program. What initially began as a mental health support line has turned into an all-encompassing program that is a direct link for Veterans and family members providing Veterans' resources.

To date, during this fiscal year, the total number of incoming calls to the NJ Vet2Vet Helpline is approximately 2,414 and outgoing is approximately 4,987. The calls vary in subject matter for each Veteran, but always providing support, resource information, and guidance to their questions. If a Veteran calls for assistance with mental health issues, he or she is referred to a Veterans Services Officer (VSO), who assists them to a scheduled appointment with the VA and our state network of Mental Health Providers, if needed.

The Department believes that the Vet2Vet Hotline is effective with regard to providing resources in suicide prevention, crisis management, and improvement in mental illness. However, its effectiveness depends on Veterans utilizing the hotline to get the needed assistance. Our VSOs are instrumental in getting the word out to Veterans regarding our services and encourage family members to use them as well. To that end, determination of suicide prevention is difficult to measure.

3. The point of contact for this memorandum is LTC Barbara Brown-Wilson, Public Affairs Officer (PAO), at (609) 530-6939 or by email at barbara.g.brownwilson.mil@mail.mil.

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