REVISED DRAFT AGENDA

Subject to Change
(Contact Sheri Heffelfinger 444-3596 for latest)

Subcommittee on Veterans' Affairs

Meeting #3 (2 days)

Thursday, November 15, 2001
Room 102, State Capitol

1:30 p.m. Roll Call
Approval of minutes from September 26-27, 2001, meeting

1:45 p.m. Update on effort to establish a state veterans’ cemetery in western Montana
Mr. "C.E." Crookshanks, Gen. "M.Y." Foster, BG, USA, (Ret.)

2:00 p.m. Research briefs and staff analysis, Ms. Sheri Heffelfinger, LSD
Veteran population statistics and demographics
Current anatomy of federal and state services in Montana
Focus on the MVAD structure, funding, and service coordination
Overview of structure, funding and special programs of other state veterans affairs divisions or departments

3:00 p.m. Fiscal analysis and overview related to state financing of veteran services,
Mr. Todd Younkin, Legislative Fiscal Division

3:30 p.m. BREAK

3:45 p.m. Staff overview briefing on grievance procedures currently available to veterans through various channels

4:30 p.m. Update on activities related to health care issues outlined in the "Caring for our Wounded" core document presented to the Subcommittee August 6, 2001,
VVA Chapter 626
Staff update  SJR 5 Working Group
Presentation of Issues and Options Paper #1 (See outline Attachment A)

Staff review of Friday agenda

Recess to Friday, Nov. 16, 8:00 a.m.
8:00 a.m. Introduction of panelists and discussion questions, Ms. Sheri Heffelfinger, Research Analyst, Legislative Services Division, facilitator and moderator

**UMBRELLA DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR ALL PANELS:**

1. Please BRIEFLY summarize what you or your agency does.

2. CONCISELY explain how you or your agency currently conducts outreach, communicates with veterans, and coordinates services.

3. If a veteran brings a problem to you or your agency or has a complaint, how does it get addressed?

4. How could outreach, communication, service coordination and problem-solving be improved and what should be the state’s role in facilitating these improvements?

**THEME FOCUS:**

outreach, communication, service coordination, problem-solving

**OBJECTIVE:**

Provide the Veterans’ Affairs Subcommittee with information, analysis, and any recommendations relevant to the Issues and Options paper #1: Selecting Options.  
(See outline at Attachment A)

8:15 a.m. **Benefit Claims**  
Panelists:  
John Peterson, VA Fort Harrison, Veterans’ Service Center Manager  
Ruddy Reilly, MVAD and American Legion Benefit Claims Representative  
Mike Secrease, national VVA VSO  
Robert Schwegel, VFW, VSO  
Keith Heavy Runner, Tribal Veteran Representative  
Lenni Johnson, veteran consumer and volunteer  
John Denherder, WWII and Korean Veteran

9:00 a.m. **Employment and Training**  
Panelists:  
Fred Gense, Chief of Vocational Rehabilitation and Education  
Polly LaTray, U.S. Department of Labor  
Mr. Byron Erickson, Local Veteran Employment Representative  
Mr. Grant Ellison, Disabled Veterans Outreach Program Specialist  
Russell McKinney, Great Falls
9:45 a.m. **Health Care, Mental Health Care, and Chemical Dependency**

*Panelists:*
Lynn Nilan, VA Fort Harrison, Registered Nurse and Quality Manager
Cindy Heaton, VA Fort Harrison, Registered Nurse and Manager of Network Authorization
Greg Burham, Missoula Vet Center
Tony Rizzo, Great Falls Counselor, Vet Center Contract
Ann Hamerla, County Cooperative Health Center, Lewis & Clark County
Pete Formaz, C.C.D.C., Veteran
John Denherder, WWII and Korean Veteran
Mike Hampson, Vietnam Veteran
Bonnie Adee, state mental health ombudsman

11:00 a.m. **Homelessness**

*Panelists:*
Gary Weglarz, VA Homeless Coordinator
Jim Nolan, DPHHS, Intergovernmental Human Services Bureau
Lyle Conkol, Housing and Urban Development
Shannon Sprenkle, Coordinator, Statewide Stand Down in Billings
Michael O’Neil, 1999 Standdown Health Care Clinic Coordinator, Member Veterans’ Resource Coalition
Pete Formaz, C.C.D.C., Veteran

*Staff will also provide info. from Bob Piaro, Veterans Assistance Foundation Incorporated and Chris Oliver, VA Homeless Coordinator state of Washington*

11:45 a.m. **Veteran Service Organizations**

*Panelists:*
Ed Sperry and other rep (TBD), American Legion
Mike Hampson, Vietnam Veterans of America
Disabled American Veterans (TBD)
Dan Antoniette, Veterans of Foreign Wars

12:15 a.m. **LUNCH BREAK**

1:00 a.m. **Local Government and Community Issues**

*Panelists:*
Karolyn Loendorf, Lewis & Clark County Commissioner
Rod Brown, Lewis & Clark County Public Assistance Office
2:15 p.m. **Safety nets and cost shifting**

What happens when a veteran falls into a service gap, encounters problems obtaining the benefits and services for which the veteran is eligible, or is shuffled between agencies? Are there safety nets? Are they sufficient? Are costs being shifted?

*Panelists:*
- Pat Crowely, MVAD VSO
- Mike Secrease, VVA VSO
- Ray Reed, American Legion
- Michael O'Neil, Aware, Inc.
- Tony Rizzo, L.C.P.C., Contract Provider
- Keith Heavyrunner, Blackfeet Tribal Veteran Representative
- Dewey Hahlbolm, Vietnam Veteran
- Pete Formaz, C.C.D.C., Veteran
- John Peterson, VA Fort Harrison, Veterans’ Service Center Manager
- Cindy Heaton, VA Fort Harrison, Registered Nurse and Manager of Network Authorization

3:00 p.m. **BREAK**

3:15 p.m. **Structure and funding of state veteran services**

Based on the previous discussions, are changes needed in the structure and funding of state and local services? If so, what changes?

*Panelists:*
- John Buck, Chairman, Board of Veterans’ Affairs
- Jim Jacobsen, Executive Director, MVAD
- Major General Prendergast, The Adjutant General, Department of Military Affairs
- Robin Homan, Senior and Long-term Care Ombudsman
- Bruce Meyers, Coordinator of Indian Affairs
- Karolyn Loendorf, Lewis and Clark County Commissioner
- Hank Hudson, Administrator, Human and Community Services Division, DPHHS
- Rod Brown, Director, Lewis and Clark County Public Assistance Office

4:00 p.m. **Public Comment on Veterans Issues**

4:30 p.m. **Executive Session on Issues and Options Paper #1: Selecting Options for Further Consideration**

(See outline at Attachment A)

Instructions to staff
Review of agenda for next meeting
Adjournment
ISSUE #1: Outreach and communication: Is there a significant problem with coordinated outreach to veterans? If so, what are the roots of this problem? Is there a state role in improving coordinated outreach to veterans? If so, what approaches should be further explored by the Subcommittee as possible recommendations?

OPTIONS:

A. Encourage local level and veteran service organization efforts, but take no defined state legislative action

B. Establish a statewide outreach and coordination committee or advisory council to develop a strategic plan

C. Designate the Board of Veterans Affairs as the lead agency in statute to work with various people and programs to develop and coordinate outreach and communication programs

D. Establish a Department of Veterans Affairs, make the Director a cabinet-level official directly accountable to the Governor and on equal footing with other state departments. Delineate in statute its roles and responsibilities.

E. Make the Department of Military Affairs the lead agency for Veterans’ Affairs.

F. Others?
ISSUE #2: **Interagency coordination, collaboration, cooperation:** Is there a significant problem with interagency coordination, collaboration, and cooperation? If so, what causes the problem? Is there a state role in addressing the problem? If so, what approaches should be further explored?

A. Encourage coordination and cooperation among agencies, but without specific state legislation

B. Establish an inter-agency coordinating council or advisory council or create a state veterans service coordinator position (similar to the coordinator on Indian Affairs or a coordinator for specific activities such as a state homeless veteran stand down coordinator)

C. Direct the Board of Veterans Affairs to establish collaborative interagency agreements

D. Establish a Department of Veterans Affairs, make the Director a cabinet-level official directly accountable to the Governor and on equal footing with other state departments. Delineate in statute its roles and responsibilities.

E. Make the Department of Military Affairs the lead agency for Veterans’ Affairs.

F. Others?
ISSUE #3:  **Problem solving:** Is there a problem with "passing the buck" or with agencies not having clearly defined responsibilities so that when a veteran encounters problems with "the system" they fall through the cracks? If so, what causes the problem? Is there a state role in addressing the problem? If so, what approaches should be further explored?

A. Encourage coordination and cooperation among agencies, but without specific state legislation

B. Establish a veterans' ombudsman-type position.

C. Direct the Board of Veterans Affairs to create a "case management" program within the MVAD that will augment the benefit claims process, but which will be responsible for helping veterans identify current programs and to navigate through them, similar to a resource and referral program.

D. Establish a Department of Veterans Affairs, make the Director a cabinet-level official directly accountable to the Governor and on equal footing with other state departments. Delineate in statute its roles and responsibilities.

E. Make the Department of Military Affairs the lead agency for Veterans' Affairs.

F. Others?