



Commission on Veterans Affairs



MEETING AGENDA

Tuesday, January 17, 2023

6 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.

Wayne Miller, Chair – Bob Koffman, Vice-Chair

**Join the meeting
via Zoom**

If you want to call into the meeting, call 301-715-8592, use Meeting ID followed by #.

If an attendee would like to speak during the meeting, you can raise their hand if on video and Chair will recognize you or you can use the “hand raise” function under the reactions tab at bottom of page. If connecting via a smart phone, tablet or computer, please click on the middle of the page and the functions will be at the bottom of the page. Use the Zoom app to be able to access all functions, including raising your hand. If you are calling by phone, press *9 to raise your hand. Those calling into the meeting can press *6 to mute or unmute their phone.

**6:00 Welcome, Pledge of Allegiance, Moment of Silence & POW/MIA Remembrance,
Approval of November 2022 Meeting Minutes – Wayne Miller, Chair**

**6:06 Montgomery County Department of Corrections: Overview of Veteran Services –
Kendra Jochum, LCSW-C, Deputy Warden, Inmate Services, Detention Services
Division, and Shaunda Legg, Re-entry Services Unit Manager, DOCR**

**6:10 Veterans Hiring Preference in the Montgomery County Office of Human Resources
Krista Paula Simkins, Chief Talent Acquisition Officer (CTAO), Montgomery County
Government Office of Human Resources**

7:00 Updates from Commissioners

7:20 Commission Planning for Next Meeting – Wayne Miller

7:30 Adjourn

Check on Veterans Activities - www.montgomerycountymd.gov/veteransday

ADA Reasonable Accommodation: If you need a sign language interpreter or any other reasonable accommodation to participate in this meeting, please contact betsy.luecking@montgomerycountymd.gov or 240-418-4865.

****See duties on next page**

Duties of the Commission on Veterans Affairs

The Commission duties include:

1. research, assemble, analyze and disseminate information and educational materials relating to activities and programs that will assist in meeting the needs of veterans and their families;
2. institute and conduct educational and other programs, meetings, and conferences to promote the rights and opportunities for veterans;
3. advise the Executive and the Council on the status of programs and services in the State and County related to the needs of veterans and their families; and
4. assist in planning appropriate public acknowledgement of the contributions made by veterans and assist in planning commemoration activities recognizing the contributions made by veterans.



**Montgomery County Commission on Veterans Affairs
Meeting Summary Minutes
January 17, 2023**

****MEETING WAS HELD VIRTUALLY VIA ZOOM****

Call to Order

Wayne Miller, Chair, welcomed everyone to the meeting of the Commission on Veterans Affairs (CVA). Wayne asked for all present to say the Pledge of Allegiance. He recognized prisoners of war and asked for a moment of silence for all of those who have given their lives and those who have been wounded for our country in the different conflicts in which our country has been engaged.

Approval of Minutes

A motion was made to approve the November 2022 Meeting Summary Minutes. The motion was seconded. A vote was taken and the November 2022 Meeting Summary Minutes were unanimously approved. Approved minutes are available online at www.montgomerycountymd.gov/cva.

Introduction of Destiny Nettles, Program Manager, ServingTogether

Destiny is the new Program Manager for the Western Maryland region of ServingTogether as of November 2022. She is an Army veteran. She can be contacted directly at 240-869-6551 or dnettles@every-mind.org.

Montgomery County Department of Correction and Rehabilitation (DOCR): Overview of Veteran Services – Kendra Jochum, LCSW-C, Deputy Warden, Inmate Services, Detention Services Division, and Shaunda Legg, Re-Entry Services Unit Manager, DOCR

Kendra has worked with DOCR for 22 years. She began her career working at the Pre-Release Center at Community Corrections and then transitioned to detention services in 2013. She served as a re-entry services manager until two years ago when she transitioned to the Deputy Warden position within Inmate Services. Gail Starkey was the previous Deputy Warden for Inmate Services.

Shaunda has worked with DOCR for 17 years. She also worked at the Pre-Release Center at Community Corrections and the Pre-Trial Services Unit prior to transitioning into the Detention Services Division (DSD). She recently transitioned into the Re-Entry Services Unit Manager position and is re-establishing some relationships she had previously from Community Corrections.

Kendra led an informal discussion on the overall role of Re-Entry Services and Inmate Services and how it relates to the veteran population that is in custody.

DSD has had an extended and established relationship working with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and other local stakeholders including ServingTogether over the years. Specifically, within the VA, there are designated staffmembers that DOCR connects with and who also reach out to DOCR regarding anyone in custody who is a veteran or is an active servicemember. Cara Carrington, VA Local Justice Outreach Specialist, primarily connects with individuals in custody who are pre-trial and are being held in custody pending their court proceeding. Other individuals in DOCR custody have been sentenced, meaning they have already been found guilty and are provided a term of confinement. Some individuals may be sentenced on one case and are in pre-trial in another case. Historically, the re-entry services approach has been focused on sentenced individuals who are within six to 12 months of release. Previous Deputy Warden and DOCR Rob Green focused on re-entry for all but due to the limited staff available re-entry services are prioritized based on which individuals can be worked with more in-depth. The veterans population is a prioritized specialized group and DORC is working with them regardless of their sentencing status to provide whatever supports or connections they need based on their individual circumstances.

During the intake process for all individuals coming into custody, everyone is asked about their prior military service and their veteran status. Years ago, the Commission on Veterans Affairs had met with then Director Art Wallenstein and asked that Corrections ask them if they had served in the military. Some individuals choose to self-identify while others do not want to disclose their veteran status for various reasons. As of 2015, DOCR re-established its data exchange process with the VA. Custody data is reviewed by the VA and compared to their records of who has prior military service. The VA then will provide DOCR with a monthly update of who is in custody that is also in VA's records. Generally, 15 or less veterans have been identified by this process at any given time. Very rarely have close to 20 individuals been identified. The veteran population within DOCR is a smaller population. If they are being held in confinement it is not for an extended period of time. Kendra does not at this time have specific information regarding terms of sentencing outcomes or overall length of stay in custody.

For those individuals who are in custody, based on intake questions and re-entry assessment, the Re-Entry Services Unit asks individuals what their needs are and what they can benefit from during their period of incarceration as well as what their needs are in terms of preparation for return and release. Some individuals are returned to another jurisdiction but Re-Entry Services will be working with that individual regardless of their status.

Within re-entry services, an initial assessment is conducted after the first case assessment. During this process, staff are reviewing potential risks for recidivism, the individual's needs during incarceration and their needs leading up to their return and release back into the community. Re-entry looks different for every single person. It is the responsibility of staff to shape an individual's re-entry service plan that has their interests in engagement as well as includes realistic supports and referrals. DOCR is working with Public Health to be able to expand some of their facility operations and build back the wide spectrum of program groups that were occurring prior to the pandemic. Kendra noted the expansion provides an opportunity to provide services in a more informed and tailored way that is also flexible which is necessary with a high turnover population. She also noted that it is a challenge for long-term program engagement due to the fairly frequent population turnover in custody. One item that DOCR was speaking about with Destiny Nettles, Program Manager, ServingTogether, was the possibility of Peer Navigators to provide greater engagement with and additional support for individuals in custody as referrals are provided to better address those specific needs and interests in preparation for individuals to be released into the community.

The Montgomery County Detention Center (MCDC) is the intake and discharge facility located in Rockville. The Montgomery County Corrections Facility (MCCF) is located in Boyds. The majority of DOCR's population is housed at MCCF with a smaller short-term population located at MCDC. Populations do include both men and women. Historically, the total population of women is 10% or between 30 or 40 women in either facility at one time.

The floor was opened to questions.

Mike Subin, Commissioner, asked if there have been any discussions relating to developing a veterans court. Kendra reported that DOCR has not been involved in any formal conversations. It is not known how many pre-trial veterans would be required to support a veterans court. Mike also discussed the issue of homelessness and incarcerated veterans. Betsy reported that the County Council had added \$650,000 in funding every year to serve homeless veterans who are dishonorably discharged. This funding is used to provide housing and services for approximately 15 to 20 homeless veterans who had been living on the streets for many years. Betsy suggested discussing some of these more difficult veteran issues with new Governor Wes Moore, who is also a veteran. It was suggested that this Commission dedicate 10 to 15 minutes every meeting to continue addressing the issues of homeless and incarcerated veterans.

Bill Gray, former Chair, asked how DOCR handles cases where an individual is identified as a veteran after the intake assessment. Kendra stated that DOCR certainly yields to an individual's preferences at any given time and this includes re-entry services. Individuals are not forced into services. Re-Entry Services Unit's role is to ensure individuals are educated on their options to include different resources available to them. If an individual does not self-identify as a veteran during the intake process but are later identified as a

veteran, staff will ask in an open-ended way that DOCR was informed on the individual's veteran status and explain that additional resources are available to veterans. For veterans who may not qualify for services under the VA due to service time or discharge status, ServingTogether is available to help connect those veterans with other resources. In the past, ServingTogether Peer Navigators have come into the facility to meet with individuals or individuals have been referred to ServingTogether post-release as part of the broader support system. Wayne said that some individuals may not identify as a veteran because they may lose their financial benefits, but he noted that partial financial benefits can be given to family members.

Jameelah Johnson, Commissioner, asked if there is data that shows the types of crimes being committed by veterans. Kendra said common factors do include substance abuse and mental health but also run the full range of charges including violent offenses as well as sex offense charges.

Jameelah also asked if there are programs within DOCR for families and children who have incarcerated spouses or parents. Kendra reported there were several programs available. The pre-release program is able to maintain connections between the incarcerated individual and their family and the community. Unfortunately, due to the pandemic that program had to be closed but will likely reopen in the next four to six months. Community Corrections will soon be reopening a branch of the pre-trial division ... Kendra noted that one of the biggest changes to re-entry services is not having direct access with families. DOCR previously had and will be reinstituting parent programs that focus on how to parent from inside the facilities, how to support the parent or caregiver within the community during the period of incarceration, and how to support the child or children. These parent programs were developed using grant funding with the Collaboration Council. Another program called Healthy Bonds focused on providing clinical support to both the child and the parent in the community while also providing intervention supports to the parent in the facility with the intention for reunification, even if that individual was not under the same household once they were released back into the community. Healthy Bonds is available to both men and women. Another parent program available was Inside Out Dad which was a program available to fathers who are inside the facility. There are currently no parenting programs specific to veterans or servicemembers but connections and referrals can be made on an individual basis both within the facility or as the individual is transitioning out.

Dr. Bob Koffman, Vice-Chair, asked about veteran recidivism and if the prevalence of post-traumatic stress (PTS) amongst veterans contributes to incarceration. He also asked what kind of mental health services are available for incarcerated veterans. Kendra stated that recidivism can be defined in different ways including return to custody including returning to local custody based on local charges or arrested and charged in another jurisdiction, return of conviction, and length of time through the first year, three years or five years. DOCR does not have current recidivism data nor would it specify the veterans population directly. Prior to the pandemic, DOCR was reviewing the number of individuals returned back into custody, which is a very broad definition of recidivism. In terms of mental health services, DOCR is not a mental health provider. DOCR does not offer counseling supports or provide ongoing mental health therapy. The mental health therapist on staff focuses on safety, triage and assessment and stabilization of the most acute individuals that are in custody. DOCR does have a mental health housing pod that has a maximum bed space of 36. DOCR needs more staff in order to offer broader mental health preventions, support and ongoing interventions. The state's hospital system is not built to house many offenders that need their services for acute presenting needs. DOCR has over 40 individuals in custody currently waiting for a bed space at a state mental health hospital. DOCR does not specifically have data available on the veterans population regarding mental health concerns, but many individuals in the re-entry services have a trauma-informed need in terms of how staff approach them. Kendra acknowledged that post-traumatic stress is still something very specific to the veterans population. In past years, DOCR has explored the possibility of providing a veteran support group within the facility. When veterans in custody were surveyed, there were not enough individuals interested in participating in such a group. Bob noted that the lack of interest could stem due to depression which needs to be treated. Kendra reported that a previous managing social worker was assigned to all veteran cases and that is a model DOCR plans to continue so that one re-entry staff member can form a consolidated approach and bring people together as common issues are presented. If in the future veterans are interested in forming a group, staff are absolutely able to do that.

Stan Siedel, Maryland Veterans Commission, reported he is currently working with hospitals to have them update their intake process to ask an individual if they ever served in the U.S. armed forces rather than a veteran as some veterans who served in the military but did not serve in the combat zone do not consider themselves to be veterans. This same issue occurs for veterans who receive less than an honorable discharge. In reality, those veterans are still eligible for a multitude of benefits.

Bob Norton, Maryland Military Coalition, reported he met with Delegate Charlotte Crutchfield last summer about veteran treatment courts. Delegate Crutchfield is the surviving spouse of a veteran and is a member of the Maryland General Assembly Judiciary Committee. Bob reported he will share with Delegate Crutchfield the data reported this evening that DOCR averages 15 veterans in custody at any given time. They briefly discussed the need to establish separate courts versus establishing case dockets. Mike suggested connecting with Senator Will Smith who is Chair of the Judicial Proceedings Committee and is a combat veteran. Bob asked if DOCR has any connections to the VA's Community-Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC) in Gaithersburg or with the DC VA Medical Center in terms of VA medical providers making assessments or providing physicals. Kendra stated that DOCR does not have any direct connections with those entities in terms of assessments or direct services. DOCR's approach is connect veterans with a VA representative who then connects the veteran with additional services. If an assessment needed to be completed, the VA would be welcome at DOCR facilities. Medical exams would have to be assessed in terms of specific need. Individuals do not leave DOCR custody for outside exams or evaluations, but accommodations could be made for an onsite evaluation or medical information could be shared with the VA if the individual gives permission.

Dr. Cynthia Macri, Commissioner, reported she also serves on the Maryland Veterans Commission as well as that Commission's subcommittee for incarcerated veterans. She noted that the healthcare provided within the state prisons does not offer mental health services. She asked if there would be opportunities to provide evidence-based programs for the pre-release population at DOCR. Dr. Macri and Jameelah have both participated in a chronic pain self-management class. The principles taught could be applicable in a pre-release setting and Dr. Macri offered to provide evidence-based programs not just to veterans but to the general population as well. Kendra appreciated the offer and would like to explore that opportunity further. She noted that the number of participating individuals does come down to who is in custody and for how long.

Scott Schlesinger, Commissioner, asked if individuals in custody are local. Kendra reported that due to Montgomery County being located in the Metropolitan area, DOCR does receive individuals from all over. One-third of individuals in custody are directly from Montgomery County with the rest of the individuals being from local jurisdictions such as Prince George's, Frederick, and Baltimore Counties, Baltimore City, and Washington, DC. Some individuals are from out of state and DOCR has had folks released back to the west coast but the majority of individuals in custody are from Montgomery County or Maryland. Kendra noted that one of the challenges when preparing for an individual's release and return to the community is identifying a sentenced probationary term. If that individual is not local, DOCR coordinates a connection between local probation and the probation in the state that individual would be returning to prior to release so ensure there are no violation of any requirements post release. Parole release typically is reviewed in advance and includes a combination of accessing Montgomery County services and confirming housing within Montgomery County. Resources for veterans access through the VA and ServingTogether are not necessarily county specific.

Wayne reported the Silver Spring Vet Center offers mental health counseling too combat veterans and makes benefit and medical referrals to all veterans regardless of discharge status. Vet Centers are available throughout the country and in Puerto Rico and Guam - www.vetcenter.va.gov. Local Vet Center programs include Montgomery County, Prince George's County, Washington, D.C., Alexandria, Annapolis, Baltimore and Martinsburg, West Virginia. Wayne Stinchcomb, Silver Spring Vet Center, would be available to provide outreach within DOCR facilities to talk about the Vet Center program. Kendra reported she will ensure re-entry staff are aware of the Silver Spring Vet Center. DOCR is open to have outreach provided within the facility and support a direct connection.

Betsy will send Kendra and Shaunda's contact information to Commissioners.

American Minority Veterans Research Project – Commissioner Dr. Elwood Gray, Executive Director

Website: <https://americanmvrp.com>

American Minority Veterans Research Project's (AMVRP) student interns and volunteers and Advisory Board are dedicated to providing the highest quality of service, support and research data for all veterans, especially minority veterans. We will provide referral service to the National Archives, the Library of Congress and the Military Personnel Records in Missouri along with other state and federal agencies for veterans, surviving spouses and their dependents to ensure quicker access to personnel records unfolding the awards, decorations, citations and/or ribbon to include the presumptive benefits to which they are entitled. We are not part of the Department of Veteran Affairs nor any of our fine Service Organizations; we help veterans to navigate the DVA system to obtain essential and inherit privileges. AMVRP student interns and volunteers seek to work closely with various veteran organizations, the VA as well as the Montgomery County Office of Human Rights to seek additional community wide support.

Dr. Gray shared a list of AMVRP activities from January 2022 through December 2022:

<https://montgomerycountymd.gov/HHS-Program/Resources/Files/A%26D%20Docs/CVA/Minutes/AMVRPAfterActionReport.pdf>

Chair and Vice Chair Report

Next meeting is February 21 from 6pm to 7:30pm. It was suggested that the Commission invite Montgomery County State's Attorney John McCarthy to discuss a veteran's docket.

Updates / Announcements

Carly Clem, Staff, reported she is currently working on a press release for Black History Month with Neil Greenberger, Public Information Office. During the month of February, the Commission will be recognizing and honoring Black veterans and servicemembers from Montgomery County. In addition to a website with virtual tributes, Carly will be updating the display cases at the Silver Spring Civic Building with profiles.

Website: www.montgomerycountymd.gov/HHS-Program/ADS/VETERANS/BlackHistoryMonth.html.

Adjournment: 7:30pm

Respectfully submitted: Carly Clem, Administrative Specialist I; Betsy Luecking, Community Outreach Manager

Attendance

Commissioners Present: Josephine Bahn; Elwood Gray; Jameelah Johnson; Robert Koffman, Vice-Chair; Cynthia Macri; Wayne Miller, Chair; Scott Schlesinger; Joanna Starling; Michael Subin; Michael Wilson

Commissioners Absent: Reggie Mitchell; Anneke Vandenbroek; Susan Webman

Non-Voting Congressional Representatives Present: Joseph Eyong (Congressman Jamie Raskin); Austin Morris (Senator Chris Van Hollen); Ken Reichard (Senator Ben Cardin)

Non-Voting Congressional Representatives Absent: Vikki Garcia (Congressman John Sarbanes)

County Staff Present: Kendra Jochum, Department of Correction and Rehabilitation (DOCR); Shauna Legg, DOCR

Commission Staff Present: Betsy Luecking, Staff Liaison; Carly Clem, Program Specialist II

Public Present: Bill Gray; Destiny Nettles, ServingTogether; Stan Siedel, Maryland Veterans Commission