

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS  
ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON THE READJUSTMENT OF VETERANS

November 02-04, 2022  
811 Vermont Avenue, Conference RM 3166  
Washington, D.C.  
(In-Person & Virtual: WebEx Platform)  
8:00AM – 5:00PM (EST)

**MINUTES**

**Wednesday, November 02, 2022:**

**Attendees:**

**Committee Members Present:**

Joseph Anderson  
Viviana Marcotte  
David Duren  
Jessica Dunn  
Michael Embrich  
Terry Schow  
Jara Monetathchi  
Isaac Pike  
Heather Nystrom  
Thomas Hall  
Gregg Orto  
Jessica Dunn

**Department of Veterans Affairs Staff Present:**

Richard Barbato, Designated Federal Officer  
Matthew Newman, Strategy & Analysis Officer, Readjustment Counseling Service  
Tanya Bradsher, VA Chief of Staff  
Michael Fisher, Chief Officer, Readjustment Counseling Service  
Deb Moreno, Operations Officer, Readjustment Counseling Service  
Jessica Schiefer, Communications Officer, Readjustment Counseling Service  
Edward McEvoy, National Outreach Specialist, Readjustment Counseling Service

**Public Attendees:**

Moyo Mitchell, DAV Chapter 3 Senior Vice Commander and Service Officer  
Adrian Atizado  
Sidath Viranga Panangala, Congressional Research Service

## **Opening Remarks:**

At 08:00 a.m., Designated Federal Officer Richard Barbato welcomed the Committee members, initiated with housekeeping items, to include the WebEx platform as some Committee members and members of the public joined virtually. He invited members of the public to introduce themselves for the record.

Members of the public introduced themselves.

Committee Chair Joseph Anderson called the Committee to order, and provided an overview of the meeting, took roll call to establish quorum, introduced ideas for future meetings including the next face-to-face session in February 2022 and two potential site visit locations to be determined.

## **Presentation:**

DFO Barbato led the Committee in a review of the Committee Objectives and Charter. He also provided an overview of the Committee Report process moving forward.

Committee members then introduced themselves and provided some background and biographical information.

## **Presentation:**

Ms. Tanya Bradsher, the VA Chief Of Staff, Provided remarks and information regarding the PACT Act, Survivor Benefits, Transitioning Service-Members, and that VA has provided access to care, benefits, programs and services to over 11 million Veterans. Ms. Bradsher spoke further to the Committee regarding two main questions: 1.) What are you (the Committee) seeing? and 2.) What is the need? The Chief of Staff then engaged in a question-and-answer period with the Committee.

Questions from Committee members included:

Q: David Duren: Challenges being experienced with regard to licensing of clinical staff (mental health), as a potential bottle neck with bringing staff on board?

## **Presentation:**

Michael Fisher, Chief Officer, Readjustment Counseling Service (RCS) provided an overview on RCS to the committee and spoke to service highlights and access to care as well as eligibility expansion. In addition, he discussed the impact of COVID and provided distinctions in service provision to ensure the safety of staff and those we serve and adaptations that have been maintained due to infection control. Mr. Fisher further discussed Mobile Vet Centers, Community Access Points and Outstations. Mr. Fisher reviewed the process of transition from outstation to full Vet Centers and discussed the application of the RCS Projection Model. He further explained its application to inform resource and staff allocations. Mr. Fisher finally spoke to two main focal areas for the committee to consider in shaping their recommendations, which were: 1.) Organizations RCS should consider partnering with to provide visibility of an

access to RCS services. 2.) Professional organizations across the Nation that could be leveraged and serve as potential pipelines for new Vet Center staff.

The Chief Officer then opened up for a Question-and-Answer block, there were no questions from the Committee at that time.

*The committee then adjourned for a fifteen-minute break.*

*The committee re-convened after the fifteen-minute break.*

### **Presentation:**

Jessica Schiefer, Communications Officer, Readjustment Counseling Service, presented to the Committee on current projects the RCS Communications office had been working on, to include the completed branding operation and increased awareness that has resulted. Next, Ms. Schiefer covered the national outreach plan, which included increased partnerships with Veteran Service Organizations, the Department of defense and other state and Federal government agencies. Ms. Schiefer went on to speak to targeted outreach, which included:

- National Guard, USMC
- DAV, VFW, VVA, Fleet Reserve Association, American Legion, etc.
- USO, Bowlers to Veterans Link, Guitars for Vets, YMCA
- National Association of Counties, National Association of State Directors of Veterans Affairs
- Homeland Security

Ms. Schiefer then covered the process for strategic partnerships that the RCS Communications office was following in their efforts moving forward.

Questions from Committee members included:

Q: Viviana Marcotte: To what level has RCS utilized social media to engage with eligible population(s).

### **Presentation:**

Deb Moreno, Operations Officer, Readjustment Counseling Service, presented to the Committee on current projects the Operations office had been working on, to include:

- Staffing Model Project
- Current Approaches to Recruitment
- Current Challenges
- FY 23 Strategic Staffing Plan

Ms. Moreno then went on to review the Staffing Model Project, that RCS has collaborated with Workforce Management and Consulting (WMC) and the Office of Information and Technology (OIT) on a multi-year project to better understand and

assess the counselor staffing needs of Vet Centers. This project was launched in response to findings from a 2020 Government Accountability Office Report on Counselor productivity expectations.

Ms. Moreno then covered Current Approaches to Recruitment, which included participation in National Hiring and Onboarding Surge Events and current associated challenges.

Questions from Committee members included:

Q: Jessica Dunn: To what extent has utilization of the Department of Defense Skill-bridge program been utilized or explored for utilization?

**Presentation:**

Matthew Newman, Strategy and Analysis Officer, Readjustment Counseling Service, presented to the Committee on current projects the Strategy and analysis Office has been working on to include:

- RCS Strategic Planning – VA / VHA / RCS Plan Alignment
- Service Location Analysis – Vet Center Demand Projection Model
- Customer Service Modernization – Vsignals Real-Time Customer Feedback.

Questions from Committee members: There were no questions from the Committee.

*The committee then adjourned for lunch.*

*The committee re-convened after lunch.*

The Committee then conducted discussion of each of the morning's presentations by category, key take-aways were identified, and Committee 23<sup>rd</sup> report recommendations began to emerge and take shape.

*The committee then adjourned for a fifteen-minute break.*

*The committee re-convened after the fifteen-minute break.*

Committee Chair Joseph Anderson re-capped the days presentations and covered what would be heard from the next day.

The Committee adjourned at 5:00 p.m.

**Thursday, November 03, 2022:**

**Attendees:**

**Committee Members Present:**

Joseph Anderson  
Viviana Marcotte  
David Duren  
Jessica Dunn  
Michael Embrich  
Terry Schow  
Isaac Pike  
Heather Nystrom  
Thomas Hall  
Gregg Orto  
Jessica Dunn

**Department of Veterans Affairs Staff Present:**

Richard Barbato, Designated Federal Officer  
Matthew Newman, Strategy & Analysis Officer, Readjustment Counseling Service  
Deb Moreno, Operations Officer, Readjustment Counseling Service  
Jessica Schiefer, Communications Officer, Readjustment Counseling Service  
Edward McEvoy, National Outreach Specialist, Readjustment Counseling Service

**Public Attendees:**

Moyo Mitchell, DAV Chapter 3 Senior Vice Commander and Service Officer  
Adrian Atizado  
Sidath Viranga Panangala, Congressional Research Service

**Opening Remarks:**

At 08:00 a.m., Designated Federal Officer Richard Barbato welcomed the Committee members, initiated with housekeeping items, to include the WebEx platform as some Committee members and members of the public joined virtually. He invited members of the public to introduce themselves for the record.  
Members of the public introduced themselves.

Committee Chair Joseph Anderson called the Committee to order, and provided an overview of the meeting, took roll call to establish quorum.

## **Presentation:**

Matthew Newman, Strategy and Analysis Officer, Readjustment Counseling Service, presented to the Committee on the VSIGNALS customer feedback operation that has been underway. The surveys capture customer feedback across the spectrum of RCS services by measuring customer experience at five separate and specific stages of engagement including:

- (1) Initial Engagement,
- (2) Intake,
- (3) Ongoing Services,
- (4) Separation from Services, and
- (5) Re-engagement Following Separation.

Mr. Newman went on to cover that customer experience is the product of interactions between an organization and a customer over the duration of their relationship. VA measures these interactions through Ease, Effectiveness, and Emotion, all of which impact the overall trust the customer has in the organization. RCS surveys are designed to measure this through the following areas of focus:

- **Confidence/Trust:** The client trusts the Vet Centers to provide services for improving their quality of life. Trust score is the standard measure that VA uses across all VSignals surveys across the Department to assess the overall trust the customer has in the organization. This is an overall indicator of the satisfaction ratings by clients. If an area has lower trust scores it is an indicator that further analysis may be required in that survey group.
- **Satisfaction:** The services received at Vet Centers have met or exceeded the expectations of the client.
- **Efficiency/Speed:** The Vet Center schedules appointments within a reasonable amount of time.
- **Employee Helpfulness:** The Vet Center provided or connected the client to services, resources, or help that was needed to meet goals.
- **Quality:** The Vet Center staff makes clients feel welcome and safe. Individualized services are provided to the client.
- **Ease/Simplicity:** The Vet Center offers remote and/or in-person services to clients that are assessable and appointment times that are convenient to the client.

**Presentation:**

Barbara Wilson, Chief, Transition Assistance Program (TAP) Curriculum and Governance, Office of Outreach, Transition and Economic Development (OTED), presented to the Committee on the VA – DoD TAP program. Overview included TAP interagency governance, curriculum delivery modalities, the Military Life Cycle module and women’s health transition training.

Questions from Committee members included:

No Questions from the Committee were brought forward.

**Presentation:**

Regina Julian, Deputy Assistant Director (DAD) for Health Care Operations, Defense Health Agency (DHA), presented to the Committee on the DHA and the Military Health System, to include Improved Readiness, Better Health and Better Care. Ms. Julian spoke to the organizational structure, the DHA priorities, strategic transformation, and the Military Treatment Facility (MTF) current state.

Questions from Committee members included:

Q: Michael Embrich: What does the relationship currently look like between the Vet Center Program (RCS) and the DHA (Defense Health Agency).

*The committee then adjourned for Lunch.*

*The committee re-convened after Lunch.*

**Presentation:**

22<sup>nd</sup> Committee Report VA Response Review – Richard Barbato, Designated Federal Officer & Joseph Anderson, Committee Chair.

Mr. Barbato reviewed with the committee the VA response to the 22<sup>nd</sup> Report. The committee reviewed each response, discussing the S.M.A.R.T. format utilized, and action items moving forward.

Questions from Committee members included:

Q: Joseph Anderson: How can we improve our recommendation format to impro

## **Presentation:**

23<sup>rd</sup> Report Process and Committee Discussion – Richard Barbato, Designated Federal Officer & Joseph Anderson, Committee Chair.

DFO Mr. Barbato and Committee Chair Mr. Anderson reviewed the process of

Questions from Committee members included:

There were no questions from the Committee, but discussion regarding the four recommendations the Committee will work towards.

*The committee then adjourned for a ten-minute break.*

*The committee re-convened after the ten-minute break.*

Committee chair Joseph Anderson then led the committee in a round-table discussion of the presentations the committee had received so far.

Committee Chair Joseph Anderson then reviewed the plan for the breakout sessions that would be used the next day.

The Committee adjourned at 4:30 p.m.

## **Friday, November 04, 2022:**

### **Attendees:**

#### **Committee Members Present:**

Joseph Anderson  
Viviana Marcotte  
David Duren  
Jessica Dunn  
Michael Embrich  
Terry Schow  
Isaac Pike  
Heather Nystrom  
Thomas Hall  
Gregg Orto  
Jessica Dunn

#### **Department of Veterans Affairs Staff Present:**

Richard Barbato, Designated Federal Officer  
Matthew Newman, Strategy & Analysis Officer, Readjustment Counseling Service



**Public Attendees:**

Moyo Mitchell, DAV Chapter 3 Senior Vice Commander and Service Officer  
Adrian Atizado  
Sidath Viranga Panangala, Congressional Research Service

Committee Chair Joseph Anderson initiated the meeting, took roll call to establish quorum facilitated a brainstorming session to determine the four to five topics the Committee would like to focus on for the next committee report. The table below represents the items for consideration:

**Committee Discussion:**

Committee DFO Richard Barbato and Committee Chair Joseph Anderson then reviewed the meeting concept for the remainder of the day, in crafting the 23<sup>rd</sup> Report. Committee Chair Joseph Anderson Broke the Committee up into working groups, Committee DFO Richard Barbato moved the committee members virtually into their assigned groups for the first block. During this breakout group discussion occurred in preparation of the FY23 Committee report and associated recommendations. Breakout groups focused on the following:

- Group 1 – Partnering and Referral from the Defense Health Agency.
- Group 2 – VA DoD Transition assistance Program
- Group 3 – Recruiting & Retention of Staff within the Readjustment Counseling Service
- Group 4 - How can VA Best partner with Veteran Service Organizations

The committee then adjourned for a ten-minute break.

The committee re-convened after the ten-minute break.

High level / committee wide breakout occurred to discussion preparation of FY23 Committee report and associated recommendations, as well as the next committee meeting to be held in February of 2023.

Breakout sessions ended, and the Committee came together for final discussion

The committee finally discussed potential locations for their next meeting, as well as briefing elements and potential dates in which to meet.

The committee adjourned at 12:00 p.m.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Joseph Anderson, Committee Chair

**16 DEC 22**  
Date