

**VETERANS' ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON REHABILITATION  
(VACOR)**



**ANNUAL REPORT  
2017**

Submitted September 2018

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## Letter from the Advisory Committee Chair



DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS  
Veterans Benefits Administration  
Washington, D.C. 20420

September 31, 2017

David J. Shulkin, M.D.  
Secretary of Veterans Affairs  
810 Vermont Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20420

Dear Secretary Shulkin:

Attached is the Annual Report of the Veterans Advisory Committee on Rehabilitation (VACOR), in compliance with 38 U.S. Code § 3121.

We greatly appreciate your consideration of this report and look forward to learning of any recommendations you may have in response to our report. If you have any questions or would like additional information, please do not hesitate to contact the undersigned.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kathleen West-Evans".

Kathleen West-Evans, Chair  
Veterans Advisory Committee on  
Rehabilitation (VACOR)

## Part I. Executive Summary

The 2017 Annual Report of the Veterans' Advisory Committee on Rehabilitation (VACOR) provides the Committee's observations, recommendations, and rationales that address the effectiveness of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to include an assessment of the rehabilitation needs of Veterans. The report also provides Departmental responses and action plans to address the 2017 VACOR Annual Report recommendations.

VACOR is authorized by § 3121 of Title 38, United States Code, to advise the Secretary on the rehabilitation needs of Veterans with disabilities and on the administration of the VA rehabilitation programs. The goals of the Committee were fully met. The Committee met twice during 2017 in Washington, DC.

During these meetings, the Committee reviewed current VA rehabilitation programs and practices, and received input from customers, partners, and key stakeholders on new policies or changes to existing VA policy. The first meeting was held in December 2016; this meeting was in alignment with Priority 1 of MyVA Breakthrough Priorities and Outcome Statements and focused on the committee's continued assessment on improving the Veterans experience and rehabilitation needs. The second meeting was held in April 2017; this meeting was in alignment with the Top 5 Priorities for VA and focused on improving efficiency and timeliness, and providing greater choices to Veterans.

In addition, during Fiscal Year (FY) 2017, VACOR's charter was renewed and signed by VA Secretary Dr. David Shulkin on September 25, 2017. VACOR recommended six new nominees for Special Government Employees to replace two members who resigned and four others whose terms had expired. The reconstructed membership package was approved and signed by the Secretary on November 3, 2017.

In conclusion, the Committee strongly believes that if implemented, the two 2017 recommendations listed below will significantly enhance VA's ability to effectively delivery comprehensive rehabilitation services to Veterans with service connected disabilities. These recommendations and rationales address the following issues:

- Update all legislative language referencing Veterans with disabilities to reflect changes in other related laws, including the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended.
- Provide cross training between the sub-agencies within the VA.

## **Part II. Summary of 2017 Recommendations**

### **Summary of 2017 Recommendations**

**Recommendation #1:** Update all legislative language referencing Veterans with disabilities to reflect changes in other related laws, including the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended.

**Recommendation #2:** Provide cross training between the sub agencies within the VA. VACOR recognizes that there is a lack of understanding between sub-agencies and/or units who may all be serving the same Veteran and/or providing similar services.

### Part III. VACOR Recommendations, Rationales, and VA Responses

**Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)  
Responses to the  
September 31, 2017, Recommendations  
Submitted by the  
Veterans' Advisory Committee on Rehabilitation (VACOR)**

#### **Recommendation 1:**

Update all legislative language referencing Veterans with disabilities to reflect the changes in other related laws, including the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended. To accomplish this update, remove the word "handicap" and replace it with the language consistent with ADA in all legislation and regulations addressing the needs of and VA services to Veterans with disabilities.

**Rationale:** The language now used in all other legislation related to individuals with disabilities uses the term disability and not handicap. It also uses person first language, "people with." This change in the language was driven by feedback from the community and is now incorporated into the ADA, as amended; the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, and other pieces of legislation and regulations that reference this population. The recommendation with the committee follows that thought process, a Veteran with a disability. Focusing on the Veteran and his/her skill sets, individual circumstances, etc. as well as updating the language from handicap to disability.

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/096382899297594>

#### **VA Responses:**

**VBA Response (VRE):** Concur

VR&E concurs with this recommendation since there are negative connotations to the term "handicapped" when referring to a person with a disability. A **handicap** is a barrier or circumstance that makes progress or success difficult, whereas a disability is a medically definable condition. Additionally, this language was driven by feedback from the community of people with disabilities and is now incorporated into the ADA and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended. Therefore, VA should be consistent and utilize the updated terminology within all applicable legislation and regulations.

<b>VA Action Plan</b>						
<b>Recommendation #1:</b>						
<b>Steps to Implement Recommendations</b>	<b>Lead Office</b>	<b>Other Offices</b>	<b>Tasks</b>	<b>Due Date</b>	<b>Current Status</b>	<b>Contact Person (DFO)</b>
Develop legislative proposal (LP) to request a change to	VRE	VBA ORM,		LPs are developed two years in	Pending	Sabrina McNeil, DFO <a href="mailto:Sabrina.McNeil@va.gov">Sabrina.McNeil@va.gov</a> 202-461-9618

the language in statute, title 38 of the United States Code (U.S.C.) Chapters 18, 31, 35, and 36.		OGC, OMB		advance. The LPs for fiscal year (FY) 2020 are complete. The next LP cycle will be for FY 2021. Development of LPs for FY 2021 will begin in January or March 2019.	
Amend current regulations in the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Title 38, Part 21		VBA, ORM, OGC, OMB		Once the law is changed, regulations can be amended. This process generally takes two years from start to completion.	A key leader will be identified once the law is changed.
Amend VR&E agency guidance.		VBA, OGC		Once the law is changed, amendments to agency guidance could begin.	A key leader will be identified once the law is changed.

**Recommendation 2:**

Provide cross training between the sub-agencies within VA.

**Rationale:**

VACOR recognized through information that was presented from Veterans Health Administration (VHA) that there is a lack of understanding between sub-agencies and/or units who may all be serving the same Veteran and/or providing similar services. The committee believes that Veterans will be better served if the staff has a clear understanding of the full range of programs and supports offered across the Veterans Health Administration. This cross training will enable VR&E staff to become more knowledgeable and allow Veterans to receive more cohesive services. Implementation of this recommendation would be an ongoing strategy.

**VA Responses:**

**VBA Response:** Concur

Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) Service concurs with this recommendation. In an effort to address this gap, VR&E collaborated with Veteran Health Administration (VHA) to provide cross training to all VR&E Counselors and VHA Mental Health providers with training to ensure employment needs are addressed in mental health treatment when necessary. On April 3, 2017, VHA mental health providers participated in the following training: A Holistic Approach to Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) Services, TMS ID: VA 31301. This training was designed to educate VHA mental health providers on how to assess Veterans with mental illness who are eligible for VR&E Services. On April 3, 2018, VR&E Counselors received training on the Veterans Integration to Academic Leadership (VITAL) Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), TMS ID: VA 35412. The training was designed to address gaps in the identification of signs of PTSD and provide avenues for intervention with Veterans. VR&E and VITAL collaboratively acknowledge that assisting Veterans in accessing proper PTSD treatment strengthens the ability to complete school and pursue meaningful employment.

In addition, VR&E also collaborated with VHA to develop the following TPSS courses:

- VRE Techniques for Mental Health TMS ID: VA 3845358
- VRE Awareness of Mental Health and Other Behavioral Challenges TMS ID: VA 3845356

<b>VA Action Plan</b>						
<b>Recommendation #2:</b>						
<b>Steps to Implement Recommendations</b>	<b>Lead Office</b>	<b>Other Offices</b>	<b>Tasks</b>	<b>Due Date</b>	<b>Current Status</b>	<b>Contact Person (DFO)</b>
Collaborate with VHA to provide PTSD training to all VR&E staff	VRE	VBA, VHA		On-going FY2018	Complete	Sabrina McNeil, DFO <a href="mailto:Sabrina.McNeil@va.gov">Sabrina.McNeil@va.gov</a> (202) 461-9618

**VHA Response: Concur**

<b>VHA Action Plan</b>						
<b>Recommendation #2:</b>						
<b>Steps to Implement Recommendations</b>	<b>Lead Office</b>	<b>Other Offices</b>	<b>Tasks</b>	<b>Due Date</b>	<b>Current Status</b>	<b>Contact Person (DFO)</b>
<p>VR&amp;E Service will collaborate with VHA to provide all VR&amp;E Counselors with refresher training on a yearly basis.</p> <p>This training will also be available to newly hired VR&amp;E Counselors.</p>	VRE	VHA		On-going FY2018	Pending	<p>Dr. Stacy Pollack, National Director, Program Policy Implementation <a href="mailto:Stacey.Pollack@va.gov">Stacey.Pollack@va.gov</a> (202) 461-4174</p>

**Part IV. Agendas – Washington, DC**

**Veterans’ Advisory Committee on Rehabilitation (VACOR)**

**Meeting Agenda**

<b>Date:</b> December 12, 2016 – December 13, 2016	
<b>Location:</b>	Department of Veteran Affairs 1800 G Street NW, 5 <sup>th</sup> FL Room 542 Washington DC 20006 Teleconference: Dial into 1-800-767-1750, Participant Code 45367#
<b>Purpose of Meeting:</b>	To assess the rehabilitation needs of Veterans and review how effectively Veterans’ needs are met by programs in the VA.
<b>Participants:</b>	Irmo Marini, Ph.D.; Zoë Dale; David Peterson, Ph.D.; Jorge Garcia, Ph.D.; Margaret Casteel; Karen Brown; Antonio Pruitt, DPT; Danish Santiago; Alicia M. Brown; Eleanor Flowers-Jones; Scott Trimarchi; John Rio; Lenardo Pandac, Ph.D.; Jan Trunce; William Metheny; Leslie Caplan; Jerry Elliott
<b>Committee Chair:</b>	Kathy West-Evans
<b>Designated Federal Officer (DFO):</b>	Anthony Estelle
<b>Assistant DFOs:</b>	Sabrina Barry and Avery Lewis

**Monday, December 12, 2016**  
**9:00 am – 5:00pm Eastern Time Zone**

<b>9:00am – 10:00am</b>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Welcome</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introductions</li> <li>• Review agenda</li> <li>• Review Minutes from September’s meeting</li> <li>• Discuss September’s Action Items/Follow-up questions</li> </ul>	DFO/Asst DFO’s/Committee Chair
<b>10:00am – 10:30am</b>	<b>Veteran’s Choice Program (VCP)</b>	<b>Dr. Kameron Matthews</b> Deputy Executive Director, Provider Relations and Services Health for Community Care/VHA
<b>10:30am – 11:00am</b>	<b>Q&amp;A Committee Discussion</b>	Committee Members

11:00am – 12:00pm	<b>Panel Discussion:</b> Questions/Answers pertaining to VR&E Service.	<b>Representatives From All Functional Areas of VR&amp;E Service</b>
12:00pm – 1:00pm	<b>Lunch</b>	
1:00pm – 1:45pm	<b>Longitudinal Study:</b> Reviewing the results and understanding the feedback	<b>Nelson Foster</b> Supervisor for Strategic Analysis VACO
1:45pm – 2:00pm	<b>Q&amp;A</b> <b>Committee Discussion</b>	Committee Members
2:00pm – 2:30pm	<b>Comments from the Public</b>	Asst DFO/Committee Chair
2:30pm – 2:45pm	<b>Break</b>	
2:45pm – 3:30pm	<b>Updates from the Director, VR&amp;E</b>	<b>Jack Kammerer</b> Director, VR&E Service
3:30pm – 4:30pm	<b>Working Session</b>	Committee Members
4:30pm – 5:00pm	<b>Wrap-Up/Adjourn</b>	DFO/Committee Chair

**Tuesday, December 13, 2016**  
**9:00 am – 5:00pm Eastern Time Zone**

9:00am – 9:15am	<b>Welcome/Overview</b>	DFO/Committee Chair
9:15am – 10:15am	<b>MyVA Transformation Overview</b>	<b>Scott Blackburn</b> Interim Executive Director, Office of Information and Technology
10:15am – 10:45am	<b>Q&amp;A</b> <b>Committee Discussion</b>	Committee
10:45am – 11:00am	<b>Break</b>	
11:00am – 1:00pm	<b>Working Session/Planning for next VACOR meeting</b>	Committee Members
1:00pm – 2:00pm	<b>Lunch</b>	
2:00pm – 2:15pm	<b>Review/Recap</b>	Committee Members
2:15pm – 2:45pm	<b>Comments from the Public</b>	Asst DFO/Committee Chair

<b>2:45pm – 3:00pm</b>	<b>Break</b>	
<b>3:00pm – 4:00pm</b>	<b>PTSD/Mental Health</b>	<b>Stacey Pollack</b> National Director, Program Policy Implementation, VHA
<b>4:00pm – 5:00pm</b>	<b>Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)</b>	<b>Joel Scholten</b> National Director, Program Policy Implementation, VHA
<b>5:00pm – 5:15pm</b>	<b>Final Comments Wrap-Up/Adjourn</b>	DFO/Committee Chair

## Veterans' Advisory Committee on Rehabilitation (VACOR)

### Meeting Agenda

<b>Date:</b> April 6, 2017 – April 7, 2017	
<b>Location:</b>	Department of Veteran Affairs 1800 G Street NW, 5 <sup>th</sup> FL Room 501K Washington DC 20006 Teleconference: Dial into 800-767-1750, Participant Code #45367
<b>Purpose of Meeting:</b>	To assess the rehabilitation needs of Veterans and review how effectively Veterans' needs are met by programs in the VA.
<b>Participants:</b>	Irmo Marini, Ph.D.; Zoë Dale; David Peterson, Ph.D.; Jorge Garcia, Ph.D.; Margaret Casteel; Karen Brown; Antonio Pruitt, DPT; Danish Santiago; Alicia M. Brown; Eleanor Flowers-Jones; Scott Trimarchi; John Rio; Lenardo Pandac, Ph.D.; Jan Trunce; William Metheny; Leslie Caplan; Jerry Elliott
<b>Committee Chair:</b>	Kathy West-Evans
<b>Designated Federal Officer (DFO):</b>	Sabrina Barry
<b>Assistant DFO:</b>	Avery Lewis
<b>DFO Support:</b>	Anthony Estelle

**Thursday, April 6, 2017**  
**8:00 am – 4:00pm Eastern Time Zone**

<b>8:30am – 9:00am</b>	<b>Welcome</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introductions</li> <li>• Review agenda</li> <li>• Review Minutes from December's meeting</li> </ul>	DFO/Asst DFO/Committee Chair
<b>9:00am – 10:00am</b>	<b>Updates from the Director VR&amp;E Service</b>	<b>Jack Kammerer Director, VR&amp;E Service</b>
<b>10:00am – 10:30am</b>	<b>Q&amp;A Committee Discussion</b>	Committee Members
<b>10:30am – 10:45am</b>	<b>Comments from the Public</b>	Asst DFO/Committee Chair
<b>10:45pm – 11:00am</b>	<b>Break</b>	
<b>11:00am – 11:45am</b>		<b>Dan Bradford</b>

	<b>Intensive Community Mental Health Recovery</b>	National Director of Intensive Case Management Service Durham VA Medical Center
11:45am – 12:00pm	<b>Q&amp;A Committee Discussion</b>	Committee Members
12:00pm – 1:00pm	<b>Lunch</b>	
1:00pm – 2:00pm	<b>Comprehensive Work Therapy (CWT)</b>	<b>Coniece Washington</b> CWT Program Manager Washington DC VA Medical Center
2:00pm – 2:15pm	<b>Q&amp;A Committee Discussion</b>	Committee Members
2:15pm – 3:45pm	<b>Working Session</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss December's Action Items/Follow-up questions</li> <li>• Team Selection/Assignments</li> </ul>	DFO/Committee Members
3:45pm – 4:00pm	<b>Wrap-Up/Adjourn</b>	DFO/Committee Chair

**Friday, April 7, 2017**  
**8:00 am – 4:00pm Eastern Time Zone**

8:30am – 8:45am	<b>Welcome/Overview</b>	DFO/Committee Chair
8:45am – 9:15am	<b>Team Breakout Discussion</b>	Committee Chair
9:15am – 10:15am	<b>Transition &amp; Care Management</b>	<b>Elsie Moore, LICSW</b> OEF/OIF/OND Program Manager Washington DC VAMC
10:15am – 10:30am	<b>Q&amp;A Committee Discussion</b>	Committee Members
10:30am – 10:45am	<b>Break</b>	
10:45am – 11:00am	<b>Comments from the public</b>	Asst DFO/Committee Chair
11:00am – 12:00pm	<b>Breakout Team Working Session</b>	Committee Members
12:00pm – 1:00pm	<b>Lunch</b>	
1:00pm – 1:30pm	<b>Breakout Team Working Session</b>	Committee Members
1:30pm – 2:00pm	<b>DFO Advisory Committee on Minority Veterans</b>	<b>Barbara Ward</b> Director, Center for Minority Veterans
2:00pm – 2:15pm	<b>Updates from the Deputy Under Secretary for Economic Opportunity</b>	<b>Mr. Curtis Coy</b> DUSB, Office of Economic Opportunity

<b>2:15pm – 3:30pm</b>	<b>Team Working Session/ Out briefs</b>	<b>Committee Members</b>
<b>3:50pm – 4:00pm</b>	<b>Final Comments Wrap-Up/Adjourn</b>	<b>DFO/Committee Chair</b>

## **Appendix A: Advisory Committee Biographies**

### **Veterans' Advisory Committee on Rehabilitation (VACOR) Committee Members**

#### **Current SGE Members:**

##### **Kathy West-Evans (Chair Lead)** Council of State Administrators

Ms. Kathy West-Evans, is the Director of Business Relations, at the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR), located in the state of Washington. Ms. West-Evans has a master of public administration from Seattle University, a bachelor of science from the University of Washington. She is a certified rehabilitation counselor who is fluent in American Sign Language. Ms. West-Evans has been in the field of rehabilitation since 1978. She started her professional career working as a vocational consultant and manager of the Projects with Industry (PWI) program at the Hearing, Speech, and Deafness Center in Seattle. She moved into the Washington State Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) in 1983 as a vocational rehabilitation counselor for consumers who are deaf, deaf-blind, or hard of hearing. Ms. West-Evans held several positions within DVR during her 14-year tenure with the state agency. In addition to her time as a vocational rehabilitation counselor, she worked as an assistant regional administrator, a regional business relations specialist, and the statewide manager for business relations and marketing.

In 1997, Ms. West-Evans moved to the federal level with the Region X office of Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) where she worked until July 2005. She was employed as an RSA VR program specialist, serving as the state representative to Oregon and Alaska as well as the regional specialist in the areas of employment and business development, the American with Disabilities Act, training, PWI, and services to individuals who are deaf, deaf-blind, or hard of hearing. She served on the planning committee for the RSA – CSAVR National Employment Conferences in 1998, 2000, 2002, and 2004. Ms. West-Evans is co-founder of the ACCESS - conference, job fair, technology, and resource expo for business and people with disabilities held annually in the Seattle area since 1994.

##### **Jan Trunce** National Veterans Training Institute

Jan Trunce is a training manager at the National Learning Center, National Veterans' Training Institute at the University of Colorado. She has developed a start-up program under a \$1 million Innovation and Expansion Grant from the California Department of Rehabilitation. Ms. Trunce holds a master of science degree in vocational rehabilitation from the University of Wisconsin-Stout in Menomonie, Wisconsin.

**Margaret Casteel**

National Organization on Disability

Margaret Casteel currently serves as a career specialist for the National Organization on Disability, Wounded Warriors Career Program. She is passionate about implementing proactive and positive solutions to empower persons with acquired disabilities to sustain independent living, achieve vocational goals, and experience inclusion through awareness, self-advocacy, and assistive technology. For six years, she served as a vocational service representative for the VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System assisting with the Veterans Career Integration and Supported Education efforts. Ms. Casteel has a master's in rehabilitation counseling and rehabilitation technology. She is also a licensed professional counselor and a certified clinical trauma professional.

**Irmo Marini**

University of Texas

Irmo Marini, Ph.D., CRC, CLCP is a professor in the Department of Rehabilitation at the University of Texas-Pan American. Dr. Marini earned two outstanding faculty research awards at Arkansas State, three faculty research awards at Pan-American, two outstanding teaching awards at Pan-American, and one service award. On a national level, Dr. Marini was the recipient of the 2009 Distinguished Career in Rehabilitation Education award by the National Council on Rehabilitation Education, and a year later received the 2010 James F. Garrett Distinguished Career award in rehabilitation research by the American Rehabilitation Counseling Association. He was also voted the National Council on Rehabilitation Education's 2013 recipient of the Rehabilitation Educator of the Year award. To date, he has over 75 peer-reviewed journal publications, 30 book chapters, and co-authored and co-edited four books on counseling and rehabilitation counseling psychology topics. Dr. Marini is former President of the American Rehabilitation Counseling Association and former Chair of the Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification. He holds a master's in clinical psychology from Lakehead University in Thunder Bay, Canada, and a Ph.D. in rehabilitation from Auburn University in Alabama.

**David B. Peterson**

California State, Los Angeles

David B. Peterson, Ph.D. is a professor at California State University, Los Angeles, a certified rehabilitation counselor, licensed mental health counselor (Iowa-inactive), and licensed clinical psychologist (Iowa, New York, Illinois, and California) with expertise in rehabilitation psychology and comprehensive assessment of biopsychosocial functioning. He serves as a medical expert for the Social Security Administration's Office of Disability Adjudication and Review.

For nearly three decades, his clinical work focused on psychiatric rehabilitation and neuropsychological functioning. Dr. Peterson's scholarship has focused on the

International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF), computer-based training in clinical problem solving, and ethics. He has contributed to 55 scholarly publications, 45 local and national presentations, directed six research and training grants totaling over \$1.7 million, and is a member of four editorial boards for peer-reviewed journals in rehabilitation and psychology.

**Karen Brown**

Brain Injury Services

Ms. Brown is a certified rehabilitation counselor and certified brain injury specialist. In July 2011, Ms. Brown was awarded a scholarship from the Harvard Business School Club in Washington, DC to attend the Strategic Perspectives for Nonprofit Management course at Harvard. She served as adjunct faculty at George Washington University and taught several courses including case management and disability issues and head injury rehabilitation, and supervised practicum and internship students. She has spent over 35 years in the rehabilitation field working in Alabama, Texas, and Virginia. In the late 1970's, Ms. Brown worked at VA McGuire Hospital in Richmond as a state liaison vocational rehabilitation counselor. She also developed and implemented two supported employment programs for individuals with psychiatric and intellectual disabilities in Northern Virginia.

Ms. Brown is past chair of the Virginia Brain Injury Council and Virginia Alliance of Brain Injury Services Providers. She presently serves as chair of the Fairfax County Long Term Care Coordinating Council. She is a member of the Board of Directors for Life

Circle Alliances and serves on George Mason University's College of Health and Human Services Advisory Board. She also serves on the Ohio Valley Center for Brain Injury Prevention and Rehabilitation Advisory Council. Ms. Brown is a 2001 graduate of the Fairfax Leadership Class where she has served as a team coach for the past few years. She is a member of the Virginia Wounded Warrior Program, Region 1 Advisory Board. Ms. Brown holds a bachelor's degree in Psychology from Ithaca College and a master's degree from Auburn University majoring in rehabilitation counseling. She was a doctoral student at George Washington University and completed all course work in rehabilitation leadership.

**Dr. Jorge Garcia**

Professor-George Washington University, Washington, DC

Dr. Jorge Garcia, Ph.D. is a professor of rehabilitation counseling at George Washington University. Dr. Garcia has been awarded \$2,000,000 in grants from the U.S. Department of Education Rehabilitation Services Administration. He is past president of the National Council on Rehabilitation Education (NCRE) and a member of the Committee on Rehabilitation Counselor Education Standards. Dr. Garcia serves on the editorial boards for Rehabilitation Education as well as the Journal of Rehabilitation. He has also served as the co-chair on the Ethics Committee of the American Counseling Association. Finally, Dr. Garcia has received the 2012 American Rehabilitation Counseling Association Research Award, the 2002 "Dr. Bobby Atkins

Research Award" from the National Association of Multicultural Rehabilitation Concerns, as well as the 1992 NCRE Educator of the Year Award.

**Dr. Leonardo P. Pandac**

Pacific Asian Alcohol and Drug Program

Dr. Pandac, Ph.D. is the Program Director of the Pacific Asian Alcohol and Drug Program (PAADP) of Special Service for Groups (SSG), Inc., based in Los Angeles, California. SSG/PAADP is a community based service agency that provides multi-faceted services to individuals, youth, families, and organizations in Southern California. Dr. Pandac is the President of Asian Rehabilitation Service, Incorporated, an agency providing services to individuals with disabilities and the Federation of Filipino American Associations, Inc. based in Long Beach, California that provide affordable housing and support services. He serves as a board member in several local non-profit organizations that provide community economic and housing, health, and disability services.

Dr. Pandac is involved in arts and culture promotion and development as the President of the Los Angeles Lotus Festival, Inc. that hosts the annual Lotus Festival in collaboration with Department of Recreation and Parks of the City of Los Angeles. He is also the producer for the annual Historic Filipino Festival and 5 K run now on its 12th year.

**Scott Trimarchi**

Disabled American Veterans

Scott Trimarchi is a disabled Veteran of the U.S. Air Force and was appointed assistant national service director for the 1.2 million-member Disabled American Veterans (DAV) organization in March 2007. Mr. Trimarchi works at DAV National Service and Legislative Headquarters in Washington, DC, where he helps assist and supervise the DAV National Service Program, which employs more than 400 professional national service officers (NSOs) and 30 transition service officers (TSOs) at 100 offices in the United States and Puerto Rico.

Mr. Trimarchi began his DAV career in January 1994 as a NSO Trainee at the DAV National Service Office in New York City. In August 1996, he was promoted to assistant supervisor at the Newark, NJ office and to supervisor in May 1997. He was assigned as supervisory NSO at the Milwaukee office in May 1999, and reassigned as assistant supervisor at the New York City office in January 2001. In November 2001, Mr. Trimarchi was promoted to supervisor for Area 9 in 2002. In October 2005, he was assigned as assistant supervisor at the St. Petersburg, FL office and later transferred to the Boston office to serve as the supervisor. He was also appointed National Area Supervisor for Area 1 and served in these capacities until his current appointment in March 2007.

Mr. Trimarchi is a native of Bay Shore, N.Y., and a graduate of Brentwood Sonderling

High School. He enlisted in the U.S. Air Force in 1987. Following basic training at Lackland Air Force Base (AFB) in San Antonio, Texas, he attended technical training school for telecommunications and cryptographic maintenance at Sheppard AFB in Wichita Falls, TX. In May 1988, he was stationed at Wallace Air Station in the Philippines. In December 1989, he was assigned to Castle AFB, Atwater, California, where he remained until being medically retired in August 1992.

### **Zoë Dale**

Mental Health Clinician

Ms. Dale is the senior mental health counselor at Grady Memorial Hospital's Psychiatric Unit in Atlanta, Georgia. Ms. Dale is a licensed professional counselor in the state of Georgia. She is also certified by the National Board of Certified Counselors as a national certified counselor. Ms. Dale possesses more than 12 years of counseling experience providing culturally competent therapeutic services to adults and children, couples, families, and diverse groups of ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds. She specializes in the treatment of Mood Disorders, Depression, Anxiety and Posttraumatic Stress Disorder. Ms. Dale holds a bachelor's degree in fine art from Atlanta College of Art in Atlanta, Georgia and a master's degree from Argosy University in professional counseling. She is also a member of the American Art Therapy Association. Ms. Dale intertwines the use of art and therapy as a unique form of expression. She facilitates art therapy group sessions with young gay inner city youth using various artistic mediums to promote client introspection.

### **John Rio**

Senior Program Associate

Mr. Rio is the senior program associate at Advocates for Human Potential directing the National Veterans Technical Assistance Center for US DOL-VETS. Mr. Rio manages a new initiative with the Department of Veterans Affairs aimed at coordinating community employment services for veterans. He is also a subject matter expert for HUD 's Office of Special Needs Assistance Programs (SNAPS). Mr. Rio has over 30 years of experience in vocational rehabilitation & recovery services, supportive housing, developing HUD financed housing, operating mental health inpatient and outpatient employment services, directing supported employment service programs and providing homeless assistance services. Before joining AHP, Mr. Rio was a senior staff member of the Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH) where he directed national employment initiatives and worked on public policies related to employment and supportive services for people with co-occurring mental health and substance abuse disabilities. Mr. Rio was trained in Psychiatric Rehabilitation practices at Boston University and founded Riverwood Rehabilitation Services in Rhode Island.

### **Antonio Pruitt, DPT**

Director of Rehabilitation

Mr. Pruitt, DPT, is the director of rehabilitation services at Select Medical/Regency

Hospital in East Point, Georgia. Dr. Pruitt has spent the past 10 years working in various settings including Pediatrics, Psych, Outpatient Orthopedics, Skilled Nursing Facilities (SNF), Home Healthcare and Long Term Acute Care (LTACH). He is a member of the American Physical Therapy Association (APTA), American Academy of Physical Therapy (AAPPT) and Advisory Board Member for the Atlanta Technical College Physical Therapy Assistant Program. Dr. Pruitt holds a bachelor's degree in Psychology and Biology from the University of Alabama At Birmingham, and masters of Public Administration with a Concentration in Healthcare Administration and Public Policy from Auburn University, and a doctorate degree in Physical Therapy (DPT) from the University of Alabama At Birmingham.

**Danish N. Santiago**

U.S. Air Force Disabled Veteran

Mr. Santiago is a disabled U.S. Air Force Veteran and a native of Adverse, New York. He was enlisted in the U.S. Air Force from 1998 to 2012. Shortly after receiving an honorable discharge in September 2012, he enlisted in the U.S. Air Force Reserve and remained until being medically retired in September 2015. During his military career Mr. Santiago served as an in-flight refuel/boom operator, stationed at McGuire Air Force Base in New Jersey. Mr. Santiago had many deployments to the Middle East, being assigned to various operations and war engagements. He also received many awards and accolades during his military career. Mr. Santiago is currently in culinary school pursuing his dream of being a professional chef. He also volunteers as a cooking instructor at his local community center, where he teaches the members of his community how to use the art of cooking Latin cuisine as a therapeutic method of dealing with depression and anxiety.

**Alicia M. Brown**

U.S. Navy Disabled Veteran

Ms. Brown is a disabled U.S. Navy Veteran and a native of Tuscaloosa, Alabama. She enlisted in the U.S. Navy in July 1993. Following basic training at the Orlando Naval Station in Orlando, Florida, she attended an apprenticeship training school for administrative personnel. In December of 1993, she was stationed at Gulfport, Mississippi where she remained until being honorably discharged in February 1998. Ms. Brown holds a bachelor's degree in computer science technology from the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. She currently works as a financial representative at the Tuscaloosa VA Federal Credit Union in Tuscaloosa, Alabama.

**Eleanor Flowers-Jones**

U.S. Navy Disabled Veteran

Ms. Flowers-Jones is a disabled U.S. Navy Veteran and a native of Cleveland, Ohio. She began her Naval career in 1989. Senior Chief Flowers-Jones completed basic training at Recruit Training Command, Orlando, Florida and transferred to Great Lakes, IL to attend and graduate from Hospital Corps "A" School. After Hospital "A" School,

Senior Chief Flowers-Jones reported to Naval Medical Center Portsmouth, VA, for her first tour of duty.

Ms. Flowers-Jones has had various shore tours as well as sea duty assignments; and she has participated in numerous exercises and operations. Senior Chief Flowers-Jones is Surface Warfare and Enlisted Fleet Marine Force Warfare Specialist qualified. She retired from the U.S. Navy in July 2015 after providing 26 years of honorable service.

Ms. Flowers-Jones received her associate in arts degree at Campbell University, and bachelor of science degree from Southern Illinois University. She is currently enrolled in Webster University working towards a master's of arts degree in human resource management and a master's of arts in management and leadership.

**Ex-Officio Members:**

**Jack Kammerer**

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA)

Mr. Kammerer is the Director of VBA's Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) Service. Mr. Kammerer oversees the development and evaluation of policies, plans, and procedures necessary to effectively implement agency-wide programs in the areas of VR&E assistance for Veterans and their dependents.

Prior to this appointment, Mr. Kammerer served as a VA Senior Advisor. In this position, he worked closely with VA senior leadership in the formulation of strategy and policy for the Federal government's second-largest cabinet department, which has over 300,000 employees.

Before his VA career, Mr. Kammerer completed assignments as an Army Senior Fellow serving in the role of the Director of Stakeholder Engagement in the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, and as the Director of Strategic Initiatives and Integration in the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs. His work focused on overseeing the Department of Defense's implementation of recommendations and stakeholder engagement in support of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness.

**Jerry Elliott**

U.S. Department of Education, Rehabilitation Services Administration

Mr. Elliott serves as the ex-officio representative for the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) of the U.S. Department of Education. RSA funds and oversees the public Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) system, which includes 79 State VR agencies. Mr. Elliott has worked in RSA for 21 years in a variety of program and policy positions. His current primary assignment is as project officer for some of RSA's large technical assistance center grants. Most relevant to VACOR, for the last 18 years he has been

the RSA liaison to the VA VR&E program in various ways, including serving on VACOR, the Blue Ribbon Panel, and other VA projects related to VR&E. He drafted, together with VR&E staff, the last MOU between the Rehabilitation Services Administration and the VR&E program, which was signed in 2011, and is working with VR&E staff to revise that MOU. Prior to entering federal service, Mr. Elliott worked in the field of vocational rehabilitation for 30 years, including holding jobs as a VR Counselor, VR Supervisor, and several administrative positions in State VR agencies. He has taught rehabilitation counseling at the university level and worked with programs that provided continuing education and technical assistance to State VR agencies. He also has experience in the provision of vocational rehabilitation services in the private sector, including working with worker's compensation claimants, Social Security Disability beneficiaries, and individuals involved in third party injury litigation. In one past life, he was the Alaska State Rehabilitation Administrator for the Alaska Workers Compensation Board.

**Dr. Leslie Caplan**

National Institute for Handicapped Research of the Department of Education

Dr. Leslie Caplan, Ph.D., has been a Project Officer in the National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research (NIDILRR) Division of Research Sciences since 2007. She manages a portfolio that includes research in the areas of employment and vocational rehabilitation, transition to adulthood, traumatic brain injury, and psychiatric disability. Dr. Caplan came to NIDILRR after 21 years as a researcher in the intramural program of the National Institute of Mental Health, where she was part of an interdisciplinary team that studied the effects of environmental and occupational conditions on psychological functioning. She is a member of the Federal Partners in Transition, serves as facilitator for the Interagency Committee on Employment (a subcommittee of the Interagency Committee on Disability Research), and has participated in planning the third (2011) and fourth (planned for 2017) Interagency Conferences on Traumatic Brain Injury. Dr. Caplan received her Ph.D. in Developmental Psychology from the University of Iowa in 1980.

**William "Bill" Metheny**

U. S. Department of Labor

William Metheny is Director of Field Operations in the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Veterans' Employment and Training Service

Dr. Metheny has consulted with businesses and government agencies for more than a decade, helping them to find ways to better utilize resources. His clients have included large organizations such as Texas Instruments and the U.S. Government, as well as the mid-size and extremely small firms prevalent in Montana and other western states.

Prior to entering consulting full-time, Dr. Metheny worked for over twelve years in the U.S. Army in administration and combat arms, followed by employment with several small firms in information systems and manufacturing. He also taught operations management, human resource management, and business strategy at the University of

North Texas, Montana State University-Billings, and for the University of Montana for about ten years.

Dr. Metheny has presented articles on self-directed work teams and innovative training at national and international conferences, and has written articles in both areas for journals and books.

Dr. Metheny holds a bachelor's degree in Biological Sciences from Arkansas Tech University. He also holds a master's degree in business administration and a doctor of philosophy degree in production and operations management, with a minor in industrial and organizational psychology, from the University of North Texas.

**Gale Watson**

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Health Administration (VHA)

Gale Watson, M.Ed., CLVT, is Director of Blind Rehabilitation Service for the Department of Veterans Affairs. Her responsibilities include overseeing VHA programs for Veterans and Servicemembers who have disabling visual impairment, developing policy and procedures for those programs, and advocating to ensure that care and communications are accessible.

Her practice spans teaching pre-school children who are deaf and blind, itinerant teaching for school-aged students, and administering low vision therapy to adults and seniors.

Her research contributions include an evidence base for reading rehabilitation, and the development and dissemination of low vision reading and writing assessment instruments and instructive methods. She has contributed to peer-reviewed journal articles, book chapters, and a textbook for the field.