

National Partnership Council Meeting Minutes 7/16/24 – 7/18/24 - San Diego, CA

NPC Agenda:



Agenda NPC
Quarterly Meeting -

NPC Members:

Denise Biaggi-Ayer - LMR (Co-Chair)
Mary-Jean Burke - AFGE (acting Co-Chair)
Joe Henry - NNOC/NUU
Link Miles – NFFE
Claudia Moore - NAGE
Mark Bailey – NAGE
Terri Beer – NCA (Virtual)
Linda Parker-Cooks - AFGE/VBA
Mary Anastas - VCS
James Zeveski - VHA
David Perry - VHA
Christine Polnak - SEIU
Gia Chemsian – OGC
Simon Ravona - OIT
Ryan Fulcher – LMR

George Cannizzaro - NCA
Jeffrey Shapiro - NFFE
Irma Westmoreland - NNOC/NUU
Bill Wetmore - AFGE
Michael Stephens - VBA
Robert Sheena - VBA

Guests-Observers

Kurt Martin – LMR
Avia Pichon – VHA
Robyn Bolgla-NFFE

July 16, 2024

Meeting began at 9:00 a.m. ET at the Jennifer Moreno VA Medical Center in San Diego, CA.

Denise Biaggi-Ayer, Executive Director LMR (Co-Chair Management) and MJ Burke acting as Union Co-Chair in Alma Lee's absence. Denise and MJ welcomed everyone. General welcome. Discussions on October meeting being hybrid or fully virtual. MJ mentioned that there is advantage of having people in DC when SMEs are face-to-face. The next meeting will be hybrid in October.

Infrastructure Updates, VHA

➤ Al Montoya, Deputy Assistant Under Secretary for Health for Operations

Al - Apologized for not being in San Diego and would cover: Infrastructure failure, Academic Partnerships, DoD partnerships and Summit.

Failure data - Tracking for 2024, taking a look at total clinic closures. This data is gleaned from issues after a facility self-reports. I work with the Deputy Network Directors to move clinical appointments from one clinic to another so we don't have cancellations. Where we're at with 2024 is something I can probably update you on in October.

MJ – Sterilization, our standards are so high. Is it under your umbrella in plumbing waste, water and leak, do you track that in your umbrella?

National Partnership Council Meeting Minutes **7/16/24 – 7/18/24 - San Diego, CA**

AI - SPS falls under patient care services, but there is some cross over.

MJ - If we publish what we've done since the Augusta and Dublin issues and keeping these surgical programs online.

AI - That's something we can take back for Dr. Saslo and his team. I'll bring that back to him tomorrow. Academic affiliate locations - Palo Alto doesn't have the space on campus so they're looking at Menlo park. Nashville, Philadelphia and Coatesville are all looking. Nashville we have a community partners with Vanderbilt so we're looking at the feasibility. Charleston is going through a process in the next months to partner.

MJ - How much are you engaging local unions in these MOUs? Engaging them would be helpful.

AI - Vanderbilt is still a hope, so the first step will be the feasibility study and we can invite the union to that. With Charleston, I'm trying to recall if the unions were there, but I will double down on my efforts to let them know.

AI - In Coatesville, the land was not appropriate, so they are including the local team there and that feasibility study was already done to move forward in Coatesville. We have some where we favor a non-MOU, we may go back as we move forward, but at this point Omaha, Tennessee, and Charleston we don't need at this point. The VA-DoD partnership does not displace anyone. It puts our staff into unused space. Pensacola is a Mon-Fri clinic so this offers them the opportunity to go to the Naval hospital. You can go down the list for all of them. In Alaska, the buildings are connected by a hallway which allows Veterans to go to DoD and not have to go out to the community which is overstretched.

David - VHA FTE are still VHA FTE, they don't report to DHA and they're not related in that respect, they're just using the space at the DoD facilities.

MJ - In Fort Campbell, are they new FTE or reassigned FTE?

AI - In some cases they are new, like in Pensacola. The VISN has activation funds for equipment or staff. There is a lot of resource sharing information and agreements. There is a lot that has to go on behind the scenes for the sharing of resources outside of space. In some places like Pensacola they have to get a base access card. One thing that we wanted to ensure was that Veterans family members can also get on base. In some cases, they've developed a QR code to get on base and get cleared in advance. PACT Act now allows us to do joint capital projects, how does that work where we're building something together, or paying for something together and fleshing that out.

Jeff - I want to know about contingency plans. If we had a change in President and Secretary, if the new administration feels we don't partner with DoD, has there been any thought from your office?

AI - Seeing different administrations and personalities, I don't see how this is something that can be argued against. Some of this started under Secretary Wilkie, this is bringing care closer to our Veterans. This has the legs to go far.

National Partnership Council Meeting Minutes

7/16/24 – 7/18/24 - San Diego, CA

Jeff - Clinics that VA is renting out like Tom's River, can you explain that? And as VA clinics contract out.

AI - Our next time we meet, I can give you an update on both leasing and major constructive prioritization efforts. I meet with CFM about our leases.

Claudia - In Coatesville can you confirm Penn is looking at an area at 10th and 3rd? People still feel we're going to close in Coatesville.

AI - I'm going to look at coming out there. The VA-DoD strategic summit, I met with my colleague at Defense Health Agency, we identified 100 opportunities for this. We're going to be going to different VISNs, like 12 and 17 are bursting at the seams and have a DoD presence there.

Mark - Are you guys including engineering dept leaders or are they just passing the information along? How will VA stop the bleeding without hiring the amount of staff or are they waiting for them to be dilapidated until they are torn down? In Coatesville we had 17 pipefitters and helpers, now we're down to 5, what is happening with preventative maintenance?

AI - We do work with engineering staff and leadership, we are encouraging that collaboration. We're up overall in engineering. We're also talking about the technical career field path as well for engineers.

Hybrid Collaboration Process – VHA

- Jeremy Pearce, Director, Center of Expertise Staffing/ Policy and CARDS
- Paula Jones, Deputy Director, Recruitment and Placement Policy Service

Jeremy – Covered the hybrid collaboration standard and moving from Title 5 to Hybrid Title 38, via the hybrid collaboration team. While the program office is preparing the request, we send out info requests through email for nominations for the SMEs. Presented a flowchart of the process which is lengthy and may seem simple, but has many different stops.

Paula - Reviewed Phase 3 of the process.

MJ - Part of the frustration is that the unions, we're around when we inserted into the handbook what collaboration means. To see this chart is offensive because we spent a couple of weeks with the Department with people who have left. And WMC and VACO switched places and we've lost the idea of what collaboration means. To see the chart of how it goes in your mind, without our involvement is offensive. We used to have a grid and get on calls and where we've moved to is this quarterly development process, I haven't seen that. Appendix S and T of 5005 seems like the last time we got together. We had a recent issue of the NAs...you talked about 5 days for a nomination, that's not in policy. We've got to get reacquainted on this. We understand the law says 30 days, but the issue is you hold it for 2 years and we only get a few days.

Denise - Asked MJ where in the flowchart there have been changes.

MJ - Change 16 is in policy, we were not involved in phase 1, 2 and 3 up here. Having this chart

National Partnership Council Meeting Minutes **7/16/24 – 7/18/24 - San Diego, CA**

is a big deal so we could at least track where these occupations are in the process. We put out comments and get nothing back.

Jeremy - This map was just created four or five days ago, we did want to provide a visual. A lot of us were in different positions over the years, what is the ideal state and timeline, what does that look like for you? Are these stars not in the right place or should there be more?

MJ - I can write some of this down for you but the last time our group met was in St. Pete, moving the MSTs, that's been 7 years ago at least.

Paula - Showed the online library for Qualification Standards.

Jeff - In your urgency, you've left the union behind. The collaboration doesn't exist.

Mark - Everything is absolutely true. With NAGE, even though you put a chart up, we feel you lack a process because we don't know anything about it. There are issues with the contractual agreements. How do you know what's happening in the field if HR doesn't have to report out when they're converting? I question your process and why the unions aren't being notified of the selection when you're going to change a Title 5 position and want to know if a classification appeal was filed with OPM. Maybe a meeting needs to take place with the 5 unions and the Hybrid collaboration team.

Denise - When you say select individuals, do you mean SMEs or positions?

Mark - I'm talking about both. We need time to have a discussion period for positions. At the front end of the process.

Jeff - The boarding going away chopped everything down, now we're having less involvement. I can understand mgmt. was given a high number but the union should have been there.

Paula - We coordinate back through VHA or through LMR. We do try to address everything that is on the matrix. Sometimes, things we've received, they may be more about the occupation and not the qualification standards.

Jeff - Who is this group that comes together for new position qualification standards? It could be Joe the hatmaker. We do not even know if they are qualified.

MJ - I think we should get back to meeting how we're supposed to, meeting at least once every two years.

VHA Memos – Hiring

➤ Ryan Lily, Network Director for VISN 1, VHA

Ryan L - FY23 was a large growth year, we were coming back from the pandemic but also the PACT Act authorities that were made available to us, with much better attrition rates than in years past. If you look at 2025, it calls for a reduction in VHA FTE, so we've gone up about 12,000 FTE despite a zero-growth goal. We've all been shifting our hiring position and slowing down that growth. We expect a slight decline in the 4th quarter.

National Partnership Council Meeting Minutes **7/16/24 – 7/18/24 - San Diego, CA**

All three memos have the foundational belief that the best decisions are made locally. This is constantly evolving and changing. Last year was a record hire year and we had a very good base. Some of these conversations are above VHA with OMB, the White House and Congress.

Jeff - I'm looking at this like a smoke and mirror thing. We're always short staffed, and now we're over hired. And then you have the VISNs that are up in the hundreds. The number of people retiring is going to be astronomical, we pass laws to service veterans, but we don't have enough staff across the board. The Unions are skeptical. Show me the money.

Ryan L - There isn't total agreement in Congress on VA's role and what we should do. In the past 20 years you didn't have HR, the CCCs, there are many places that report to the VISN that did not use to report at that level. I understand the feeling that we're understaffed, but at the end of the day you can only hire what you have funding to hire.

MJ discussed productivity and how that impacts VA.

Ryan L - I'm not sure if we can ever match the private sector in terms of productivity, we're not trying to mimic their system, because we have more comprehensive care.

Bill - Do you have a system set up of looking at how many patients a provider sees per day? Is that part of how they're looked at?

Ryan L - Yes, it's part of it, but outcomes, quality, patient satisfaction, all of those things matter and if you're not seeing 10 a day like someone else but seeing 8, and doing well in the rest. You don't want to necessarily incentivize having people come in for appointments unnecessarily just to get numbers up. You wouldn't want patients to come in for a quick appointment for something that could be addressed with a phone call.

Bill - What practices are available to reduce expenses, beyond salary costs?

Ryan L - We look at things like contracting, it's universally more expensive to have things by contract. Some of it is nibbling at the margins, drug costs negotiated outside of VA.

Bill - Can you tell us one thing that is a best practice that you're requiring facilities to do, to save money.

Ryan L - We've done reviews of contract reviews if they're north of a million dollars. There are initiatives in the drug cost world.

Bill - I don't know why creating a resource board saves money

Ryan L - If you are only operating off an org chart, the FTE count is going to be higher, which is more expensive.

David - They look at staffing and definitely save money.

Mark - A resource board is old, it's nothing new. It's when the VISN started getting big and for

National Partnership Council Meeting Minutes **7/16/24 – 7/18/24 - San Diego, CA**

the record HR at the VISN is a problem. I would appreciate if we could get some statistical data about these three memos. I need time to see the dollars and see what makes sense.

Ryan L - I'm not aware of a single VISN replacing a resource board locally.

Bill - AFGE testified a few days ago to a House subcommittee about cost savings and to stop contracting out Comp and Pen examinations.

VHA Budget Shortfall, VHA

➤ Dr. Elnahal, Under Secretary for Health, VHA

Dr. Elnahal - For the first two and a half, three years, we've made progress in getting us to staffing level that were by far the highest in VA history. Some of the retention incentives and recruitment incentives have worked. We're in a situation that because we're at a point of 30% increase of veteran enrollments and because of the presumptive benefits of the PACT Act that reliance of VA healthcare has gone up. We think the most responsible move is to communicate with Congress that we have a funding shortfall.

We've expressed that Monday of this week to HVAC and SVAC. On the VHA side, we expressed 12.71 billion dollars. If we are able to get those funds to the agency, we will no longer be in a posture that we will have to attrit down any further, but instead can add 5,000 employees. This would be the first of many steps that will need to happen. If we get those resources, we will be in a much more flexible situation.

MJ - When Congress and VSOs say you need the second bite at the apple, what prevented that from happening before? And I'm worried they're going to grill you on productivity.

Dr. Elnahal - we're in the business of being honest of what we need for veteran care and we need this for veteran care. We're seeing productivity going up. And we're seeing all of this productivity go up with shorter wait times. Our SAIL report last quarter was incredible. When it comes to veteran outcomes, we're doing pretty well. The dynamics of the budget are extremely sensitive, we didn't get here with a few weeks of work and we're ready to take whatever risk to get this done.

Jeff - NFFE represents VBA, are we correlating those claims and seeing if those claims are resulting in service connections that may require services in VHA? We have a political race coming up...when one administration is pushing community care, have we embraced VSOs and DAV to support your position?

Dr. Elnahal - Your members are processing claims at a stronger clip and a faster pace than ever before. That does mean more veterans receiving service connection, and we're seeing our demand for care skyrocket too. We're at a point where we have to ask for more resources to meet demand.

Mark - Will you be asking the congressional reps to increase the monies coming into the department for care? And I feel this administration needs to be more vocal about what it has done for veterans.

National Partnership Council Meeting Minutes **7/16/24 – 7/18/24 - San Diego, CA**

Dr. Elnahal - The straw that broke the camel's back is that I was hearing that we were being forced to dial back service activations because of a lack of resources. We need to make VA care more available at every turn.

Bill - I would say we all agree that VA contracts out too much. One thing is compensation and pension exams, which seems like an easy fix, is that VBA will pay contractors for comp and pen exams, but first they're supposed to go to VHA, and if they say yes, it comes out of VHA's budget, so VHA has been reducing so they can put their funds toward care. Have you gotten with the USB to work this out?

Dr. Elnahal - Comp and pen exams are heterogeneous based off region, so I hate to give a system wide answer.

Office of Nursing Service Updates, VHA

➤ Karen Ott, Director for Policy, Legislation and Professional Standards

Karen provided an overview of an emergency revision to NA Qualification Standards and basic education requirements, The Advanced Practice Nurse Qualification Standard and national call, toolkits and crosswalk were shared and the Q&A. Effective May 22-recruit highly qualified nursing assistants. Provide immediate relief. What is new is addition of "experience." Six months of general experience. Training.

Irma - GS-3..? No one will meet that...Do not know how you will be able to hire anyone with this requirements.

MJ - Suggests experience was already required for promotion.

Karen - GS 4-no change. Q&A-Describing what experience is.

Irma asked if they have simply just changed the name of the Board to do away with any obligations under the Master Agreements.

Karen - APN/RN qualification standards meetings and trainings (data) Have made improvements to our calls. Function the same way, but we have taken out the "board" name so folks do not believe the requirements in the contract apply anymore. Now it is being called a committee. Irma said this -what do we do about this-? Karen said, I will take this back.

MJ - We are going backwards. We are doing the same thing, but you are calling it something else.

Karen – We had this level of support before and to take it away completely is not great. Still need SMEs.

MJ - Leave it alone, do not have this advisory thing. The whole purpose of getting rid of it was to do things quicker.

National Partnership Council Meeting Minutes **7/16/24 – 7/18/24 - San Diego, CA**

Mark - What type of nurses are the SMEs? “Charge nurse” folks in education...? Who is selecting them, how are they making these selections, under whose recommendations.

Karen - Facility ADPCS selects. Cannot be more descriptive about that at this time.

Mark - These are the questions the RNs will ask. HR will respond in a totally different way because they do not know. Karen will follow up.

Karen - Continue to make improvements in the tool kits. These are found on SharePoint site. Let me know if video or resources are not useful.

Karen will take back the ideas that were expressed about freeing nurses up for time and not being on VISN CNO and facility ADPCS as SMEs or to be available. This was the purpose of doing away with the Boards, to get nurses back to the bedside, but they seem to be tied up again on the VISN CNO and facility ADPCS meetings.

Karen - Flow maps were created for many different scenarios, including promotions that should be useful. We would love to hear feedback from you all.

Jeff - We just went through a major change, got rid of Board, getting two evals this year people are unhappy about evaluations, if mgmt. and employees don't know what they're doing, how happy is our workforce going to be at the end of the year? I am a projection type of guy, where are we at the end of this performance year-no one knows what they are doing. Are we going to have a bunch of unhappy folks. What are your projections about how happy or unhappy people will be? Issue with awards, etc.

MJ - The tools are great. Standardized language for periodic step increase, there is some vague language in one of the slides. You guys are starting on ePerformance and they can look up their anniversary date, date of last promotion and appointment. The training material looks really good that comes out of your office.

Irma - I have to say that too. People are not getting their promotions done and because there is no policy written they need a policy.

Karen - Do you mean natural progressions?

Irma - Yes, and not a one is getting done.

Jeff - We're seeing the same thing in Miami and across the board.

Karen - I might need to reach back out to you so I can get this right. Irma I will probably reach back out to you too.

Irma - I'm getting pushback for the waiver process. And I'm being told it's coming from VACO. It's in the policy but whisper, whisper, don't do it. Show me where people are getting a promotion? I am about to issue a something....there must be a violation of something. Policy said you will give “genuine consideration” you have to do what the policy states.

Karen - There is a desire to make the change in the policy, but no changes yet.

National Partnership Council Meeting Minutes **7/16/24 – 7/18/24 - San Diego, CA**

Irma - There has got to be something because it's in the policy but don't do it. The policy says genuine consideration, but nobody is getting it. When you do none, I got a case.

Karen - I think you and the labor partners should have a conversation with Dr. Saslo to talk about this.

Irma - I'm up for that.

Mark - It's a concern, why should they beg for something that should come to them on their anniversary day.

MJ - Nurses are being told to backdate their proficiencies because they were so remiss.

Irma - People do it because they're afraid of their supervisor and not doing it.

David - You can't do that in ePerformance.

Karen - The Q and A were covered. Karen will follow up with NNU, AFGE, NFFE and NAGE on due outs and additional feedback.

MJ - Asked regarding anniversary dates and there were a group 1 and group 2. What was the purpose of the two groups?

David - Talked about paper documents being entered into the system by HR.

PDI and Facility Outreach

Discussion regarding the use of PDI and reaching out to facilities that did not identify having a forum on the NPC Forum Assessment. These sites included Minneapolis HCS, West Texas HCS, Muskogee VAMC and Huntington VAMC, all of which are represented by AFGE. Bill began reaching out to several sites and LMR will do the same.

Additional discussion on whether training or templates should be developed for stations with forums that needs templates/resources for improvement. NPC determined some training material should be collected and provided electronically as resources. The NPC subcommittee for forum education will collect and review.

July 17, 2024

Meeting began at 9am

I*DEA

- Jolisa Dudley, Director, Strategic Initiative Group/Customer Experience Strategy
- Kimberly Forte, Program Manager for the I*DEA Influencers Network

Jolisa - Influencers are spreading the awareness for IDEA and spreading meaningful change.

National Partnership Council Meeting Minutes **7/16/24 – 7/18/24 - San Diego, CA**

Feedback from influencers will enhance outreach efforts.

Kimberly - IDEA is a space for members to have conversations and share idea activities. Encourages VA leaders and employees to embrace inclusivity, diversity, access. IDEA is identifying and eliminating barriers for underserved communities to advance equity for veterans, their families and survivors. IDEA makes advocacy possible and Influencers help ensure cultural change. Influencers are across VA and there are currently 1,528 across the administrations, including all 50 states and attempting to reach 10% of employees. The virtual listening sessions are voluntary and confidential and union representatives will be invited via email to attend. Facilitators are a safe space, responses are confidential, only the facilitators will be able to see participant responses, and everyone will be set as anonymous.

Jeff - This brought me back to Harvey Johnson and we had spoken to him about this. We were hoping to be sitting at the table when this rolled out. NFFE is still interested in being part of this, anywhere you feel that the union can be involved, if there is a committee that is part of this, we can contact our local presidents to join hands to make this a valued program. How do employees get approved time to sit in these sessions?

Kimberly - We can't control different facilities, but each meeting is recorded and anyone can review those recordings.

Jeff - If it's being recorded, is it not interactive?

Jolisa - We haven't heard of any issues with leadership not giving them time. Not in terms of being an Influencer but to engage in activities. The interactive program is being recorded.

Jeff - The best communication is interactive. NFFE will place a demand to bargain because this is impacting working conditions.

MJ - I have a quick comment, for the Union we have been intricately involved in EEO complaints, diversity issues, etc. My concern is wrapped in EEO/ORM IDEA, or the GAO report in September 2023 and promotion opportunities, but the after action and the factors that led to these problems. For me it's connecting the dots of where we've screwed up but it's not just a marketing campaign.

Jolisa - I'm the Director of customer experience strategy, particularly our internal customers, employees, and hearing from them about their pain points related to their identity. We're pending permanent leadership that we have to navigate, we're aware of those GAO reports and I think there are going to be some major things coming down the pike soon.

MJ - We're not always living the gospel that we preach.

Jolisa - That's where we got a lot of information from our Influencers.

Bill - Did I hear you say that you record these sessions?

Jolisa - We have a disclaimer that people can opt out prior to the recording taking place.

Kimberly - These meetings are a safe space, and everyone is very supportive of other participants.

National Partnership Council Meeting Minutes **7/16/24 – 7/18/24 - San Diego, CA**

Bill - People get on the call and are notified that they're recorded, but there is not a moment where there is consent from individual participants.

David - There is complicit consent for Teams when a call is recorded in our policy.

Irma - Do you say it's being recorded?

Jolisa - I'm pretty sure we do that during the opening statements, but we will double check.

Irma - If it's anonymous, so if I'm in the chat....

Kimberly - All participants will dial in, only facilitators have access to the Teams. If you dial in, there is no access to chat.

Irma - I would suggest that when Influencers agree to do that, I think they should know that when agreeing to become an Influencer they could be in calls that VA records, so it's clearer.

George - In terms of best qualified candidates, what ways can we try to influence and diversify the workforce in a way that lets people know there is an opportunity in the organization?

Irma - From our perspective we've been looking for years at demographics.

Mark - I'm concerned with some of the departments within VA and how they get the word out. I would ask that facility leadership make space available for anyone that wants to participate without being in a group setting. Maybe you can influence managers and employees to have discussions on policies such as No Fear. Some things for change need conversation.

Stay in VBA

- Monika Martinez, Employee Engagement Specialist, Office of Human Capital Services
- Yvonne Rutherford, Chief, Operations and Program Management, HCS

Overview of Stay in VBA roles of Champions, supervisors, and employees. Stay in VBA is voluntary for the employee and have an important role in meeting with their supervisor and providing feedback which can improve job satisfaction. Various training modules are available in TMS for employees, Champions and supervisors. 30-day touchpoints are encouraged, 90 days touchpoints are follow-ups to the 30 days, and 1+ year for seasoned employees. Touchpoints should be in-person, over Teams or phone and not over email.

Bill - Do you compare your results with the AES or do you just look at gross numbers on employees that come in and leave?

Monika - We don't have any overarching requirement to compare the results. The Stay in VBA dashboard covers all of the demographics of respondents and who is involved.

Yvonne - Due to PACT Act, the requests for VBA attrition data has increased greatly. VBA Exit interviews, once an employee identifies they are leaving, the HR Liaison is required to reach out

National Partnership Council Meeting Minutes **7/16/24 – 7/18/24 - San Diego, CA**

and offer an exit interview. HRO completes demographic info and employee validates leadership chain for electronic notification process.

MJ - Was all this related to PACT Act hiring authorities, is this we hired a bunch of people from PACT Act or is this a congressional issue where we're just starting with VBA?

Yvonne - With surge hiring, a lot of people ended up leaving. The number one position that has left, after starting in December 2023, is RVSRs and VSRs and we're not just analyzing PACT Act positions, but they're mainly leaving because of retirement. But I do think PACT Act did kick this off, what are we doing to make sure we have retention.

Jeff - What we're seeing is a tremendous amount of new hires. Willie Clark and Josh Jacobs have been the best thing to happen to VBA in years. The union would be interested in any data of why people are leaving. I would think part of it is the stress of meeting quotas.

Yvonne - Training has been a highlight, to build that up. People want remote work and that is leading to issues with people wanting employees to come back into the office. We share this information with the union and leadership.

Geotracking Systems

➤ Marilyn Browser, Executive Director, Office of Asset Enterprise Management

Marilyn - EO 14057 requires telematics in all government vehicles. Sensitive national security or law enforcement vehicles can be exempted. Access to data is limited by facility only. How the data is used is something that will be coordinated with LMR. The Fleet Directives were updated in April and in accordance with the Executive Order. By FY 2026, existing VA vehicles have to have telematics installed. 70% have telematics installed currently. AFGE and VA have an MOU for the Directive but does address telematics. We do have stickers on some vehicles but not the entire fleet. Reliability for speeding is high at 99%.

Edra Scott - Reconciliation at the core/base is verification or confirmation of a few things. We're not tracking by individual. Let's say there's speeding of 90 MPH, we're asking that the driver be verified and the posted speed.

Jeff - What I'm hearing is you're monitoring the car and not the individual? Are you looking to see if the speed limit is being broken or a red-light camera?

Edra - The telematics in GOV would not let us know if a vehicle had run a red light, but it would do is provide data and information to confirm the red-light ticket. When you say we're not tracking individuals, the GOVs are dispatched in a myriad of ways.

Jeff - Well the vehicle does not drive itself yet, so you are tracking the individual.

Edra - We can certainly identify who is operating the vehicle, we're not trying to say that you can't do that.

Mark - Why is the transportation supervisor going in and tracking the use of that vehicle to see if an employee went to their house? When will that guidance go out so we can address the misuse of the geotrack system? And because all the vehicles aren't tagged, I believe

National Partnership Council Meeting Minutes **7/16/24 – 7/18/24 - San Diego, CA**

employees are being unknowingly set up with some bad actors on the other side. And now they come up with the Geotab system.

Marilyn - There is no timeline for guidance. Regarding stickers, we're relying on training that everyone needs to take and it is included in that training. We're working out sticker logistics to get them up. One concern being distance a vehicle may travel and that being used to flag possible misuse...distance cannot be used as a sole measure for misuse. If there's a pattern, it could be different.

San Diego VA Medical Center- Management and Union leadership

- Dr. Frank Pearson, Director, Jennifer Moreno VA Medical Center; Cyndi Aber, Associate Director
- Steven Schneblin, President, SEIU/NAGE Local R12-228; Janelle Redmon, Vice President
- Erin McLeod, NNU Local Director; Andrea Johnson, Local Communications Chair
- Darlene Basallo, AFGE Local 1061; Carlo Basallo, Chief Steward

General introductions were made. Dr. Pearson provided an overview of the VAMC, which is growing and is the fastest growing in VA. Already grown 4.6% this year. Very low community care bills.

MJ - Asked about what Dr. Pearson thinks VA could do that he learned in DoD.

Dr. Pearson - More standardization. Old saying that if you've been to one VA you've been to one VA. Best practices aren't widely shared. DEMs being gone and in DoD you can be ordered.

Erin McLeod - Previous relationship wasn't great and the understanding of zero growth, but we can't not replace nurses. If you can take that to Dr. Elnahal.

Jeff - Asked about Meaningful Mindfulness and whether it was voluntary for employees to sign.

Erin - Clarified it was voluntary and that Nurse floating is difficult but understands it is a requirement.

David - Asked about hiring because looking at the numbers.

Erin - 72/80 is hugely popular, we are well staffed and need to keep it that way.

Mark - The staffing methodology burns out staff. Minimal staffing number make it difficult to absorb one person calling out sick, and if it's happening to RNs, it's happening to LPNs and NAs.

Darlene - Collaborative joint training and a separate AFGE training. At this facility there are 3 Master Agreements. We also need basic training. Seasoned supervisors need training on the basics of supervision.

National Partnership Council Meeting Minutes

7/16/24 – 7/18/24 - San Diego, CA

Carlo - Transparency for harassment.

Steven - Largest union in the hospital with over 1700 employees, non-pros. Many employees need help with reading, writing, or using email. Issues with VCS and an employee who was inadvertently terminated after putting two weeks' notice in writing.

EO 14119 and Agency Plan

General NPC discussion on the Agency Plan and EO 14119. Denise mentioned that according to OPM, the Plan is meant to capture data at the level of recognition only. VA is far ahead of other agencies. The draft plan was reviewed by the group for feedback and editing. Denise will send Due Outs and the edited Plan via email and it will include any issues the unions can identify for b1 compliance issues.

NPC will develop its own metrics to be sent to Forums for measuring employee satisfaction, manager satisfaction and organizational performance. There may be discussion with NCOD to help develop this analysis. Discussion centered around what be used to measure/track these categories.

July 18, 2024

Meeting began at 9 a.m. EST

Quality Stand Down and Employee Wellness Day, VBA

➤ Erica Heath, Director, Operations Compliance

Erica - First ever VBA quality stand down and employee wellness day. Feedback regarding quality were consistent from employees. The stand down consisted of two hours of a nation-wide training provided by HCS. We didn't want a day of TMS, but of practical engagement and exercises. Critical mission folks weren't able to attend that day, but there are makeup days. We created alternate scheduled for those folks and that is for the call centers.

Irma - Do they have set aside time?

Erica - Yes. Next steps are to establish a Quality IPT to recommend improvements using RO best practices, to offer a recurrent training program for common errors that folks are having trouble overcoming, and being specific to trends occurring at the local level, and review RO local quality for program enhancements.

Link - Was labor invited to the stand down?

Erica - Yes, we engaged with labor and the VSOs while we were planning this. We had a symposium in April and received feedback.

VBA Local Management and Labor Leadership - EO 14119 Agency Plan Discussion

National Partnership Council Meeting Minutes **7/16/24 – 7/18/24 - San Diego, CA**

VBA local management and labor leadership were not able to attend. However, AFGE Local President Sona Anderson reported the following: The relationship we have with Management staff at SDRO is one based on partnership. The Master Agreement is the premise we work together from, and it is upheld. We don't agree on everything during bargaining but have managed to meet in the middle of the road on the issues that we don't. We meet with all divisions on a quarterly basis and our Labor Management Forum. If any issues of urgency arise, we make sure we address them immediately for the good of the bargaining unit. We know that this may sound unusual but it's the truth. Hopefully, this relationship will continue in the future, and we can continue to make positive contributions to the VA and the Bargaining Unit Employees we service.

Discussion on EO 14119 picked up around whether local HR was providing listings of BUEs to NAGE. Mark raised instances in which that was not always occurring. These appear sporadic and infrequent.

Talent Solutions Change – VHA/WMC

➤ Cristina L. Byrne, Director, Talent Solutions, Workforce Solutions (WMC)

Cristina - Selection process in VHA. pre-employment assessment options provide more information to make a better decision. Standardization across the enterprise is needed but is a slow and gradual process. Industrial Organization I/O Psychologists, 10 currently make up Talent Solutions. A strong job analysis can impact many other areas of the workplace.

Mark - Concerned that OPM has classification standards for Title 5 positions. Career ladder promotions and positions. My concern is that OPM writes out standards and are based on merit promotion principles and our contracts have merit promotion processes and procedures. Will the Department still be considering disabled vets and the requirement under the CFR? What about other CFR considerations?

Jeff - Asked for FAA model for review. When will the union be sitting at the table?

Cristina - At some points in the process, yes. This is how we're going to sample your workforce. Where the SMEs are participating in the panel, your members will be represented but you representatives could be more at the front end.

Jeff - We're going to poll SMEs, the union is concerned how the process is being done and when it's being done. We need to be there as that rolls out.

Cristina - I would like to get agreement to get agreement of how the process works up front.

Jeff - We want to be at the front end in the pre-decisional point, so we're not bobble dolls just nodding our heads.

Cristina - Absolutely.

Jeff - Are we doing the same thing for HR and managers? Leadership is the key.

Cristina - Selection procedures can be used to hire better managers as well.

National Partnership Council Meeting Minutes

7/16/24 – 7/18/24 - San Diego, CA

Jeff - Start with leadership first.

SAIL Updates, VHA

➤ Dr. Joe Francis, Executive Director, Analytics and Performance Integration

Dr. Francis discussed overall that VA and what it provides to employees with the granularity of detail, is not equaled anywhere else in the private sector. Much of the data is also shared with the public. Within SAIL, there are over 100 measures and it summarizes to help you navigate and find things. SAIL data released quarterly, it goes to the 4 corners. The question can be what do you focus on...we don't want people chasing after one number. The red diamond shows a decline but sometimes your numbers have to get worse but are really getting better, like if you're working down a backlog, they always get worse in the short term before they can get better. One year ago we had a lot more red on the chart and a lot more yellow.

MJ - Empirical data and the ways we can analyze data and would like to hear how you would approach this thought and criticism in measure. Do you have any data on increase in Veteran Suicide? Differences between virtual intervention vs face to face intervention?

Dr. Francis - If you want to get deep into the suicide prevention program, you should talk to Matt Borgan, or Dr. John McCarthy, one thing that I have learned is that suicide epidemiology is very hard. Our biggest challenge with suicide prevention are the veterans who do not see us for a variety of reasons. Look at the SAIL data and compare to the private sector. Every single comparison we fare better. With these metrics you can go in and look at your facilities performance. Sometimes we argue against bad measures, CMS wants to put a measure in place.

MJ - I think you should be meeting regularly with the USH and Dr. Suh, a pocket version of Dr. Francis.

Dr. Francis - We do this with Dr. Elnahal all the time, to discuss these things.

Employee Journey, OIT

➤ Nathan Tierney, Deputy Chief Information Officer and Chief People Officer, Office of People Science

Nathan discussed the results of OIT's HR authorities, the Special Salary Rate and OIT authorized headcount and position requests. Several initiatives based on employee feedback related to attraction and recruitment and enhance attraction strategies with the OIT brand, with updated webpages with employee testimonials. For onboarding, there is an increase in the number of New Hire Advocates. Focus on improving career growth support including the OIT Career Development Portal which highlights: Technical, Leadership and will soon cover Business. Retention requires recognizing constant organizational changes increase employee uncertainty. Transitioning to the VA Exit Survey to improve employee response rate.

National Partnership Council Meeting Minutes **7/16/24 – 7/18/24 - San Diego, CA**

With OITs HR Authority, they are working through details, promotions and awards. Details backlog has been successfully processed, all promotions backlog will be completed by end of the week and the awards backlog of been processed entirely.

SSR impact survey shows 83% of new hires indicated compensation as the most important or very important consideration for taking a position. The SSR is set to expire September 30, 2027. Staffing levels are not expected to grow in FY24 or FY25 due to fiscal constraints.

MJ asked how many programmers have left. VISTA information, can she find the manuals? OIT is aligning iFAMS and HRSmart.

MJ wants to talk to Dr. Evans about CERNER.

Bill-are you trying to cut down on the level of contractors used or are you happy with current level? Response, do not know.

NPC Recommendations Discussion

NPC discussed possible endorsements from the current meeting:

Bill Wetmore recommended endorsing:

- IDEA
- Stay in VBA
- Talent Solutions Change
- VBA Quality Stand Down
- SAIL

MJ recommended more discussion and possible endorsements related to:

- Identify best practices that can be shared/dispersed.
 - Financial health and budgetary savings, such as VA-DoD sharing agreements and Dr. Pearson's lowest community care costs.
- Comp and Pen examinations being done in-house by VHA.
- SAIL – every other week there are public relations efforts to highlight SAIL data and findings.

ONS - Increase education for employees to be trained on researching their anniversary dates .

- Jeff requested Dr. Saslo brief at the next NPC after Karen Ott speaks with him.
- Issue with waivers and promotions-need for local policies
- Facility Advisory Committee, why do we need it?

Jeff mentioned standardization of CBOCs (NFFE office space inconsistent) and continuous maintenance at CBOCs. NFFE is not getting information when new CBOCs are built.

Hybrid Collaboration – pre-conversion and revision of the standard, five days is the recommendation but 7403 states periodic review which has traditionally meant the group convened every two years and returning to that standard/expectation. MJ will work on this recommendation.

National Partnership Council Meeting Minutes
7/16/24 – 7/18/24 - San Diego, CA

Meeting ended at 4:00 p.m.