



**“Mind Games: The State of Veterans Mental Health”**

**Community Forum**

**Tuesday, July 19, 2016**

**After Action Report**

The Veterans Coalition of North Central Texas hosted its first mental health community Forum. **“Mind Games: The State of Veterans Mental Health”** was held at the Communities Foundation of Texas. It was developed by VCNCT Mental Health Committee, as part of a series of mental health education sessions. This mental health forum followed an education sessions, previously conducted at a VCNCT monthly meeting. **The mission of the VCNCT Mental Health Committee is: To provide assistance to Veterans dealing with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), & Military Sexual Trauma (MST). Assisting with free and confidential counseling services in NC Texas and the Ft. Hood/Killeen area, covering mental, physical, and spiritual health and healing.** The purpose of the forum was to bring together the community, Veterans and their families, Veterans Service Organizations, and State Representatives to openly discuss mental health, resources, advocacy, collaboration at all levels, and best practices.

There were two panels: **Community Leaders and State Representatives**. The first panel of community leaders consisted of four panelists discussing mental health as is relates to the following:

- 1. Moral Impact (Faith Based)**
- 2. Self-Advocacy**
- 3. The State of the VA**
- 4. Mental Health Services**
- 5. Recent shootings by Veterans**

The second panel of State Representatives also consisted of four panelists. They discussed mental health as it relates to the following:

- 1. Their Districts**
- 2. Services and support in their districts**
- 3. Self-Advocacy**
- 4. The Hazelwood Act**
- 5. 84<sup>th</sup> and 85<sup>th</sup> Texas Legislature**
- 6. Veterans Court**

The panelist responded to a series of questions, educating attendees on their organizations, services and resources, and personal and professional experiences. (Please see the event program for panelist bios) Upon the completion of both panels, the moderator opened up the floor for questions and comments. In addition to the attendees, VCNCT live streamed the event on their face book page. There were 67 attendees and 127 people logged on and viewed the event on social media. The following organizations participated as supporting partners of the event:

- 1. Disabled Veterans National Foundation**
- 2. Dallas County Veteran Services Office**

### 3. Mental Health America of Greater Dallas

### 4. Dallas Rotary Club

### 5. VCNCT Mental Health Committee

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The following are a series of questions asked by the moderator:

#### Panel I Questions

In regards to Mental Health...

1. Chaplain Stoglin, being on the front lines with each branch of service as the head Chaplain, tell us your thoughts to the moral impact of deployment and the impact upon their return?
2. Arnie Marks, as a Veteran and a mental health provider, what trends have you seen in treatment?
3. Mr. Roberts, your agency has been an advocate for mental health for 40+ yrs. Can you tell us the shifts in advocacy and the focus on mental health from Austin?
4. Dr. Culp, as a Clinical Director for an outpatient mental health clinic as the VA, have you seen a change in mental health request and services provided by the VA?
5. We understand there is an effort to privatize the VA. For the most part, we (the Coalition and partners) are against this effort. Can you tell me your thoughts on this starting with you Dr. Culp?
6. Matt, what can we do to advocate for mental health funding and support as we prepare for the next legislative sessions?
7. Chaplain, how can we engage the faith based community, educating them on the mental health needs of their veteran constituents? How can we support Veterans and their families as they deal with their faith?
8. Arnie, we were all impacted by the events of lately in Dallas and other cities. We are also aware that at least two of these acts were committed by Veterans. It would seem their mental state was one of war and taking out who they perceived as the enemy? While many are focusing on the trigger, what are your thoughts on their actions once they were triggered? **Follow up question**, reports say they were outstanding soldiers with awards for their service and had no record of receiving mental health services. Do you find this common, that those in most need are not in treatment?
9. Two minute closing remarks on what we can do as a community to support the mental health of Veterans as it relates to moral impact, advocacy, financial, VA services?

#### Panel II Questions

1. Tell us about the needs of your district as it relates to Veteran services and what you are doing in your office to support the Veteran community?
2. Judge Collins, tell us about Veterans Court in Dallas.
3. What do you see as the major accomplishments of the 84th Texas Legislature on behalf of veterans, members of the armed forces and their families?
4. What issues, related to veterans and military families, are emerging as you prepare for the 85th Legislature in Texas?
5. How do you recommend that veterans, members of the armed forces and their families advocate for public policies that affect them?
6. Rep. Sheets, you are a Veteran, what do you see as the differentiator in services when you discharged from service to now?
7. Rep, Turner you are well known as an advocate for Veterans in Tarrant County. Tell us what has worked for your district?
8. Rep. Hall same question for your district?
9. Two minute closing remarks on what we can do as a community to support the mental health of Veterans as it relates to moral impact, advocacy, financial, VA services?

Additional follow-up questions were asked by the moderator. Please visit our website for pictures and the full program agenda.

