



State of New Jersey

GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL ON ALCOHOLISM AND DRUG ABUSE
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NEIL VAN ESS
Acting Chairman

CELINA LEVY
Executive Director

MINUTES

Governor's Council on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse

November 16, 2021

Attendance: Celina Levy (Executive Director), Gregg Benson (Public Member), Betty Ann Cowling-Carson (Public Member), Donna DeStefano (Public Member), Frank Greenagel (Public Member), Donna Westhoven (AOC), Herb Kaldany (DOC), Lu Pereira (DOE), Lashunda Harden (DOH), Craig Sashihara (LPS), Chuck Robbins (DMAVA), Allison Samay (NJ President's Council)

Call to Order

The three hundred and fifty third regular meeting of the Governor's Council on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse was called to order at 10:00 a.m. by 2nd Vice Chair Donna DeStefano.

Open Public Meetings Act Statement

Ms. DeStefano announced that notice of this meeting was provided in compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act (N.J.S.A. 10:4-6 – 10:4-21). In addition, Ms. DeStefano stated that public comments were to be provided electronically, through the GCADA website contact portal between the hours of 10am and 1pm on the day of the meeting.

Roll Call

Katelyn Assenheimer called the roll. Members present and absent were noted for the record. Ms. DeStefano informed the Council that this meeting would be for informational purposes only due to the lack of quorum.

Veterans Day Resolution

Executive Director Celina Levy read a resolution recognizing November 11th as Veterans Day. This resolution will be voted on at the next meeting.

Presentation: “NJ Department of Military and Veterans Affairs (NJ DMAVA)”

Joe Nyzio, Chief of Veterans Benefits Bureau of the NJ Department of Military and Veterans Affairs gave an overview of the Department’s services initiatives and programs to the Council.

The Division of Veterans Services is responsible for two transitional housing programs in the state, Veterans Haven South and Veterans Haven North. These programs offer vocational counseling and training for homeless veterans.

The BG Doyle Veterans Memorial Cemetery in Wrightstown provides no charge burials to services members who die on or in active-duty status, honorably discharged veterans, Reservists and National Guard members with 20 years of service as well as spouses and children of the dependent.

There is currently a state-wide program for the construction or restoration of veteran and war monuments such as the WWII Memorial in Trenton and the Korean War Memorial in Atlantic City.

The Veterans Benefits Bureau offers such services as medal verifications, grants and aids in areas such as homelessness, transportation and education and also comprehensive programs to assist veterans and family members in PTSD counseling.

The NJ DMAVA is currently tasked with the “Governor’s Challenge to Prevent Suicide Among Members, Veterans and their Families”. This is an interagency team of military and civilian leaders to develop a plan to prevent suicide among veterans by implementing evidence-based practices and enhancing local and state-wide suicide prevention efforts.

Executive Director’s Report

Executive Director Celina Levy thanked Joe Nyzio for his presentation and took a moment to thank DMAVA for their service to New Jersey and the nation as well as to all other military, veterans and their families.

Ms. Levy shared that she and Deputy Director Rebecca Alfaro continue to have conversations with the Governor’s office about the long-term sustainability of the Alliance program and how to engage the Alliances in the administration’s efforts to raise awareness and educate New Jersey as part of collective overdose prevention goals. She also informed Council that Ms. Alfaro had presented to the NJ Association of Prosecutors to begin a conversation about building and strengthening partnerships.

Ms. Levy directed the Council to Department of Education link that was shared by DOE designee Lu Pereira. This grant opportunity allows for school districts to increase their capacity to deliver tier 2 and 3 mental health services.

Director of Prevention and Planning, Sara Thode informed the Council that the counties are working on their FY23 plans which are due to GCADA by February 2022. She also reminded the Council that our Volunteer of the Year virtual event will be held on December 14th.

Ms. Levy thanked the Council members for their guidance and support, County Coordinators, and all the Alliances for their good work especially in light of the challenges faced, GCADA staff for continuing to meet the unprecedented challenges with strong worth ethic and to Chairman Van Ess for his leadership.

Adjournment

Ms. DeStefano adjourned the meeting at 11:03.