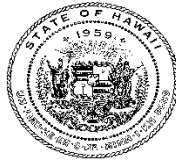


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**MILITARY AND VETERANS AFFAIRS
COMMITTEE MEETING**
Thursday, October 10, 2024
1:30 P.M. – 3:00 P.M.
Online via Zoom and in-person

MINUTES

ATTENDEES:

Trang Malone, Work Initiatives Manager, CVS Health, Chair Military and Veterans Affairs Committee
Cheryl Cross, Owner, C.A. Cross and Associates, LLC, Co-Chair Military and Veterans Affairs Committee
Ann Greenlee, Department of Labor, Veterans Employment and Training Services

GUESTS:

Deb Uemura, Hawaii National Guard Work for Warriors Program
Ramon Ruiz, DLIR, Local Veterans' Employment Representative, Oahu American Job Center
Steve Janke, Founder of Semper Forward - Wisconsin
Paige Williams, Island Palm Communities
Ka'eo Winner, Island Palm Communities
Carrie Akamine, Work Hawaii - Rent to Work
Leelynn Brady, Hiring Our Heroes, Hawaii Chapter
Robert Lietzke, Booz Allen

STAFF:

Bennette Misalucha, DLIR, Executive Director, Workforce Development Council

I. Call to Order

The Military and Veterans Affairs Committee meeting was called to order at 1:30 p.m. by Committee Chair Trang Malone.

II. Chair Report

Chair Malone reported on several successful military spouse events held over the last quarter. A resource and career fair was held on August 29th at Aliamanu Military Reservation Community Center with 52 attendees. Staff and participating agencies noted the high quality of attendees at this event. On September 25th, a military spouse resume and job search workshop was conducted in partnership with the Military Spouse Professional Network at HOH and AJC, which included a tour of the AJC facilities. Chair Malone announced that the AJC may attend the HOH Hawaii Amplify career event for spouses scheduled for October 28th. Additionally, Chair Malone will be introducing AJC staff to the employment and readiness staff with U.S. Army Garrison Hawaii on October 11th, as part of ongoing efforts to build bridges within military communities while supporting the AJC.

Chair Malone also shared information about her participation in a Workforce GPS webinar, an online technical assistance platform sponsored by the Employment and Training Administration through USDOL. The webinar focused on enhancing skills and support for veterans, covering AJC resources, recent guidance, and various ways to recognize local veteran employers at job fairs and community events. Chair Malone noted these resources are available free to everyone through Workforce GPS.

Prior to moving to presentations, Vice Chair Cheryl Cross reviewed the committee's goals and purpose, emphasizing their role in addressing workforce-related issues specific to military personnel, veterans, and their families.

https://labor.hawaii.gov/wdc/files/2024/10/SLIDES_Role-of-MVAC.pdf

II. Presentations

A. Work Hawaii Housing Assistance Programs

Carrie Akamine presented the Rent to Work program, which is funded by the Department of Housing and Urban Development. She introduced herself as currently being a case manager for Rent to Work, but also noted she would be beginning work with the new Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program (HVRP) starting the following week. The program provides housing subsidies for individuals or families who meet program eligibility requirements. Akamine explained that participants must be validated as meeting the HUD definition of homelessness (sheltered or unsheltered), facing eviction, or at risk of homelessness, with total household income at or below 60% of Hawaii's median income. All participants must be willing to work and have required identification documents including birth certificate, social security card, valid ID, and any applicable immigration paperwork.

The program provides several key services including short-term rental subsidies similar to Section 8 vouchers, where participants pay 30% of their gross monthly income for rent with utility allowances potentially affecting the rent calculation. Akamine emphasized their housing placement assistance component, noting they have a dedicated housing assistance specialist who works with clients once they receive their voucher/coupon. She mentioned recent success in placing clients in affordable housing, as the program's goal is for participants to sustain housing independently after the 1-2 year program period.

During the extensive discussion period, Deb Uemura raised multiple questions about National Guard eligibility. She specifically asked about soldiers who are "couch surfing"

or sleeping on cots at their units due to lack of housing, and whether National Guard members' training or weekend duty orders would qualify them for veteran status. Ann Greenlee provided detailed clarification about the differences between Title 10 and Title 32 service, explaining that Reserve Component members (Army Reserve, Navy Reserve) fall under Title 10 organizations, while National Guard members serve under the governor's command through Title 32 unless specifically activated for federal duty. She noted that even one day of Title 10 active duty would qualify someone as a veteran for program purposes.

Robert Lietzke sought clarification about training orders, which led to further discussion about the distinction between different types of service. Ann Greenlee noted that many Air Guard members often qualify due to active duty service, while this is less common among Army Guard members.

Bennette Misalucha inquired about coordination with other agencies, specifically asking about the iPad-based system used by City and County Homeless Section workers for accessing client information in the field. Akamine confirmed their integration with the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), explaining how this system allows them to access critical documentation and avoid duplication of services. She provided an example of recently accessing a veteran's DD-214 through the system, which helped streamline the service process.

Ramon Ruiz inquired about the historical requirement for DVOP involvement with HVRP programs. Ann Greenlee clarified the policy change under the new VPL, while Ramon expressed interest in establishing stronger connections between their offices. Akamine noted that their offices were in close proximity, which could facilitate better collaboration.

Cheryl Cross made a broader point about systemic issues, encouraging the group to think beyond just identifying problems and focus on finding solutions for Guard and Reserve members who often fall through gaps in service provision.

B. Island Palm Communities' Eligibility and Application Process

<https://labor.hawaii.gov/wdc/files/2024/10/ISland-Palm-Communities-Presentation-Slide-Deck.pdf>

Paige Williams, accompanied by Ka'eo Winner, presented on Island Palm Communities' housing programs across their various military installations including Schofield, Wheeler, Helemano, Red Hill, Fort Shafter, Tripler, and Aliamanu Military Reservation. Williams detailed their current rental structure, with rates starting at \$2,200, noting that for active duty members it could go as high as full BAH, while non-active duty rates could reach up to \$3,669 for certain units.

Williams emphasized their pet-friendly policy as a key differentiator in the housing market, particularly for those struggling to find off-post housing with pets. They allow a two-pet limit with a restricted breed list. For active duty members, there is no pet deposit, while DoD and retirees pay a small one-time fee.

During the Q&A session, Cheryl Cross questioned the 20-year service requirement, leading Williams to clarify that VA documentation showing 100% disability status would

also qualify. She explained that when reviewing DD-214s, they look at sections A through E to verify the total years of service.

Bennette Misalucha inquired about potential expansion to non-military residents, referencing previous housing shortage situations. Williams explained that they had recently reopened to non-active duty residents but haven't expanded to the general population. Current eligibility is limited to DoD contractors and retirees alongside active duty.

Trang Malone probed about general veteran eligibility and transitioning service member options. Williams acknowledged they currently only accept retirees or 100% disabled veterans but mentioned ongoing discussions about broadening veteran eligibility criteria. She described their process for helping current residents transition to retirement, including relocating them to units qualified for non-active duty occupancy.

When questioned about National Guard and Reserve eligibility, Williams clarified that reservists in active status qualify under the active duty category, while National Guard members currently fall under the general population category, noting this as an area they hope to address in future policy updates.

Ka'eo Winner contributed to the discussion by highlighting their success in employing military spouses, using Paige Williams' own career progression from leasing consultant to leasing manager as an example. Winner emphasized their connection to WinnCompanies' broader network of 23 different sites, including 12 military locations, which allows for employee transfers when military spouses PCS to new locations.

C. How to Build an Effective State Talent Attraction Model for Transitioning military personnel

Steve Janke, a Marine veteran previously stationed at Kaneohe, presented on his experience developing the "Mission Wisconsin" program. The program, which ran successfully as a state program from 2018-2020, focused on creating public-private partnerships around transition solutions for military personnel.

Janke emphasized that the paradigm around transition has shifted since the pandemic, becoming more location-driven rather than solely employment-focused. He stressed the importance of communicating comprehensive information about communities, including schools, safety, housing affordability, and economic opportunities.

Janke shared examples of successful state programs:

- Kentucky's VALOR program: Created 44 occupational pathways for accelerated licensure after service, matching 153 different MOSs
- Virginia's V3 program: Focuses on talent retention, restricting military base hiring events to companies with Virginia-based jobs
- Maine's Boots to Roots: A nonprofit organization with 50% state grant funding and 50% philanthropic funding
- Ohio Works: An economic development outreach program

- North Dakota: Department of Commerce program contracting with Semper Forward for marketing and talent attraction

During discussion, Ramon Ruiz inquired about specific employment solutions being implemented in other states. The conversation focused on the need to create accelerated pathways for various sectors beyond IT and cybersecurity. Janke recommended starting with one employer as a pilot program and suggested utilizing veteran service officers as key points of contact for post-employment support.

IV. Roundtable Discussion on the Committee's 2025 Priorities

The committee discussed priorities aligned with four pillars of the Hawaii State Plan:

1. **Alignment with Economic Development:** Ann Greenlee suggested focusing on logistics and renewable energy as growth industries. Ramon Ruiz proposed organizing employment sectors into broad categories (healthcare, hospitality, technology) to help transitioning service members identify career paths. Robert Lietzke highlighted the universal application of technology skills across various sectors.
2. **Engagement with Education and Training:** Discussion centered on strengthening partnerships with local educational institutions. Deb Uemura raised concerns about younger National Guard members lacking the experience requirements for certain positions while being unable to take time off for additional training. She also noted the discontinuation of the Pacific Region Onward to Opportunity program, which had been a valuable certification pipeline.
3. **Equity and Diversity Commitment:** Leelynn Brady introduced the committee to local Centers for Independent Living that assist veterans with their transition to independence. Bennette Misalucha clarified that this pillar aligns with WIOA's focus on providing access and support to those with barriers to employment.
4. **Workforce Synergy and Collaboration:** The discussion addressed changing attitudes toward hiring military spouses, with Ka'eo Winner and Robert Lietzke sharing their organizations' successful experiences with internal mobility programs for military spouses.

V. Executive Director's Report

Executive Director Bennette Misalucha presented an update on the transition planning of the Workforce Development Council's new structure. She reported that the council recently held a Future of Work Conference which was deemed quite successful. During this period, the council also recognized Workforce Development Heroes for their contributions. Looking ahead to the next quarter, Misalucha outlined three key focus areas: training board members with specific emphasis on building their understanding of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) academy, continuing efforts to build capacity for local areas, and increasing public awareness of American Job Centers. The council is also working to integrate these efforts with ongoing projects such as the Long-Term Care Workforce Taskforce. Misalucha noted the importance of incorporating the committee's comments into a document that will be presented at the next meeting.

V. Announcements and Public Testimony

Ramon Ruiz announced a hiring event scheduled for December 13th at the Akaka VA Clinic in Kapolei, targeting 35 employers. Ann Greenlee added that a Stand Down event for homeless veterans and those at risk of homelessness would be conducted simultaneously.

There were no public testimonies.

VI. Next Meeting The next meeting target is late January, 2025, but will determine the precise date later

VII. Adjournment Chair Malone adjourned the meeting at 3:05 p.m.

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