

**Transition Brainstorming Meeting:
1/30/25, 1-2pm**

Participants:

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|------------------|-----------------|----------------|-------------------|
| Adam LaVigne | Brian Pegouske | Jim Yates | Steve McCartney |
| Alex Szwarc | Tabitha Welch | Jeremy Suttles | Michelle Luttrell |
| Patrick Forystek | Kai Gritter | Dean Sienko | Joan Ilardo |
| Ann Annis | Jonathan Garvey | Dave Schneider | Parker Brisbee |
| Kathleen Oberst | Ariel Hawthorne | | |

- K. Oberst mentioned that the Suicide Prevention brainstorming meeting held on 1/29/25 had good conversation regarding transition issues. The notes from each session will be distributed to all and may serve to provide synergy to projects.
- S. McCartney-noted in addition to resource and education discussions, the role of individual responsibility should be incorporated. A good number of resources are available yet characteristics such as age, maturity, duration of enlistment, and co-occurring mental health issues may impact how an individual approaches and absorbs information. Individuals evolve and future needs/goals may not be considerations at the time of separation. Scope of transition is also important – is service member in US or outside US immediately prior to separation.
 - There are resources available, National Guard and Reserves do a good job – soldiers are working at both civilian and military jobs.
 - MVA also sponsors [Buddy to Buddy mentorship](#) programs. Program uses trained veteran volunteers having lived experience. More likely to be seen as a trusted source. Veterans work with their buddy to navigate steps and resources for benefits. Always looking for more volunteers to serve as buddies, opportunity for spouses to volunteer as well.
- A. LaVigne – multiple experiences with Transition Assistance Program (TAP). TAP provides a national level focus which is not fully connected to an individual's local/regional resource availability. It was difficult to understand how to get connected to resources across different settings and was not particularly relevant for citizen-soldiers. Experience was overwhelming in terms of information delivered. Also mentioned was the need for family/friends to understand the soldier's experiences during their time of service. Returning to hometown is not always "back to normal" and transition can take months to years to reacclimate.
 - Transition Assistance point persons could be helpful in that they are employed more regionally, they may be better positioned to understand local resources and ways to access them.
 - Michigan National Guard has a transition coordinator for this understanding of what is available in communities.
 - National Guard sponsors yellow ribbon events to support transition. These events provide training and identify services and resources.
 - Supplemental programs like the Guard provides may be useful for those leaving active duty as well. Initial thoughts when separating are just wanting to be home, mindset is "I'm home and I'm safe". May be more receptive to information later.
- B. Pegouske – VA is at a disadvantage in MI since there is no active-duty post. When trying to recruit people back to Michigan, don't know where they settle and how to identify them in the community. This is where importance of community outreach efforts comes in. There is a tremendous amount of misinformation out there and need to connect at the individual level to clear up confusion.

- A priority area is to get out into community where veterans work, live, and play
- P. Forystek – Over half of veterans use some education benefits. Schools are transition points and could provide tremendous opportunity as touch points. There is potential to get a lot of information to them through universities/community colleges. This is an opportunity to grow and partner more with local/regional/state agencies. MSU has highest veteran enrollment including a significant number of military affiliated (dependent) students.
- [TAP](#) – focus on general information but also provides tracks based on future interest areas: business, vocational, education, and additional programs. There can be access issues for these with waitlists to get into classes over 1 year.
 - A service member is theoretically eligible to start TAP 1 year ahead of getting out. However, may not be best prepared to attend class because doing their ‘regular’ job at the same time. The information can be an overload at a time when they are looking forward to getting out.
 - Responsibility of leadership was noted here to address barriers or challenges to training. Important that supervisors allow ample time for transition education but this can vary.
- An idea was offered to create a subsequent TAP class through educational settings.
 - Cons – doing another TAP event, individual might have bad taste in mouth about military service and not value the offering.
 - Pros – evaluate Joint service transcripts, what service-connected training and/or MOS education might qualify for academic credit, need to be creative to disseminating information for promoting learning, different individuals will need and respond to different education platforms and methods. Certain job specialties may have more targeted academic credit ex. nursing, cyber security, nuclear supports. Consider support of programs like [Warrior-Scholar](#) to help promote educational success.
 - Share information through educational institutions, MSU and others don’t have budgets to attend all education fairs but would be a good opportunity to share information; partner with MVAA how to attract more vets to MI overall, emphasize sharing of 1-800-MICH-VET resource.
 - Suggestion for a MI-based registry to house educational institutions and related information, create a deliverable package, leverage vet friendly school information,
- K. Bohnsack – consider influence of political overtones. MI is ahead in some areas and lagging in others. Provided example of MSU’s student center location in a basement in contrast to facilities at other Big 10 universities (Penn State or Rutgers). Learn from states that are doing it right. How to support MI university investments, encourage all to stay engaged and involved. Commented that best success in connecting with veterans has been through resource fairs having subject matter experts in attendance who can register or sign people up for benefits on the spot.
- MSU Extension – can support community engagement and involvement in each county, possible support for benefit courses and other related courses
- P. Brisbee – discussed the value of VA outreach after separating from service. However, follow-through is important. Timing of this outreach can also be important, if it occurs too quickly after discharge – a veteran might not know the right questions to ask at the time while they are acclimating to civilian life.