

**Veterans’ Service-Related Ailments Task Force
Meeting Minutes
October 17, 2022, 12pm-2pm**

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

- a. Meeting called to order by William Sutton at 12:08pm.
- b. Roll call taken and quorum established with 11 members at roll call.
- c. IDVA staff members present: Sara Augustinas, Kourtney Hopkins.

Senator Wilcox	Present
Representative Kifowit	Present
Representative Swanson	Present
Director Prince or designee	Present
COL John Fulk	Absent
Christopher Spears	Absent
Nikita Richards	Present
Kimyada Wellington	Present
Michael Iwanicki	Present
Michelle Ramlow	Present
Summer Padaoan	Present
Eric Peterson	Present
William Sutton	Present
VACANT	
VACANT	

2. Reading and Approval of Minutes from September 26, 2022

- a. Representative Swanson- Motion to approve minutes.
- b. Michael Iwanicki- Second.
- c. Meeting minutes from September 26, 2022 approved.

3. Old Business

- a. Review templates for report- Veteran Suicide Taskforce template
 - i. Kourtney Hopkins- Shared Veteran Suicide Taskforce Report via WebEx. Sara Augustinas provided link in chat for taskforce members to review.
 - ii. Senator Wilcox- Representative Kifowit, did you receive any feedback on the style of the report?
 - iii. Representative Kifowit- we received positive feedback from the report. The group did not receive any critique on missing information regarding suicide and suicide prevention.

iv. Nikita Richards- I am familiar with this document and want to thank you and your colleagues for this work. I think it is a good template for us to work from.

v. Sutton- Thoughts from anybody else?

vi. Summer Padoan- I think it is easy to follow. I think our work will fit nicely within this template if we break our findings down by workgroup sections.

vii. Sutton-Anybody else? I agree with Summer. This is a very clean and well put together document. Does anybody have any other templates that they want to share?

viii. Sutton- Entertain a motion to utilize this template?

ix. Richards-motion

x. Michael Iwanicki-second

xi. Sutton-any other discussion? Hearing none. Template adopted for our taskforce.

4. New Business

a. Task Force Vote on requesting a deadline extension

i. Sara Augustinas- November 15-17 and November 28-December 1 are veto session days. There are six days on legislation calendar for the request to be filed and moved through both chambers for one word change which is a simple change. The request could very easily move through the General Assembly or could potentially not. We as a group would not have a definitive answer until December 1st. Bottom line is that is if we need to have something ready to go by December 1st but didn't end up needing it, it would be positive and give the group more time, but the official legislative change would not be effective until December 1st. I will turn over to legislators on the call for their input as well.

ii. Representative Kifowit- we should file what we have if we have something put together. One of the work arounds is to submit a skeleton report and go back and amend it or put in for the date change. I think we can go back retroactively in Dec/Jan. I don't think it is a hard date. I think we can always change it in the future. Passes the house, passes the senate. We have two ways we can go about it.

iii. Representative Swanson-We are on a time crunch now. Let's get a document put together and move forward. I think we can go forward with a draft copy with an expectation of have a completed document later.

iv. Senator Wilcox- Caution is probably best. No guarantee on veto.

v. Representative Kifowit- it can always be amended and file a corrected version I believe.

vi. Sutton- The legislators make a good point. As long as we can go back and amend that is good. A skeleton draft would be awesome but again it is up to the whole task force.

Senator Wilcox	Yes
Representative Kifowit	Yes
Representative Swanson	Yes
Director Prince or designee	Yes
COL John Fulk	Absent
Christopher Spears	Absent
Nikita Richards	Yes
Kimyada Wellington	Yes
Michael Iwanicki	Yes
Michelle Ramlow	Yes
Summer Padoan	Yes
Eric Peterson	Yes
William Sutton	Yes
VACANT	
VACANT	

Majority in favor of requesting the extension, with the understanding that a draft report is still needed by December 1, 2022 due to the timeline.

vii. Padoan- What are the next steps to request the extension?

viii. Representative Kifowit- I got it.

b. Review Working Group Drafts for Annual Report

Re-entry to Illinois Program

i. Sutton- Representative Kifowit has a draft and we will get that out to everybody by the end of the meeting. Next three groups are Summer.

Training and Outreach to veterans

i. Padoan-Not much of an update from last meeting. I need writer for training and outreach to veterans. It is a larger group but I can't write drafts from all three groups, I need help.

ii. Iwanicki- I will work with you on that one.

iii. Padoan -Thank you, Mike.

iv. Sutton-Anything else on that one?

Training and Outreach for VHA providers

- i. Padoan - No real update from last month. Will and I discussed writing MOU so that we have a draft to start off with. If we have a draft written, we can propose that as an Appendix in the response to get the state to work with local VHA facilities in Illinois.
- ii. Padoan - If we are proposing an MOU between VAC and IDVA and VHA, would it be a three-part MOU, not sure how that would work?
- iii. Anthony Vaughn- I have questions on that also. What is the focus there on training and outreach for VHA providers and C&P examiners? What is it that we are trying to influence?
- iv. Padoan - Always good questions. VHA providers group is trying to address when a veteran tries to get evidence and support for their claim many providers have a lot of pushbacks in doing so, the intent is to get a better understanding that they are permitted to complete the paperwork and help the veterans.
- v. Vaughn- Getting VHA providers to actually do what their rules and regulations, processes are supposed to do which is to provide their opinions and DBQs.
- vi. Padoan - Other questions and comments?

Training and Incentives for contracted C&P Examiners

- i. Padoan- Eric and I put together a lot of ideas. Multi-level intent on this one. We want to get the contractors who are currently contracted to provide appropriate and thorough exams. Not based on our own opinion but VA reports. We have an OIG report we can provide as an appendix. Encourage the state to provide additional training to the providers and get a MOU on CEUs out to examiners. We are also recommending military sensitivity training and getting them to understand specific conditions related to military service. A lot of examiners think some conditions are normal and age related rather than military caused conditions. Another initiative is getting additional contractors. Getting the state to push and promote more providers to become C&P examiners. We tried to reach out to contracted facilities and providers on what we thought would be incentivizing for them to become examiners, but we did not get a response. I don't anticipate we will get a response. We will include in our recommendation that some follow up be done on asking providers what would be important to them or veterans friendly emblem they can put on their business. Eric?
- ii. Eric Peterson- Summarized it well. From my perspective, personal experience and organization members my feedback from them.
- iii. Padoan- Any other thoughts on that one? Just need to work on getting this into draft form.
- iv. Sutton- That's all we got for different work groups.

5. Member Updates

a. Swanson- I talked with MG Cobetto at IL National Guard and am going to talk to MG Neely about regional training for National Guard members. I also talked to Director Prince this morning and he is going to reach out to MG Neely, and we are going to figure out how we set up a training program for NG members retiring to explain benefits available to them and discuss opportunities on federal benefits and talk about veteran homes when they get older. We are moving forward and are excited to be able to put that together and get that moving here in Illinois. Any questions?

b. Sutton- Thank. Any other updates?

c. Eric- Project Headspace and Timing is looking into establishing Troops on Trails in next two months taking veterans and bringing them on outreach retreats. Activities would include kayaking, fishing trips at state parks in and around Iroquois and Kankakee River. Instead of taking time away for trips not local, we are creating a local program to help with accessibility.

d. Sutton-If you can share that information flyer website or something to share with the group so we can get the word out there.

6. Adjournment

a. Michele Ramlow- Motion to adjourn

b. Representative Swanson-Second

Meeting adjourned- 12:43pm

7. Next scheduled Meeting is November 14, 2022, 12:00pm-2:00pm

8. Resources provided in chat:

Agenda's are also posted on the IDVA website at <https://www2.illinois.gov/veterans/about-us/Pages/Veterans-Service-Related-Ailments-Task-Force-Meetings-Information.aspx>

Template is on invite and here:

http://www.ildistrict84.com/uploads/6/7/1/1/6711327/final_report_vst_pdf.pdf