

South Dakota Joining Forces Status Report

January 5, 2017

In the first 6 month of the SDJF Initiative, all of the selected communities have been contacted with the exception of Wagner. Wagner will have the initial briefing on the 10th of this month. SDJF was invited to do a presentation in Clear Lake. The communities are in different levels of development. Milbank will be developing the resource guide and starting to educate the community about the program. By the end of the month, Sturgis, Mitchell, and Huron will be in same place. Once these communities are at that stage, the rest of the communities will be brought to that level also. I have found that it is best to work with a few communities and bring them to completion prior to starting with other communities. One of the main challenges is to get the elected officials to attend the meetings. Those officials that attend are very supportive of the program. I have started to personally invite the officials through letters and phone calls.

The Native American reservations have been difficult to approach with the initiative. I believe that I will have to find a way to visit with the Tribal VSOs on the Reservations in order to show them how the Initiative could be beneficial to their Veterans and communities.

SDJF is working hand in hand with the MyVA Initiative on both sides of the state. This partnership will be helpful in serving the Veterans and to show what gaps exist in the state. The VA leadership is very supportive of what is taking place in the communities. Another partnership is with 211 in the areas where they have established their services. The use of 211 provides easy access to the resources within an area.

The way forward is to work with the remaining selected communities to establish their Joining Forces. Then to reach out into other communities to help them establish. SDJF will continue to work with the many agencies to build the cooperation to make getting the services need to our clients.

Another portion of the Initiative is to use the network to provide education to both communities and to the Veterans, Service Members, and their Families about issues that have relevance to their lives.

SDJF will become a venue for distribution of information and fulfill the concept of “No Wrong Door” for our Veterans, Service Members, and Families.

We have had a couple of success stories already in some of the communities. A suicidal family member was able to get help through a local agency after talking with an individual who is working with the community Joining forces. Another community was able to help a service member with help with medical bills.

