

South Dakota National Guard

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Symposium connects service providers with military resources

By Sgt. 1st Class Theanne Herrmann
SDNG Public Affairs Office

SPEARFISH, S.D. – The South Dakota Coalition for Military Families hosted a symposium to help Black Hills area service providers learn more about military benefits available for service members, veterans and their families, Sept. 9, at the Holiday Inn Convention Center in Spearfish.

The SDCMF's goal is for every South Dakota military family to be connected to the right program, resource, service or benefit at the right time.

"Too often, our service members encounter challenges with finances, employment, education, mental or physical health and they do not know where to go or who to reach out to," said Lt. Col. Bryan Jacobson, SDNG family program director.

Within the past three years, the coalition has brought people together to see how they can work together and better serve, said Neal Lutke from the Pennington County Veterans Services Office

"We look at the Coalition for Military Families as a great opportunity to do some networking and to find out about other resources that we can refer veterans or their families' to," said Lutke.

Opening remarks for the symposium were made by guest speakers Lt. Gov. Matt Michels, Maj. Gen. Tim Reisch, South Dakota National Guard adjutant general and retired Command Sgt. Maj. Larry Zimmerman, secretary of Veteran's Affairs for South Dakota.

"We have so many resources in this world," said Michels, a U.S. Navy veteran. "We just need to access them. The coalition has the capability to connect individuals with the help they need whether they are service men or women dealing with direct or extended family issues."

Informational booths were set up for the attendees to learn more about the benefits a military family is eligible to use such as Hero 2 Hired, Vet Center, South Dakota Vocational Rehabilitation Services, Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve, SDNG's Service Member and Family Support branch and the Mobile Vet Center.

"Our goal is to develop a network of professional organizations and providers across South Dakota that ensures the right resources are available for our service members and their families, no matter when or where they might need them," said Jacobson.

One of the many resources available to help reach people wherever they are is the Mobile Vet Center, which provides counseling for post-traumatic stress disorder, sexual trauma, marriage and family issues and suicide prevention.

“When a Vet Center is miles from your home, it’s a long drive to access its many services,” said Jeff Gorr, veteran outreach program specialist. “When those services come to you on wheels, life gets a little more convenient.”

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High resolution photos are available at www.flickr.com/photos/southdakotationalguard



150909-Z-CW157-001: U.S. Army Maj. Lona Christensen, South Dakota National Guard’s Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve program director, informs Weston Neiffer, National American University associate vice president of military services, on the roles and capabilities of the ESGR program during a South Dakota Coalition for Military Families symposium at the Holiday Inn Convention Center in Spearfish, S.D., Sept. 9, 2015. The goal of the symposium is for service providers to learn about military benefits available for service members, veterans and their families. (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. 1st Class Theanne Herrmann/Released)



150909-Z-CW157-002: South Dakota National Guard Adjutant General Maj. Gen. Tim Reisch speaks to service providers during the South Dakota Coalition for Military Families symposium at the Holiday Inn Convention Center in Spearfish, S.D., Sept. 9, 2015. The goal of the symposium is to inform service providers about military benefits available for service members, veterans and their families (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. 1st Class Theanne Herrmann/Released)



150909-Z-CW157-004: South Dakota Lt. Gov. Matt Michels speaks to service providers during the South Dakota Coalition for Military Families symposium at the Holiday Inn Convention Center in Spearfish, S.D., Sept. 9, 2015. The goal of the symposium is to inform service providers about military resources available for service members, veterans and their families (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. 1st Class Theanne Herrmann/Released)



150909-Z-CW157-005: South Dakota Lt. Gov. Matt Michels, right, speaks with Jeff Gorr, veteran outreach program specialist, about the process of taking care of individuals inside the Mobile Vet Center during the South Dakota Coalition for Military Families symposium, parked outside the Holiday Inn Convention Center, in Spearfish, S.D., Sept. 9, 2015. The goal of the symposium is to inform service providers about military resources available for service members, veterans and their families (U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. 1st Class Theanne Herrmann/Released)

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