

Task Force Members

**Vickie Adamson**  
Task Force Co-Chair  
Wake County Board of Commissioners

**Richard Spyrison**  
Task Force Co-Chair  
President, Wake County Veterans' Council  
Commander, Cary American Legion Post 67

**Maria Cervania**  
Wake County Board of Commissioners

**Shinica Thomas**  
Vice Chair  
Wake County Board of Commissioners

**Paul Berry**  
Regional Network Director  
Veterans Bridge Home

**Frank Eagles**  
Former Mayor  
Town of Rolesville

**Brenda Jones**  
Adjutant  
DAV Woodrow Wilson Chapter 1, Knightdale

**Colleen Murray**  
Spouse of Veteran

**Elree T. Smith**  
Past President  
Wake County Veterans' Council  
Member, VFW Post 10225



**Veterans Services**

[wakegov.com/veterans](http://wakegov.com/veterans)

**Jenny Coats**  
Business Manager  
Wake County Community Services Department

**Frank Cope**  
Director  
Wake County Community Services Department

**Chris Dillion**  
Assistant County Manager  
Wake County

**Douggy Johnson II**  
Administrator  
Wake County Veterans Services Office

**Matt Roylance**  
Deputy Director  
Wake County Community Services Department



SUCCESS AFTER SERVICE:  
Helping Veterans Thrive



According to the U.S. Census, nearly 49,000 veterans called Wake County home in 2019. In order to address the needs of this important population, in 2021 Wake County convened a task force of elected officials, community leaders and county staff. The task force, spearheaded by Commissioner Vickie Adamson, was charged with identifying a menu of recommendations that staff and commissioners can use to enhance the level of services we provide veterans in our community.

The task force met five times from March 2021 to February 2022. Members explored services currently available to our veterans – including

those from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, N.C. Department of Military and Veterans Affairs, N.C. Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Substance Abuse Services, Wake County Veterans Services Office and Wake County Housing Affordability and Community Revitalization Department. The group discussed veterans court, veterans crisis intervention team training and Veterans Bridge Home.

Drawing upon this information, along with the knowledge of each member, the task force developed and ranked a list of recommendations.



## Recommendations

1. **In partnership with municipalities and nonprofits, engage in a county-wide effort to increase the number of veterans enrolled in benefits they have earned through their service.**

Launch a coordinated communication campaign that targets not only veterans, but their spouses and families.

2. **Improve veterans' interactions with the justice system by educating law enforcement officers on veterans' issues and creating a dedicated veterans' court.**

Many jurisdictions provide training for law enforcement officers, but some do not. Veterans' courts in Cumberland and Forsyth counties have proven effective and could serve as models for Wake County.

3. **Provide additional employment assistance to veterans and families who are transitioning out of active duty.**

Veterans leaving service have valuable skills, but it can be difficult to explain those skills on a resume in a way that civilian hiring managers understand. Wake County Government could also become designated as a military-friendly employer and advocate for increased reciprocity for occupational licenses.

4. **On Veterans Day, provide additional recognition of Wake County employees who are veterans.**

The county has multiple communications channels, both internal and external, that can be used to highlight and honor our veteran employees' service.

5. **Encourage more organizations to join NCServes.**

NCServes is a coordinated system of public, private and nonprofit organizations working together to provide support to veterans and their families. There are regional NCServes networks across the state, and the networks in Mecklenburg and Cumberland counties are more robust than in Wake County.

6. **Create a veterans' preference in hiring policy for Wake County Government.**

Wake County's system could mimic the point-based federal system.

7. **Partner with nonprofit organizations and government agencies to improve mental health services for veterans and their families.**

Veterans commonly experience Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, substance abuse and homelessness. Quality services exist, but not everyone knows how to find providers. Capacity can also be an issue.

8. **Provide resources for female veterans listed in an easy-to-find format.**

The population of female veterans is small relative to male veterans, but it is growing. Ensure that services and communication efforts are targeted toward this population.

9. **Establish a veterans' cemetery and nursing home in Wake County.**

These facilities are provided by the N.C. Department of Military and Veterans Affairs, but Wake County could play an advocacy role.

10. **Improve directional signage to veterans' facilities, including hospitals, nursing homes, cemeteries and veterans services offices.**

Many facilities have no signage at all. The few facilities that do often have only one sign at the interstate exit, which is not sufficient to direct visitors all the way to the facility.

11. **Create a Board of Commissioners liaison to the veteran community.**

The board chooses a representative to serve on standing committees and could similarly designate a representative to be a liaison with veterans' groups in the community.

12. **Participate in the Governor's and Mayor's Challenges to prevent veteran suicide.**

Participating in these events can be labor-intensive, but it often opens up grant opportunities that can benefit the community. These programs are particularly effective when implemented year over year.

13. **Partner with "Hidden Heroes."**

Hidden Heroes is a nonprofit organization that brings attention to the untold stories of military caregivers and seeks solutions for the tremendous challenges and long-term needs they face. They have a specific toolkit for cities and counties that might be helpful.

14. **Establish a mechanism to obtain regular feedback from the veteran community.**

The work of the task force has officially concluded, but periodic updates and check-ins would provide valuable ongoing feedback.

15. **Fly the POW/MIA flag on county-owned property.**

The National POW/MIA Flag Act authorized this flag to be flown at all federal facilities, and a similar action could be taken at the county level.