

## NC DMH/DD/SUS DIRECTOR KELLY CROSBIE



My father's military service during Vietnam was the single most defining event in my family's life. Like many veterans' children, I

was incredibly proud of my dad's service and would name him as my hero every time we wrote that essay in school. But what I didn't understand—what I had no words for—was his deep sadness, his anxiety and paranoia, his isolation, his anger.

I didn't realize then that the war had shaped him into the man he became—the father and husband he was. I've been told that the man who went to Vietnam was not the same man who came back. He was in his early twenties, with a young wife and children, trying to balance the weight of his experiences with the responsibilities of work and family. But he didn't have the tools to cope with his emotions or nightmares.

As I grew older, I learned to name his behaviors and symptoms. I began to understand that what I had experienced

wasn't necessarily 'normal.' My own anxiety, my hyper-vigilance, my tendency to see the world as threatening and fearful—these were things I learned from him. His trauma became my trauma. It became our family's trauma.

My dad needed help. His family needed help. We ask so much of our military members and their loved ones. War and service change lives in ways that cannot be undone. The least we can do is honor their sacrifices to the fullest extent possible.

That means ensuring they have access to a trauma-informed, empathetic, and easy-to-navigate system of mental health and substance use care—one that supports not only active military and veterans but also their families. That's part of our mission every day at the Department of Health and Human Services.

## GOVERNOR'S INSTITUTE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR DR. SARA MCEWEN



The Governor's Institute is proud to stand alongside the many organizations and individuals dedicated to supporting North Carolina's Service Members, Veterans, and their Families. For over 30 years, our mission has been to advance health and well-being by focusing on substance use disorder and addiction medicine, while fostering innovation, education, and collaboration across the healthcare and behavioral health fields.

We recognize that the challenges faced by service members and veterans often extend to their loved ones. Families play a pivotal role in providing care and support, and they too need resources and recognition for their efforts.

Through the Governor's Institute's partnerships with state and community organizations, we strive to address the unique needs of this population by training healthcare providers to better understand military culture, promoting programs like the NC Governor's Working Group, and bridging the gap between evidence-based research and practice. This includes education on best practices, the development of tools for healthcare professionals, and strengthening collaboration among key stakeholders to ensure North Carolina remains a national leader in supporting its military community.

Thank you for taking an interest in the stories and initiatives that highlight this vital work.