Presentation to the Senate Veteran Affairs and Border Security Committee: Veterans Health in Texas

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Texas Veteran Population

Texas is projected to have the most veterans of any state by 2020

Projected Veteran Population In 2025
(State Total = 1,606,754)

Projected Veteran Population 2025
By County:
- 60,000 or More
- 25,000 - 59,999
- 10,000 - 24,999
- 2,000 - 9,999
- Less than 2,000
HHSC Veteran Initiatives: Coordination Efforts

Federal

• State lead for the U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration Service Members, Veterans and their Families (SAMHSA-SMVF) National Policy Council on veteran issues, suicide prevention, homelessness, and employment.

State

• HHSC representative on the legislatively established Texas Coordinating Council for Veteran Services (TCCVS).

• Lead for the Texas Interagency Behavioral Health and Aging Committee in addressing needs, attributes, and programs for aging Texas veterans.

• HHSC leads the Statewide Behavioral Health Coordinating Council, which includes the Texas Veterans Commission (TVC) and Texas Military Department as member agencies.
HHSC Veteran Initiatives: 
Behavioral Health Services

Veteran Suicide Prevention Action Plan

• SB 578 (85R), 2017, directed HHSC to create a comprehensive action plan with short- and long-term goals to increase access to, and availability of, professional veteran health services to prevent suicide among the population.

Veterans Recovery Pilot Program

• HB 271 (85R), 2017, directed HHSC to establish a pilot program to provide veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder or traumatic brain injury with hyperbaric oxygen treatment, subject to available funding.

• Also requires establishment of a Veteran’s Recovery Fund.

Increased access to Licensed Mental Health Professionals

• SB 27 (85R), 2017, amended statute to increase access to licensed mental health professionals for veterans in rural areas.
HHSC Veteran Initiatives: Behavioral Health Services

Texas Veterans + Family Alliance Grant Program

• SB 55 (84R), 2015, directed HHSC to seek to improve the quality of life of veterans and family members through expanded availability, increased access, and enhanced delivery of mental health treatment and services.

• Awarded $17 million to 38 community collaboratives through three funding cycles since 2016.

• Through the first quarter of fiscal year 2018, grantees have reported serving over 8,400 veterans and family members.

Mental Health Program for Veterans

• The Mental Health Program for Veterans was established by SB 1325 (81R), 2009, to provide peer-to-peer counseling for veterans.

• Services are implemented by TVC, local mental health authorities, and Texas A&M University Health Science Center.

• In fiscal year 2017, over 133,000 peer services were delivered to service members, veterans, and their families and over 6,000 peers were trained.
HHSC Veterans Initiatives:
Texas Veterans App

The Texas Veterans App is a free phone application that has approximately 23,000 downloads providing access to:

• Crisis intervention services through the Veterans Crisis Line
• Services for women veterans
• Local veterans and veteran service organizations
• Texas Veterans Portal
HHSC Veterans Initiatives: Texas Veterans App

Veterans Crisis Line

- The U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs provides the Veterans Crisis Line
- The line is staffed 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year by qualified, trained intervention counselors who deal specifically with veteran suicides
HHSC Veterans Initiatives: Texas Veterans App

Hotline for Women Veterans

Connects women veterans to programs and resources specific to women veterans and their needs, such as:

- Military sexual trauma treatment
- Homelessness resources for women veterans with children
- Employment resources
HHSC Veterans Initiatives: Texas Veterans App

Connect to Texas Veteran Benefits

• HHSC Office of Veteran Services finalizing the link between Texas Veterans App and 2-1-1 veteran specialists

• Connection will allow veterans and their families a direct link to a trained veteran specialist who can counsel and refer them to services 24/7

• Mission United, the 2-1-1 software platform, will provide report to HHSC to monitor how the service is working
HHSC Veterans Initiatives: Texas Veterans App

Texas Veterans Hotline

Connects to the Texas Veterans Land Board, a state agency that manages:

- Loans for home or land purchase or home improvement
- State veteran nursing homes
- State veteran cemeteries
- Additional access to veterans resources
HHSC Veterans Initiatives: Texas Veterans App

Texas Veterans Portal

Links the phone or device to the Texas Veterans Portal, an online resource for veteran benefits provided in Texas

- Emergency services, food, shelter, cash assistance
- Links for law enforcement
- Links for service providers
Future of Veteran Services in Texas

Continuing to serve veterans and their families and supporting communities seeking to address unmet mental health needs

• Coordinate with TVC and other veteran-serving state agencies, local communities, and the VA to enhance the system providing services to veterans

• Develop meaningful outcome measures to evaluate successes and challenges in programs and initiatives

• Seek feedback from veterans, families, and community partners

• Continue to understand barriers veterans and families have in accessing services and collaboratively identify solutions

• Provide support to communities through capacity and competency building, training, technical assistance, and increased awareness of resources