



Veterans Recovery Pilot Program Evaluation Report

**As Required by
Texas Health and Safety Code
Section 49.008**

Health and Human Services

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Executive Summary

The *Veterans Recovery Pilot Program Evaluation Report* is prepared in compliance with the Texas Health and Safety Code, Section 49.008, as added by House Bill 271, 85th Legislature, Regular Session, 2017. The biennial report, due to the governor, lieutenant governor, speaker of the house of representatives, and appropriate standing committees of the legislature no later than October 1 of each even-numbered year, includes an evaluation of the effectiveness of the pilot program, as well as the number of veterans and facilities participating in the pilot program.

Key activities for 2018 include:

- The establishment of the Veterans Recovery Fund account;
- Research on the existing hyperbaric oxygen treatment (HBOT) programs for people with traumatic brain injuries (TBI) and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD); and
- The development of a request for applications (RFA) to consult with a subject matter expert for the HBOT program and medical protocol development.

The information gathered through the investigation of the most current HBOT research material and the RFA will further assist the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) in the development of a competitive procurement process to establish contracts with eligible facilities and treatment plans once the fund account balance reaches a level able to sustain programmatic requirements.

1. Introduction

H.B. 271 amended Health and Safety Code, Chapter 49, to establish the Veterans Recovery Pilot Program to provide diagnostic services, hyperbaric oxygen treatment (HBOT), and support services to eligible veterans who have PTSD or a TBI pending sufficient funds in the Veterans Recovery Fund account established pursuant to Health and Safety Code, Section 49.004.

Health and Safety Code, Section 49.008, requires HHSC to report to the governor, lieutenant governor, speaker of the house of representatives, and appropriate standing committees of the legislature on the pilot program no later than October 1 of each even-numbered year. The report must include:

- An evaluation of the effectiveness of the veterans recovery pilot project;
- The number of veterans; and
- The number of facilities participating in the pilot program.

This report will summarize the efforts by HHSC to establish the veterans recovery account and implement the pilot program.

2. Pilot Program Research and Development

Veterans Recovery Account

The Veterans Recovery Fund account is a dedicated account in the general revenue fund to support the veterans recovery pilot program. The account consists of:

- Gifts, grants, and other donations received for the account; and
- Interest earned on the investment of money in the fund.

Funds from the account can only be used to pay for the following:

- Expenses of administering the pilot program;
- Diagnostic testing and treatment of a veteran with PTSD or a TBI under the pilot program; and
- A veteran's necessary travel and living expenses for a veteran required to travel to obtain treatment under the pilot program.

As of September 1, 2018, the account has a total of \$1,205.47 to be used toward the pilot program. The funds consist of one \$1,200 donation and \$5.47 from interest gained on the donation.

Information on the pilot program and account is hosted on the HHSC website and has been distributed to interested stakeholders for awareness.¹

Hyperbaric Oxygen Treatment Research

HHSC conducted a review of the existing research on HBOT programs for people with TBI and/or PTSD. The review included interviews with key stakeholders, an analysis of existing research on HBOT programs, and research on existing HBOT programs for people with brain injury and PTSD.

HHSC conducted interviews with HBOT experts and key stakeholders to learn more about how the treatment is being used to support veterans with TBI and PTSD.

¹ <http://www.hhs.texas.gov/brain-injury>

Interviews included representatives of the Aerospace Medicine and Certified Hyperbaric Medicine, American Hyperbaric Awareness Association, the American Legion, and various healthcare systems. The feedback and information gathered from the interviews was instrumental in guiding HHSC through the existing research and literature on HBOT in general and more specifically how HBOT is being used to treat TBI and/or PTSD.

Hyperbaric Oxygen Treatment Request for Applications

Using the analysis and research mentioned above, HHSC is developing an RFA to consult with a brain injury subject matter expert with expertise in HBOT to develop program and medical protocols for delivering HBOT to individuals with TBI and/or PTSD. HHSC does not have staff with this expertise and needs consultation for these services.

The release of the RFA is contingent on sufficient funds in the account. Based on the cost of similar pilot programs established at HHSC, the agency estimates a minimum account balance of \$1 million is necessary to provide adequate funding for research, implementation, and support. As a result, an anticipated release date for the RFA has not been determined.

3. Conclusion

HHSC reviewed existing HBOT programs in the United States designed specifically to treat TBI and PTSD in an effort to assist with the development of program protocols and design for the pilot program, in anticipation of eventual adequate funding.

The RFA for the solicitation of a subject matter expert will help HHSC with the development of program and medical protocols. Once the account balance is sufficient to sustain programmatic requirements, an amount currently estimated at \$1 million, HHSC will conduct a competitive procurement process to establish contracts with eligible facilities and treatment plans. In the future, HHSC will continue to share account information and research existing HBOT programs, and will move forward with program development once adequate funding levels are reached.

List of Acronyms

Acronym	Full Name
H.B.	House Bill
HBOT	Hyperbaric Oxygen Treatment
HHSC	Health and Human Services Commission
PTSD	Post-traumatic Stress Disorder
RFA	Request for Applications
TBI	Traumatic Brain Injury