Presentation to Senate Veteran Affairs & Border Security Committee

Paul Theobald
Lead Coordinator, Mental Health Programs for Veterans

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Mission
Coordinate sustainable mental health services for Veterans and their families that are evidenced-based, results-driven, effective, efficient, and meet the client needs where they are

Vision
Texas Veterans and their families have access to appropriate and effective mental health services when and where they need them
The Mental Health Program for Veterans was established by House Bill 2392 (83-R) and directs HHSC to coordinate with the Texas Veterans Commission to provide:

- Peer-to-peer counseling
- Access to licensed mental health professionals (providers)
- Training to peers and providers, including suicide prevention training
- Training to community and faith-based organizations
- Jail diversion service coordination
Texas Veterans + Family Alliance Grant

Program Summary

Senate Bill 55 (84-R) requires HHSC to administer a mental health grant program to provide funding to improve the quality of life for Texas veterans and their families in the community by:

• Expanding the availability of mental health treatment and services
• Increasing access to these treatment and services
• Enhancing the delivery of mental health treatment and services
Veteran Suicide Data

• Nationally, 14 of 20 Veterans who die by suicide each day are not enrolled in VA Healthcare¹

• The national rates of suicide among male and female veterans is 1.4 times and 1.8 times greater respectively, than non-veteran suicides¹

• In Texas, a median average of 499 Veterans died by suicide each year from year 2000 through 2015²

¹ US Department of Veteran Affairs, 2019
² Texas Department of State Health Services, 2018
Prevalence: Years 2000-2015

Texas Veterans Deaths Due to Intentional Self-Harm (Suicide), 2000-2015:
Ten Counties with Highest Counts

Source: Texas Department of State Health Services, 2018
Texas Veterans Suicide Prevention Action Plans

Senate Bill 578 (85-R) tasks HHSC to create short-term and long-term veteran suicide prevention action plans, including specific policy, administrative, and funding recommendations needed to achieve full implementation of the action plans.

- The Report on the Short-term Action Plan to Prevent Veteran Suicide was published on September 1, 2019.
Texas Veterans Suicide Prevention Action Plans

Strategic Efforts

• The Short-term Action Plan to Prevent Veteran Suicide is to be fully implemented by September 1, 2021. The plan’s focus is to:
  ➢ Raise awareness among providers of the gaps in healthcare for service members, veterans, and their families (SMVF), which must be addressed to prevent suicide
  ➢ Promote the use of evidence-based methods and best practices regarding suicide prevention efforts for services members, veterans, and their families
  ➢ Normalize safety seeking behavior

• The Short-term Action Plan includes recommendations for statutory, administrative, and budget-related reforms
Texas Veterans Suicide Prevention Action Plans

Strategic Efforts

The Long-term Action Plan to Prevent Veteran Suicide is to be fully implemented by September 1, 2027, and will align with:

• The Department of Veterans Affairs National Challenge to Prevent Veteran Suicides;

• The Centers for Disease Control’s Technical Package for Preventing Suicides; and

• The Texas Suicide Prevention Council’s Texas State Plan for Suicide Prevention
Texas Veterans Suicide Prevention Action Plans

Strategic Partners

In addition to state partners, HHSC is collaborating with the following entities:

• U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
• Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
• Department of Defense
• American Foundation for Suicide Prevention
• National Sports Shooting Foundation
• Wounded Warrior Project
Texas Veterans App

Overview & Functionality

• Provides Access to key statewide and local services
• Crisis line staffed round-the-clock
• Connects female veterans to targeted resources
• Map function connects users to local services
• Over 59,000 downloads over all operating systems