



# **Presentation to the Senate Committee on Veteran Affairs and Military Installations: Veteran Services & Initiatives**

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# Texas' Veteran Population

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- In 2013, Texas was home to approximately 1.7 million veterans, ranking second behind California in having the most veterans per state.
  - There were an estimated 1,509,883 male veterans and 173,526 female veterans.
- The Texas veteran population generally includes individuals who:
  - entered service in Texas;
  - were stationed at one of the Texas military bases and remained in the state following discharge; or
  - moved to Texas following discharge.

## **HHS Veteran Services**

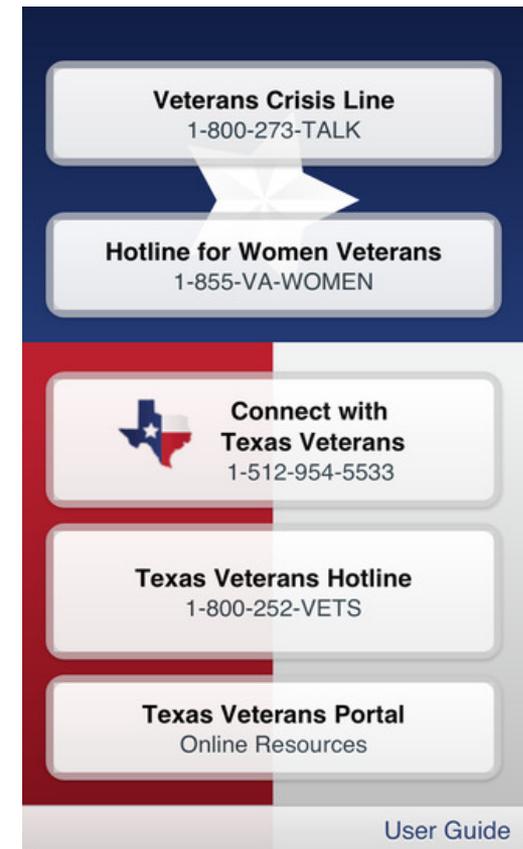
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- Created in 2013, the Veteran Services division within the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) serves to coordinate, strengthen and enhance veteran services across state agencies. The division's focus is to review and analyze current programs, engage the charitable or nonprofit communities, and create public-private partnerships to benefit those programs.
- HHSC Veteran Services is an active participant in the Texas Coordinating Council for Veterans Services, which was created by Senate Bill 1796, 82<sup>nd</sup> Legislature, Regular Session, 2011.
- The HHS System offers Texas veterans services and initiatives tailored to cover a wide range of domains, including:
  - Connecting veterans to their benefits, resources and services;
  - Providing mental health services; and
  - Providing awareness of and access to employment opportunities.

# Connecting Veterans to Resources

## Texas Veterans Phone App

- HHSC developed a free mobile application for Texas veterans, active duty personnel, military families, and service providers.
- The App allows for quick, easy, and portable access to crisis lines, online resources, personal connections with local veterans and assistance with accessing services.
- Since its launch in March 2014, the Texas Veterans App has had 12,453 downloads, as of February 21, 2016.



# Connecting Veterans to Resources

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## **Texas Veterans Portal (TVP)**

- The Texas Veterans Portal, managed by the Texas Veteran Commission (TVD), is a collaborative effort of several state agencies and commissions to provide assistance, services, and benefits for Texas veterans, their families, and service providers.
- HHSC is also working with county governments to include the portal in their websites and to further promote at the local level by extending TVP to city government and private industry.
- HHSC is currently collaborating with other veteran agencies to update the Portal.

# Connecting Veterans to Resources

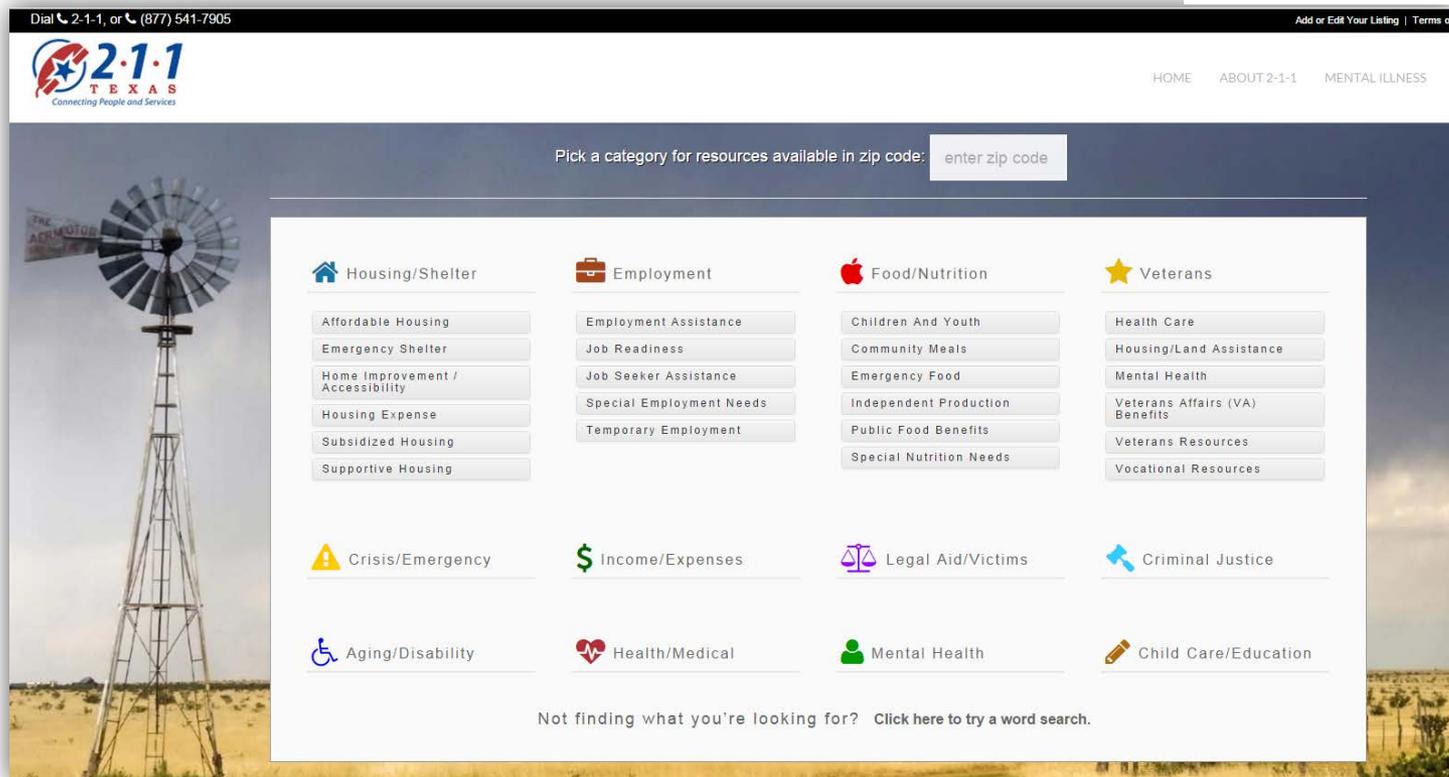
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## 2-1-1 Texas Military-Related Referral Resources

- 2-1-1 Texas maintains a database of services, including over 250 organizations that specifically target service members and their families.
  - All 2-1-1 callers are asked if they or a family member have served in the military. 2-1-1 Texas captures data on how many veterans, military members, and their families call and what they call about.
- Information Center staff receive veteran-specific training to help disseminate resource information including details about hours of operation, eligibility criteria, fees (if applicable), documentation requirements, and accessibility.
  - Several 2-1-1 Texas Area Information Centers work with local organizations, veterans groups and associations to identify veterans resources and provide service coordination for veterans, military members, and their families.
- Referral services are accessible via phone and on the web.

# Connecting Veterans to Resources

The 2-1-1 website, [www.211texas.org](http://www.211texas.org), has information specifically for veterans and their families.



The screenshot shows the 2-1-1 Texas website interface. At the top, it displays the phone number "Dial 2-1-1, or (877) 541-7905" and a link to "Add or Edit Your Listing | Terms of". The main header features the 2-1-1 Texas logo and navigation links for "HOME", "ABOUT 2-1-1", and "MENTAL ILLNESS". A search bar prompts users to "Pick a category for resources available in zip code:" followed by an input field for "enter zip code". The main content area is a grid of resource categories, each with an icon and a list of sub-services:

- Housing/Shelter** (house icon): Affordable Housing, Emergency Shelter, Home Improvement / Accessibility, Housing Expense, Subsidized Housing, Supportive Housing.
- Employment** (briefcase icon): Employment Assistance, Job Readiness, Job Seeker Assistance, Special Employment Needs, Temporary Employment.
- Food/Nutrition** (apple icon): Children And Youth, Community Meals, Emergency Food, Independent Production, Public Food Benefits, Special Nutrition Needs.
- Veterans** (star icon): Health Care, Housing/Land Assistance, Mental Health, Veterans Affairs (VA) Benefits, Veterans Resources, Vocational Resources.
- Crisis/Emergency** (warning triangle icon):
- Income/Expenses** (dollar sign icon):
- Legal Aid/Victims** (scales icon):
- Criminal Justice** (gavel icon):
- Aging/Disability** (wheelchair icon):
- Health/Medical** (heart icon):
- Mental Health** (person icon):
- Child Care/Education** (pencil icon):

At the bottom, a message reads: "Not finding what you're looking for? Click here to try a word search."

# HHS Veteran Initiatives

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## **Veterans Tactical Response (VTR) Training**

- Through the Office of Acquired Brain Injury, law enforcement, mental health, and brain injury professionals developed VTR training for officers responding to incidents.
- VTR training addresses behaviors commonly observed in returning combat veterans, specifically related to PTSD, Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) and homelessness.
- VTR Training calls for awareness and sensitivity whether in response to crisis or calls for service.
- VTR training program can be used in police departments of all sizes - from rural offices to major metropolitan departments at the state and federal levels.
- The Office of Acquired Brain Injury is beginning to distribute training materials to law enforcement and is preparing to schedule training webinars.

# Senate Bill 55 by Sen. Nelson: Veterans Mental Health Grant Program

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Senate Bill 55 requires HHSC to establish a grant program to support community mental health programs providing services and treatment to veterans and their families. Rider 68 of the 2016-2017 General Appropriations Act appropriated \$10 million in general revenue to HHSC in each fiscal year of the biennium to implement Senate Bill 55.

## *Implementation Plan*

- Phase One (Pilot)

HHSC is contracting with Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute (MMHPI) to serve as the pilot program administrator. HHSC received 11 proposals in response to the pilot Request for Proposal (RFP) and is preparing for contract negotiations.

- Phase Two (Full program)

HHSC has posted a RFP to procure a program administrator. The next stage in the process will be to develop the RFP for the full grant program, which will request proposals from community mental health programs. HHSC will work with the program administrator to make grant awards this summer.