



Presentation to House Defense and Veterans' Affairs: Veteran Services & Initiatives

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Texas' Veteran Population

- 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.

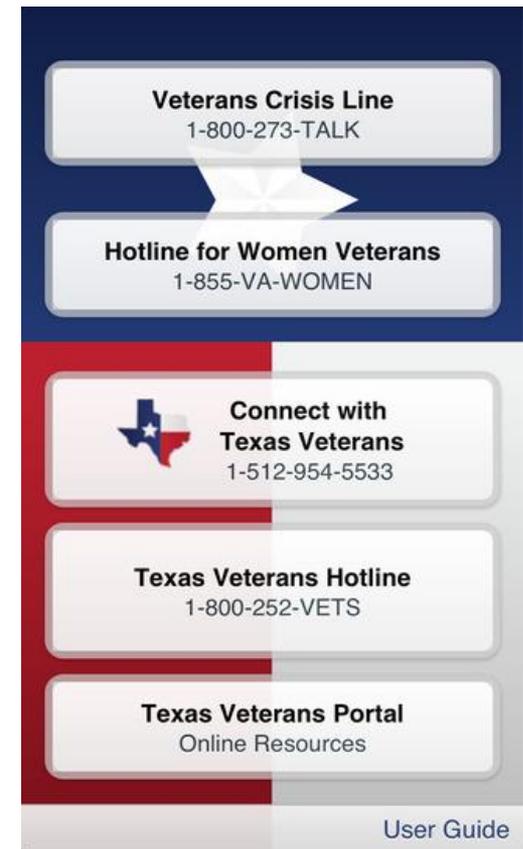
HHS Veteran Services

- 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, 82nd 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

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.

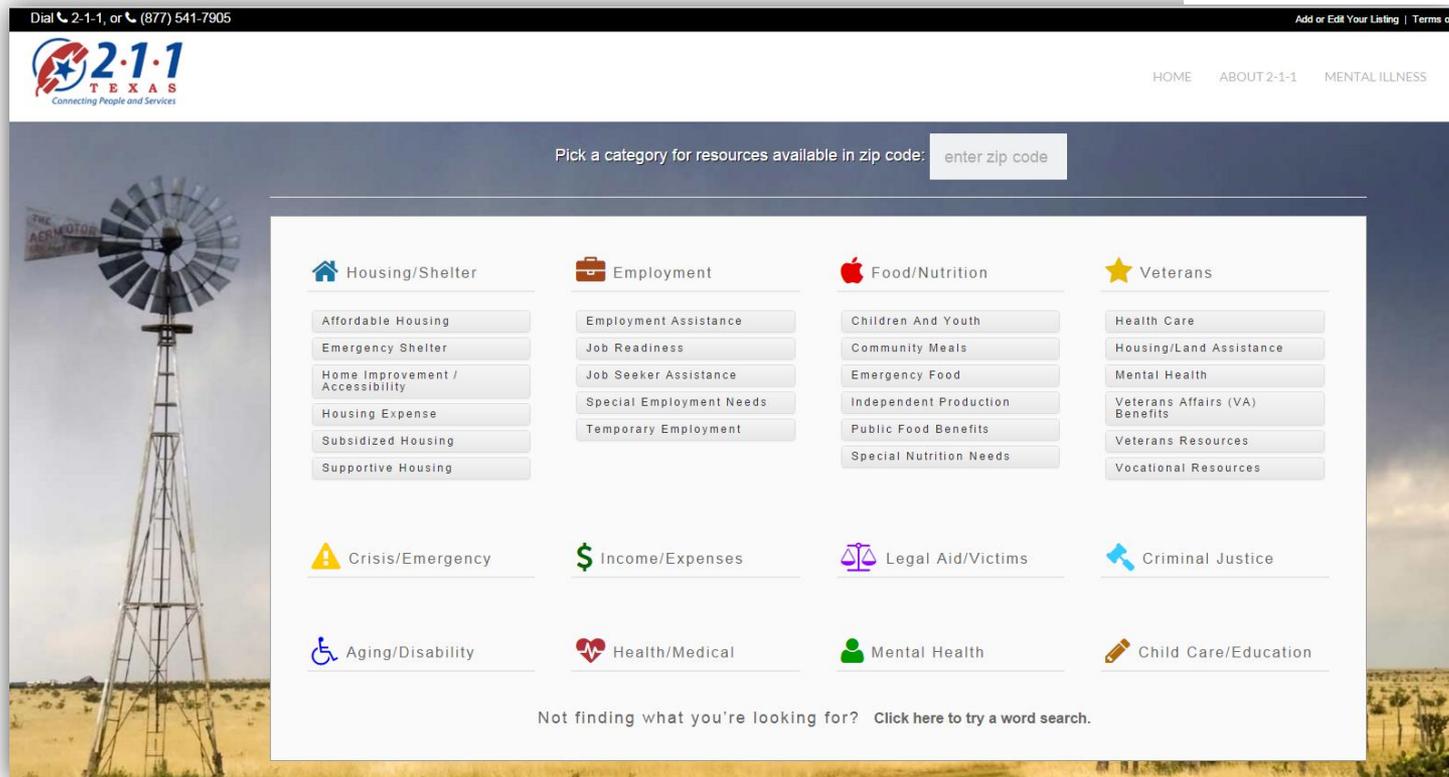
Connecting Veterans to Resources

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, has information specifically for veterans and their families.



HHS Veteran Initiatives

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.

House Bill 3404 by Rep. Senfronia Thompson: Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Study

HB 3404 directs HHSC to conduct a study to assess the benefits of providing integrated care to veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and to involve family members in the treatments. HHSC may coordinate with a university with expertise in behavioral health or post-traumatic stress disorder. A report describing the results is required by December 1, 2016.

Implementation Plan

- HHSC is exploring options for partnering with institutions of higher education.

Senate Bill 169 by Sen. Uresti: Interest and Waiting Lists of HHS Programs

Senate Bill 169 requires health and human services agencies to ensure an active duty military member, or their spouse or dependent, who is temporarily residing out of state as a result of military service, does not lose their place on interest or waiting lists for any assistance programs provided by the agencies.

- This protection ends one year after the military member leaves active duty, is killed in action, or dies while in service, if the family does not return to the state.
- If a military member is out of state when their name reaches the top of the interest list, agencies will maintain the individual's position on the interest list.

Senate Bill 169 by Sen. Uresti: Interest and Waiting Lists of HHS Programs

Some programs managed by health and human services agencies previously granted this protection. Senate Bill 169 provides consistency across program policies and agencies.

Senate Bill 169 applies to programs at the Department of Aging and Disability Services (DADS), the Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services (DARS), the Department of State Health Services (DSHS) and HHSC.

Implementation Plan

- Implementation varies by agency and program, and is either complete or near completion. Implementation activities include:
 - Rule changes for programs within DADS and HHSC;
 - Contract amendments for impacted providers at DADS and DSHS; and
 - Policy and procedure changes for programs within DADS, DARS, and DSHS.

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

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.