Joint Legislative Committee on Aging:
Improving How Texas Meets the Mental Health Needs of Veterans and Their Families

Kyle Mitchell | August 28, 2018
Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute

Vision
We envision Texas to be the national leader in treating people with mental health needs.

Mission Statement
To provide independent, non-partisan, and trusted policy and program guidance that creates systemic changes so all Texans can obtain effective, efficient behavioral health care when and where they need it.
### Mental Illness Estimates

**Texas Veterans 55 Years and Older (2016)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Population (55 Years and Older)</th>
<th>910,000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Any Mental Illness</td>
<td>170,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serious Mental Illness</td>
<td>30,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major Depression</td>
<td>50,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Texas Veterans: Prevalence Data (55 & Older)

## Substance Use Estimates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Substance Use Estimates</th>
<th>Texas Veterans 55 Years and Older (2016)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Population (55 Years and Older)</td>
<td>910,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illicit Drug Use</td>
<td>55,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonmedical Use of Psychotherapeutics</td>
<td>15,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nonmedical Use of Pain Relievers</td>
<td>15,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illicit Drug Dependence or Abuse</td>
<td>6,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol Dependence or Abuse</td>
<td>60,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Vietnam-era veterans represent the largest percentage of veterans by era and had the second-highest rate of deaths by suicides between 2005 and 2015.
Suicide rates among both veterans and non-veterans ages 55–74 increased between 2005 and 2015.
Rates of suicide in 2015 among veterans and non-veterans ages 75 and older are consistent with their respective rates in 2005, though there were fluctuations in the intervening years.
Rates of Suicide: Males, Ages 55 and older (2005 – 2015)

Rates of suicide for older veterans were lower than the respective rates for older non-veterans, particularly for those ages 75 and over.
Except in the case of older females, the rates of suicide for female veterans were higher than those of female non-veterans.
81(R) SB 1325 (Nelson) established the Mental Health Program for Veterans to provide peer-to-peer counseling for veterans.

The Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) and the Texas Veterans Commission (TVC) coordinate to administer the program.

The program provides peer counseling services to service members, veterans, and their families through contracts with local mental health authorities (LMHAs), local behavioral health authorities (LBHAs) and the Texas A&M University Health Science Center (TAMUHSC).
Expansion to Meet Additional Needs

The Legislature has continually supported important expansions in this program – most recently through 85(R) SB 27 (Campbell).

What are others ways the Legislature can continue to support this program?

• Examine the funding streams.
• Additional support for the justice-involved veterans and faith-based work at TVC.
• Additional funding for peers or focused populations.
Addressing Veteran Suicides

• 85(R) SB 578 (Hinojosa) directed HHSC to create a Veteran Suicide Prevention Action Plan – 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.

  ➢ HHSC plans to have all goals identified by September 1, 2018, with short-term goals implemented by September 2021 and long-term goals implemented by September 2027.
Addressing Needs Through Community Grants

• **84(R) SB 55 (Nelson)** directed HHSC to establish a grant program to support **community mental health programs** that provide and coordinate **mental health services** and **treatment** for Texas veterans and their families.
  - The **Texas Veterans + Family Alliance (TV+FA)** provides grants to existing or developing **community collaboratives** to fund delivery and coordination of mental health and supportive services.
  - Communities must **match** state grants on a **dollar-for-dollar basis**, demonstrating their commitment to addressing mental health needs of veterans and their families.
Two Steven A. Cohen Military Family Clinics at Endeavors™ - in El Paso and in Killeen - provide high-quality, accessible, and integrated mental health care to veterans and their families, regardless of discharge status or ability to pay.

Veteran “one-stops” in the Rio Grande Valley, Waco, and Central Texas.

Increased access to a broad range of mental health care services for veterans and their families across the state.
Changes Affecting TV+FA

• 85(R) HB 13 (Price) created the Community Mental Health Grant Program to provide incentives for state-local collaborations to help Texas communities tailor solutions to fit the mental health challenges they face.
  ➢ Communities must match state grants in an amount equal to 50 percent of the grant amount if the community mental health program is located in a county with a population of less than 250,000.

• In October 2017, HHSC and MMHPI mutually agreed to terminate MMHPI’s role as the no-cost administrator for the Texas Veterans + Family Alliance Program.
Addressing Needs Through TVC Grants

• **Veteran Mental Health grants** focus on the *mental health needs of veterans and their families* through projects that emphasize **direct services to veterans and their families**.

• **Veteran Treatment Court grants** *assist Texas veterans* in obtaining services through **Veterans Treatment Court programs**.

• TVC and HHSC should **continue their close coordination** to achieve the goals of their grant programs and to prevent duplication in funding.
Addressing Needs Through Coordination

TXServes offers service members, veterans and their families access to a class-leading continuum of providers that runs the gamut from superior housing and emergency service providers to employment, recreation and fitness, financial capabilities and more!
The truth is: mental illness affects more people than you may think, and we need to talk about it. It’s Okay to say...”  okaytosay.org