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# **Veterans Services and Initiatives**

## **Presentation to the House Committee on Defense and Veterans' Affairs**

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Lauren Lacefield Lewis

Assistant Commissioner, Mental Health & Substance Abuse Services  
Division

March 17, 2016



# Mental Health Program for Veterans

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- House Bill 2392, 83<sup>rd</sup> Legislative Session, Regular Session, 2013
  - Directed DSHS to develop a Mental Health Program for Veterans that included the following services:
    - Peer-to-peer counseling;
    - Access to licensed mental health professionals;
    - Training for peers;
    - Grants to organizations providing services; and
    - Jail diversion services.
- The 2016-2017 General Appropriations Act, House Bill 1, 84<sup>th</sup> Legislative Session, Regular Session, 2015
  - Appropriated \$5 million each fiscal year of the biennium to provide services through the Mental Health Program for Veterans



## Legislation from 84<sup>th</sup> Legislative Session, 2015

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H.B. 19 Relating to a preventive services program and mental health programs for veterans and military families.

S.B. 169 Relating to ensuring that certain military members and their spouses and dependents maintain their positions on interest lists or other waiting lists for certain health and human services assistance programs.

S.B. 1304 Relating to the creation of a women veterans mental health initiative within the mental health intervention program for veterans.

S.B. 1305 Relating to the creation of a rural veterans mental health initiative within the mental health intervention program for veterans.

S.B. 832 Relating to the coordinating workgroups of the Texas Coordinating Council for Veterans Services.



# House Bill 19: Mental Health Services for Veterans and Families

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## *Requirement:*

- Codified collaboration between DSHS and TVC to train peers in connecting veterans and their families to resources

## *Implementation:*

- DSHS coordinates with TVC and partners with 37 LMHAs to:
  - Provide access to licensed mental health professionals, peer service coordinators, and peers
  - Recruit, train, and guide peer coordinators
- DSHS also coordinates with TVC for Veteran Jail Diversion Services to:
  - Train peers and coordinators to support veterans
  - Provide services to 24 veteran treatment courts; and
  - Deliver continuity of care services to more than 249 veterans incarcerated in prisons and 207 veterans held in county jails (in fiscal year 2015)



# Senate Bill 169: Military Personnel on Interest & Waiting Lists

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## *Requirement:*

- Ensure that active duty military personnel temporarily residing out of state do not lose their place on interest or waiting lists for any assistance programs provided by the agencies
- Also applicable to dependents of military personnel who were killed in action or died while in service

## *Implementation:*

- Requirement added to Local Mental Health Authority contracts ensures military personnel and their families do not lose their place on interest or waiting lists



# Senate Bill 1304: Women Veterans Mental Health Initiative

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## *Requirement:*

DSHS required to add Women Veterans Initiative to programs provided to veterans

## *Implementation:*

- DSHS contracts with TVC to develop and implement initiative
- TVC-led workgroup assessed needs, identified gaps, and recommended outreach efforts
- Women Veterans Program Coordinator hired by TVC to facilitate implementation of projects targeting the provision of services to women veterans
- DSHS also contracts with Grace After Fire to implement Female Veteran-Facilitated Peer-to-Peer Counseling projects within Harris County



# Senate Bill 1305: Rural Veterans Mental Health Initiative

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## *Requirement:*

DSHS required to add Rural Veterans Initiative to programs provided to veterans

## *Implementation:*

- TVC-led workgroup assessed needs, identified gaps, and recommended outreach tactics
- Provided enhanced outreach efforts in LMHAs serving the 153 counties designated as rural
- TVC technical assistance provided to Peer Service Coordinators to further enhance outreach to rural Veterans



# Senate Bill 1305: Rural Veterans Mental Health Initiative

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## *Implementation (continued):*

- DSHS and TVC enhanced cooperation with the Department of Veterans Affairs Veterans Health Administration (VHA)
  - Telehealth initiative in 90 west Texas counties
- Enhanced services in LMHAs serving rural counties:
  - Nine of the LMHAs serving rural counties implemented Peer Networking Centers where peers gather for training and to access services, meet, and share knowledge about resources



## Senate Bill 832: Coordinating Council Mental Health Workgroup

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### *Requirement:*

Increased focus on veterans mental health services through the Texas Coordinating Council for Veterans Services by utilizing a workgroup that focuses on mental health

### *Implementation:*

- HHSC-wide participation in TVC-led workgroups to provide mental health and substance abuse expertise as appropriate