



Veterans' Mental Health Initiative

Background

In 2008, DSHS convened a workgroup to study the difficult and complex mental health issues faced by returning veterans and their families. Workgroup members included the Governor's Office, representation from the Mental Health Transformation Working Group, Texas Military Forces, Texas Veterans Commission, Texas Workforce Commission, Texas Council of Community MHMR Centers, and Texas Association of Community Health Centers. The group reviewed the needs of veterans and their families, what services are available, and the gaps in services. In December 2008, the workgroup produced a report, *Behavioral Health Services for Returning Veterans and Their Families: Service Gaps and Recommendations*.

Based on recommendations from this report, DSHS requested and was appropriated \$1.2 million for veteran mental health services by the 81st Legislature. The 81st Legislature also passed SB 1325 (Nelson/Corte), which created a mental health intervention program for military veterans.

In addition, the Governor secured an additional \$5 million dedicated to supporting mental health treatment for veterans and their families. Through these initiatives, DSHS and the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) have expanded and enhanced services for Texas' returning veterans and their families.

Funding from 81st Legislature

The \$1.2 million appropriation from the Legislature included funds for training and technology enhancements to match veterans' needs with available resources and to increase coordination of services.

Training

DSHS has used these funds to train 131 LMHA clinicians in Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT), an evidence-based treatment for people diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Additional therapists will enter the training program in September. These therapists are active in 34 of the 38 LMHAs.

Technology

Technology also is being developed to create new online tools that veterans and family members can use to select appropriate resources available to them via the TexVet website (www.texvet.com). DSHS has contracted with Texas A&M Health Science Center for \$463,000 worth of enhancements to the TexVet initiative during the next sixteen months. The enhancements will result in a revitalized resource database for veterans and their families and improve the users' ability to match their needs to resources and services, especially those available to them in their own communities. The contract also will help pay for staff to provide outreach to individuals and organizations that have an interest in serving veterans. TexVet staff will train members of the TexVet resource network to easily and quickly add to and maintain

their contributions to the database. The contract will also help fund a marketing effort directed at veterans and family members, informing them about the value of the service.

Governor's Initiative

Incentive Projects

The state's 38 Local Mental Health Authorities (LMHAs) were contracted to use up to \$70,000 each to provide veteran peer support services during FY 2010 and 2011. With this funding, the LMHAs will identify interested veterans and have them be trained as peer support leaders. Most LMHAs have used the program "Bring Everyone In the Zone" for this purpose.

So far, 140 veteran leaders have been trained and are implementing veteran-to-veteran support groups. They are active in 22 of the 38 LMHA service areas. The LMHAs also are using these funds to coordinate veteran-specific resource networks, including faith-based groups, the American Red Cross, veterans' service organizations such as Disabled American Veterans, VFW, Vets4Vets, Military Order of the Purple Heart, Marine Corps League, and Samaritan Counseling Centers, Hope for Heroes, Goodwill Industries, Salvation Army, Regional Planning Commissions, local Housing Authorities, food banks, college and university veterans' groups, school counselors and first responders.

Competitive Projects

In addition, ten competitive projects were funded for \$175,000 each. These funds are being used to develop formal veterans' partnerships for sustainable veteran projects to address the mental health and related needs of veterans and their families. Awards were made to the Center for Health Care Services (Bexar County); Central Texas Collaborative (20 counties); East Texas North Collaborative (41 counties); East Texas South Collaborative (16 counties); El Paso MHMR Center; MHMR Authority of Harris County; Hill Country MHMR Center (17 counties); Lubbock Regional Center (5 counties); North Texas Behavioral Health Authority (7 counties); and Tarrant County MHMR Services.

A second level of peer support is being implemented in the competitive project service areas. Using the curriculum known as "Operation Resilient Families," 53 veterans and their family members have been trained to teach their peers about how to deal positively with the challenges of multiple deployments. Further training sessions for family peer leaders will be held during FY 2011.

Lower Rio Grande Valley Project

DSHS and Texas Military Forces (TXMF) are working on a joint effort using \$200,000 from the \$5 million veterans' initiative project funding to support special projects in the Lower Rio Grande Valley. Some 700 service members, who are attached to a National Guard unit that is headquartered in Weslaco, have begun returning home from Iraq. The two LMHAs in the region are using these funds to enhance their incentive grants to roll out the "Operation Resilient Families" initiative. They are also contracting with Grace After Fire for support services and Grace After Fire has begun discussions about subcontracting with Vets4Vets to enhance the

veteran peer support initiative. The LMHAs also are working closely with the independent school districts and the faith-based community to reach out to military families in the region.

Texas Military Forces Support

TXMF, through a contract with DSHS, will hire two military advocate liaisons. They will coordinate services and resources managed by the military family programs and those offered by the LMHAs. This will ensure that both the LMHAs and the TXMF are doing all they can to identify and mobilize community based resources to support service members, veterans, and their families.

The following table provides an outline of the projects to date:

Activity	Funds	Description	Status
Training	\$700,000 (from \$1.2m Legislative appropriation)	Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT) training for LMHA clinicians treating Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.	131 CPT clinicians trained; further training sessions set for September .
Technology	\$463,000 (from \$1.2m Legislative appropriation)	Developing online self-screen to match needs with resources accessed via TexVet website (hosted by Texas A&M College of Medicine); partner w/ 2-1-1 Texas.	Staff expansion and marketing efforts have begun; enhanced website goes live in the fall.
LMHA Incentive Projects	\$2,660,000 (from Governor's \$5m initiative)	Providing up to \$70,000 per LMHA to develop community partnerships to initiate, expand, or enhance veteran and family member peer-to-peer supports and services (e.g., "In the Zone").	All projects have been funded for FY 2010, LMHAs have begun initial training components; hired project directors. 140 peer-to-peer support leaders trained; 3 more training sessions set for September, October, and November. The first full quarter reports show that at least 3,700 veterans have been served directly through the Incentive and Competitive Projects.
LMHA Competitive Projects	\$1,750,000 (from Governor's \$5m initiative)	Providing up to \$175,000 per LMHA recipient to initiate, enhance, or expand CPT training, trauma informed services, community advisory councils, veteran and family peer-to-peer supports ("Operation Resilient Families").	All projects have been funded for FY 2010; project directors in place; training for peer and family peer groups underway. 53 trained in "Operation Resilient Families;" at least two further training sessions will be scheduled during FY 2011.

Activity	Funds	Description	Status
Special Lower Rio Grande Project	\$200,000 (from Governor's \$5m initiative)	Providing veteran peer-to-peer and CPT training; peer supports and services; family resiliency expansion of community partnerships and veterans' local advisory councils; family resiliency; school outreach.	Project launched in August, 2010. Outreach and services will be provided to as many of the returning 700 service members and their families as possible.
Texas Military Support	\$150,000 (from Governor's \$5m initiative)	Providing resources to hire two positions for military advocate liaisons to provide technical support to and enhancement of community partnerships.	Contract development has been completed; hires will be made within 30 days of contract execution.
DSHS Support	\$277,000 (from Governor's \$5m initiative)	Providing overall coordination of all veterans' projects, contract management, oversight, identification of new veterans' resources, providing technical assistance to all MH and justice-involved veterans' project partners.	Staffed fulltime Veterans' Resources Coordinator; site visits have begun in Rio Grande Valley; newsletter developed; development of relationships with LMHAs and veterans' courts; supervision of vendors ongoing.
Total	\$6,200,000		