Texas Veterans Commission

Veterans Services Advisory Committee

Recommendations to Address

Veteran Homelessness in Texas

July 3, 2021

**Executive Summary**

The Texas Veterans Commission requested that the Veterans Services Advisory Committee (VSAC) conduct a review of current services to Texas veterans in the areas of suicide prevention, incarcerated veterans, and homelessness, and make recommendations to improve services to veterans in these three service areas. The VSAC assigned its members in subcommittees for the three services areas, and started its first review on TVC activities focusing on homeless veterans in Texas. The Veterans Homeless subcommittee reviewed reference documents, internet sources, and received briefings from TVC staff to develop recommendations to address improving services to homeless veterans in Texas.

**Background on Veteran Homelessness in Texas**

The subcommittee’s first area of assessment was to determine the estimated number of homeless veterans in Texas. The most recent estimate from the 2016 Point in Time Count was 1,768. However, we learned that the point in time count was an estimate made from counties that participated in the survey. All counties did not participate in the count. The Michael DeBakey VA Medical Center in Houston estimated the number of homeless veterans in its catchment area as 3,600 veterans. **Therefore, the VASC determined that it was best to assume that the number of homeless veterans was at least 1,768 and To Be Determined.**

The subcommittee then reviewed the TVC website to see how veteran homelessness services were addressed. Homeless veterans services were not addressed on the TVC website. The VA National Call Center for Homeless Veterans **(887-424-3838/ (877-4AID-Vet)** was not on the TVC website along with the VA Veterans Crisis Line (800) 273-8255. None of the Department of Veterans Affairs services for homeless veterans were referred to on the TVC website for use by homeless veterans or their advocates.

The subcommittee conducted a call with TVC staff on May 25, 2021 to hear what homeless services were being provided. That call revealed that homeless outreach/ services were not in the job descriptions of TVC staff. When homeless veterans presented for employment, benefits, health advocacy, justice involved, and other programs to TVC staff, they were referred to VA homeless service providers or local agency advocates.

**Recommendations**

On June 22, 2021 the homeless veterans subcommittee presented its findings and draft recommendations to the VSAC. Based on the homeless veterans subcommittee presentation, the VSAC approved the following recommendations for the TVC.

**Recommendation #1:** TVC provide the VA National Call Center for Homeless Veterans number (887-424-3838/ (877-4AID-Vet) on the TVC website by September 30, 2021.

**Recommendation #2:** TVC gather and provide homeless veterans services portal type information on the TVC website and disperse a printable information paper to partners by September 30, 2021 Information should include local resources as identified and verified by TVC mental health and healthcare advocacy representatives (i.e., Texas Veterans Network/Combined Arms, Integral Care, etc..

**Note:** VA Homeless Veterans Programs factsheet and services links provided herein by the subcommittee for incorporation to the TVC website or use by TVC staff.

[VA Homeless Programs](https://www.va.gov/HOMELESS/index.asp)

[Homeless Veterans Outreach Tools - VA Homeless Programs](https://www.va.gov/homeless/get_involved.asp) -VA Homeless Veterans Outreach Tool Kit

[Homeless Fact sheet (va.gov)](https://www.va.gov/HOMELESS/docs/HCHV-Fact-Sheet-508.pdf) – VHA Homeless Program Office Fact Sheet

**Recommendation #3:** TVC provide homeless veterans services reference material to its outreach staff for their use and use by non-TVC veterans advocates on an ongoing basis.