

**Public Assistance Reporting Information System  
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs  
Match Report**

**October 1, 2019**



**Required by Government Code § 531.0998(e) and  
the FY2018-2019 General Appropriations Act SB 1,  
85<sup>th</sup> Legislature**

**Health and Human Services  
HHS Office of the Inspector General  
Texas Veterans Commission  
Texas Veterans Land Board**

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## **Executive Summary**

The Public Assistance Reporting Information System (PARIS) U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Match Report provides an overview of project information as required by statute.

Government Code § 531.0998(e) directs the Texas Veterans Commission (TVC), Veterans Land Board (VLB), and Texas Health and Human Services (HHS), which includes staff and programs formerly within the Department of Aging and Disability Services (DADS), to analyze information and data received from PARIS. The 84<sup>th</sup> Texas Legislature, 2015, abolished DADS effective September 1, 2017, and transferred DADS' services to HHS.

## **Background**

In 2011, legislation from the 82<sup>nd</sup> session, HB 2562, which added Government Code § 531.0998 (e), directed HHS, TVC, VLB, and DADS to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on December 1, 2011, for the purposes of:

- Coordinating and collecting information about the use and analysis of data received from the system among state agencies.
- Developing new strategies for using system data in ways that generate fiscal savings for the state, improve communication to veterans, and maximize the availability of and access to benefits for veterans.

In addition to an annual reporting requirement in Government Code § 531.0998(e), the General Appropriations Act (GAA), SB 1, 85<sup>th</sup> Legislature, Regular Session, 2017 also addresses the use of PARIS data and the appropriation of savings.

Government Code § 531.0998(e) directs HHS, TVC, and VLB to submit an annual report that includes the following:

- The interagency progress in identifying and obtaining VA benefits for veterans receiving Medicaid and other public benefit programs.
- The number of veterans benefits claims awarded, the total dollar amount of veterans benefits claims awarded, and the costs to the state that were avoided as a result of state agencies' use of the system.
- The efforts to expand the use of the system and improve the effectiveness of shifting veterans from Medicaid and other public benefits to VA benefits, including any barriers and how state agencies have addressed those barriers.
- The extent to which TVC has targeted specific populations of veterans, including populations in rural counties and in specific age and service-connected disability categories, in order to maximize benefits for veterans and savings to the state.

Article I, Veterans Commission, Rider 8 requires \$104,574 out of the Fund for Veteran's Assistance Account No. 368 and 2.0 full time equivalents per fiscal year to investigate and analyze information and data received from PARIS.

The GAA, SB 1, 85th Legislature, Regular Session, 2017 (Rider 14) directs HHS to:

1. Submit information quarterly to the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services Administration for Children and Families (ACF) for participation in the PARIS veterans and federal files information exchange. It also specifies that the HHS Office of Inspector General (OIG) shall submit to PARIS the necessary data from all state health and human services programs that may serve veterans and forward necessary information from it to the appropriate state agencies.
2. Calculate 10 percent of the General Revenue savings during fiscal year 2018 that were the result of pursuing information from PARIS according to procedures or rules for making the calculations adopted by HHS, which shall be credited by the Comptroller to the Fund for Veterans' Assistance Account No. 368 from which expenditures were originally made and such funds are appropriated to TVC in fiscal year 2019.

### **Public Assistance Reporting Information System (PARIS)**

PARIS, operated by ACF, is a federal-state partnership which provides states with detailed information and data to assist them in maintaining program integrity and detecting improper payments. HHS executed a model agreement with the VA through ACF to participate in the PARIS VA matching system. HHS creates a file of active recipients in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and Medicaid programs. This excel file of active recipients is sent to the Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC) on a quarterly basis (February, May, August, and November) for PARIS matching. DMDC returns a file of the matched recipients with veterans benefit information to HHS.

### **Efforts to Expand the Use of PARIS**

The PARIS VA report was initially piloted with recipients residing in Bexar County and was expanded statewide to all SNAP, TANF, and Medicaid recipients in Texas. Additionally, the PARIS VA report was expanded to include Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) recipients beginning with the November 2013 match. Individuals receiving Title XX Social Services Block Grant services were added to the report to expand the opportunities for matching beginning in May 2014.

### **Cost Avoidance Methodology**

HHS is directed to calculate the cost avoidance resulting from the PARIS VA match activity conducted by the collaborating state agencies. Cost avoidance is a cost reduction opportunity that results from an intentional action, negotiation, or intervention.<sup>1</sup> The methodology used to calculate the cost avoidance in the PARIS VA report includes these steps:

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<sup>1</sup> NASPO Benchmarking Workgroup Research Brief 2007, *Benchmarking Costs Savings & Cost Avoidance*, National Association of State Procurement Officials.

1. TVC sends an interagency feedback report to the OIG of claims adjudicated by the VA, as a result of contact initiated by TVC from the PARIS VA match information.
2. The OIG distributes the interagency feedback report to HHS and legacy DADS eligibility staff monthly. Eligibility staff contact the veteran to verify the amount and start date of VA benefits received and then take the appropriate action to determine if the individual remains financially eligible for SNAP, TANF, Medicaid and/or long-term care, or if the services and supports they receive should be reduced or eliminated due to the new veterans benefits the individual is receiving.
3. Eligibility staff calculate cost avoidance when a change in eligibility or individual plan of care is initiated as a result of the TVC interagency feedback report. Eligibility staff determine cost avoidance by subtracting the recipient's new amount or value of benefits from the previous amount received for each month beginning when the change is made and continue through the end of the certification or until the next review. Changes occurring for individuals identified in the PARIS VA match file prior to receiving the TVC interagency feedback report are not included in the calculation of cost avoidance, as the action was not initiated because of the interagency feedback file. In these instances, the change was most likely the result of a consumer initiated change, an annual financial certification, or a reassessment to initiate the individual's new service plan year.
4. Eligibility staff complete the total savings and general revenue cost savings information on the interagency feedback report and return it to the OIG.
5. The OIG compiles the total savings and general revenue cost avoidance information from the monthly interagency feedback reports and prepares an annual summary report for the HHS Fiscal Division.

## **Accomplishments and Reporting Measures**

The PARIS workgroup consists of staff from all three agencies and will continue to meet quarterly. The PARIS workgroup determines the use of the PARIS VA match data and establishes processes of sharing the match data among the agencies. Each quarter, HHS creates a file of the matched SNAP, TANF, Medicaid, and long-term care recipients. HHS and TVC developed and implemented a secured file transfer process whereby TVC retrieves the file from HHS's secured file transfer process server. An interagency feedback report was developed by the workgroup as a communication tool for TVC to report veterans' claim information to HHS, and for HHS to capture cost avoidance and general revenue information on those cases. The following chart represents the number of recipient records sent to be matched with PARIS VA data and the number of matches returned during state fiscal year 2019.

## Fiscal Year 2019 PARIS VA Matches

PARIS VA Match Quarter	Number of HHS Recipients Submitted to PARIS VA	Number of Matched HHS Recipients Returned from PARIS VA
August 2017	6,550,106	Not Available*
November 2017	6,706,810	40,019
February 2018	6,671,334	39,656
May 2018	6,551,666	38,408
August 2018	6,500,286	38,323
November 2018	6,503,142	38,488
February 2019	6,465,632	38,604
May 2019	6,287,432	37,430

\*Data match not completed while OIG and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families were finalizing an updated memorandum of understanding.

### Progress in Identifying and Obtaining VA Benefits for Veterans

For fiscal year 2019, TVC worked the statewide PARIS August 2018, November 2018, February 2019, and May 2019 files received from HHS. A methodology of screening for those clients contacted in the previous file; already receiving State and Federal Aid and Attendance benefits; and who do not meet eligibility requirements for VA Pension or Dependents benefits has been established. From each new file, TVC can ascertain clients with the best opportunity for claims success within the fiscal year.

TVC screened 10,187 PARIS VA Match File clients for fiscal year 2019. This included 6,338 veterans and surviving spouses who are clients of TVC. Meaning, they had filed a power of attorney (POA) with the VA appointing TVC and partner service organizations (Veterans of Foreign Wars, American Legion, AMVETS, et al.) as their representative throughout the claims process. This allows TVC to gain full access to VA records, their personal contact information and to the targeted population for TVC PARIS.

Another 2,732 clients had no POA on file with the VA, meaning these clients could be contacted by TVC with limited personal contact information the PARIS file contained. Moreover, TVC cannot access their records in the VA system. Historically, this population had a <5% success rate in contacting — a poor return on investment with scarce resources.

The remaining 1,117 clients were determined to have appointed other representation with the VA outside of TVC’s jurisdiction. These include veterans and stakeholders with POA through Disabled American Veterans, Paralyzed Veterans of America, Wounded Warriors and private attorneys. TVC does not have access to these VA records and may not use personal contact information provided in the file.

Of the 6,338 clients eligible to be contacted by TVC’s PARIS team, TVC has contacted 3,235 clients by mail, telephone, email, and/or facsimile. Of those contacted, 2,138 were contacted regarding the opportunity for Pension Aid and Attendance benefits and the other 1,097 were contacted for possible increases for service-connected disabilities

or dependency claims.

Out of 2,138 possibly eligible Pension Aid and Attendance benefits, TVC filed 77 new claims for Aid and Attendance. Of the 1,097 veterans contacted for possible new service-connected disability increase or updated dependency status, TVC filed 261 claims. A total of 338 claims were sent to the VA throughout fiscal year 2019 for adjudication of new or increased benefits.

In all other cases, those clients not contacted were determined to be either ineligible for new or increased benefits due to recent or appealed rating decisions for service-connected disabilities; already have pending claims for an increase or dependency with the VA; have appeals pending with the VA; rated below the threshold for dependency claims; or determined to be receiving the maximum benefit.

### **Claims Awarded and Cost Avoidance Measures**

For fiscal year 2019 (beginning September 1, 2018 to August 31, 2019), TVC has forwarded 338 claims for new or additional benefits to the VA. Of those claims, 280 have been adjudicated in favor of the claimant for \$1,439,682 in increased benefits annually and \$332,041 in retroactive payments made to Texas veterans and/or their eligible dependents (VA denied benefits to 58 claimants). Another 56 claims are pending adjudication by the VA with a projected annual increase of \$197,817 to Texas veterans.

In the 86 months that the PARIS Project has been active, TVC has sent 2062 claims to the VA. There are still 56 pending and 1479 were granted to Texas veterans and their stakeholders. Since the project's inception, TVC has helped clients obtain \$2,055,744 in retroactive payments. These retroactive payments are in addition to the \$7,286,050 TVC helps clients obtain on annual basis, an amount projected to increase to \$7,483,867 once it includes claims pending adjudication.

Most Community Care Services Eligibility (CCSE) services have limited enrollment and maintain an interest list for services. Upon receipt of the PARIS VA match, CCSE staff review services received by the individuals, which may result in termination of CCSE services, allowing additional individuals to receive services.

The cost avoidance realized in fiscal year 2019 is shown in the chart below.

**Fiscal Year 2019 PARIS VA Match Cost Avoidance**

<b>Program Type</b>	<b>Total Amount of Cost Savings</b>	<b>Total Amount of Cost Savings for General Revenue</b>
DADS Legacy Programs	\$ 7,336.00	\$ 3,195.84
Medicaid	\$ 2,509.00	\$ 1,127.00
SNAP	\$ 240.00	\$ -
<b>Total State Savings</b>	<b>\$ 10,085.00</b>	<b>\$ 4,322.84</b>

Some veterans’ benefits increased due to the Aid and Attendance benefit intended to cover medical and attendant care expenses. The Aid and Attendance benefit is excluded income in the determination of SNAP, TANF, and Medicaid eligibility and would not result in cost avoidance in those programs. In these circumstances, the veterans will see an increase in VA benefits without any impact to state benefits they receive through HHS. If the veteran is receiving home attendant services, those services may be reduced. Additionally, Medicaid policy allows recipients to have other medical insurance in addition to Medicaid if otherwise financially qualified. Medicaid would be the payer of last resort to providers for medical and prescription expenses when a recipient has other health insurance. However, if a veteran is enrolled in TRICARE or dependent(s) qualify for CHAMPVA and is still eligible for Medicaid, the state will continue to pay a monthly premium for the veteran's Medicaid and no cost avoidance will be realized.

**TVC Outreach to Targeted Populations**

TVC PARIS screens every county in Texas for eligible clients from the HHS PARIS VA Match File provided within two years. TVC PARIS mails letters describing Aid and Attendance, Service Connected increase, dependency and school child benefits to targeted clients. This usually elicits a phone call, which affords the opportunity to advise and counsel the client as the VA’s process and content changes frequently.

TVC encourages veterans to utilize the VA Health Care System as any diagnosis, treatment, progress notes, etc. are entered into the VA electronic system. This facilitates the adjudication of future claims as the evidence is easily accessible and ready to rate once the claim has been filed. Moreover, this provides the State savings as the VA provides healthcare services, prescriptions, therapies and devices at minimal or no cost to the State’s veterans.

TVC PARIS also promotes the numerous TVC services provided. Most veterans don’t realize we are Texas State employees – free of charge - in the VA Medical Centers, clinics and Regional Offices to advise veterans. There are also TVC counselors in workforce centers for employment, a Military Veteran Peer Network, TVC Women’s Coordinators, as well as, TVC Education counselors to aid with Post 911 GI Bill and Hazelwood claims. TVC knows that a trained, healthy and employed veteran benefits all Texans.



In addition to participating in veteran's outreach events across central Texas, TVC PARIS informs veterans and widows of their County Service Officers and their mission. They know the local organizations, churches and philanthropists that can assist veterans with daily living activities and requirements. They know contacts at the public utility district for water and electric bill relief, those organizations eligible for Veterans Assistance Funds and can provide a helping hand or a compassionate ear when needed. There is more than just cost savings in their effort.