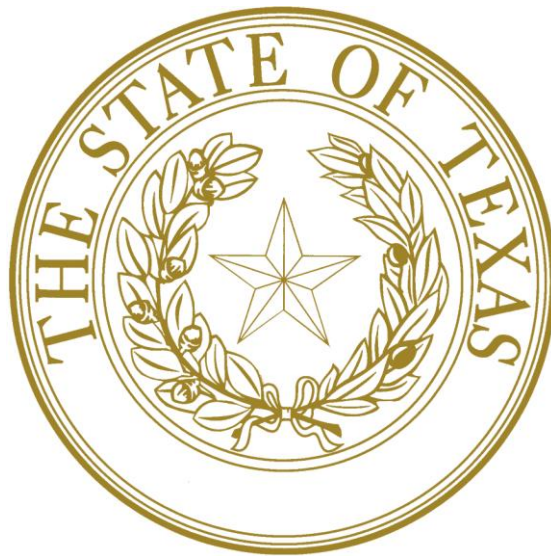


**Public Assistance Reporting Information System
(PARIS)**

**U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)
Match Report**

December 1, 2015



**As Required By H.B. 2562, 83rd Legislature, Regular Session, 2013,
and the 2014-15 General Appropriations Act S.B. 1,
83rd Legislature, Regular Session, 2013
(Article IX, Miscellaneous Provisions, Section 17.04)**

**Health and Human Services Commission
Department of Aging and Disability Services
Texas Veterans Commission
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 progress on the implementation of legislation. This report is required by H.B. 2562, 83rd Legislature, Regular Session, 2013, and the 2014-15 General Appropriations Act, S.B. 1, 83rd Legislature, Regular Session, 2013 (Article IX, Miscellaneous Provisions, Section 17.04). This report is submitted to satisfy both requirements.

This legislation directs the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC), Texas Veterans Commission (TVC), Veterans Land Board (VLB), and Department of Aging and Disability Services (DADS) regarding the coordination, collection, and utilization of data from PARIS and requires the agencies to collectively submit an annual report that includes the following:

- The interagency progress in identifying and obtaining Department of Veterans Affairs (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 the 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.

Introduction

Background

As a result of legislation from the 82nd Legislative session, HHSC, TVC, VLB, and DADS entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on December 1, 2011, for the purposes of:

1. Coordinating and collecting information about the use and analysis of data received from the system among state agencies.
2. 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 by H.B. 2562, other legislation from the 83rd Legislative session addresses the use of PARIS data and the appropriation of savings realized from its use. The 2014-15 General Appropriations Act (GAA), S.B. 1, 83rd Legislature, Regular Session, 2013 (Article I, Veterans Commission, Rider 8) requires the following:

1. TVC is required to use \$50,000 out of the Fund for Veterans' Assistance No. 368 and \$50,000 in Interagency Contracts to fund 2.0 full time equivalents (FTE) per fiscal year to

investigate and analyze information/data received from PARIS to assist and facilitate claims for veterans receiving Medicaid or other state public benefits to apply for VA benefits.

2. Ten percent of General Revenue savings during fiscal year 2014 that were the result of pursuing information from PARIS as calculated by HHSC shall be credited by the Comptroller to the TVC Veterans' Assistance Fund No. 368 in fiscal year 2015.

The 2014-15 GAA, S.B. 1, 83rd Legislature, Regular Session, 2013 (Article II, HHSC, Rider 46) directs HHSC to:

1. Submit information quarterly to the U.S. Health and Human Services Department, Administration for Children and Families (ACF), for participation in the federal PARIS veterans and federal files information exchange. It also specifies that the HHSC Inspector General (IG) shall submit the necessary data from all state health and human services programs that may serve veterans to the federal PARIS System and forward necessary information from it to the appropriate state agencies.
2. Transfer \$50,000 in general revenue funds in fiscal years 2013 and 2014 to the Texas Veteran's Commission (TVC) to partially fund 2.0 FTE staff to work as veteran benefit counselors who investigate and analyze the data received from the PARIS system. The PARIS information will be used by the TVC to assist and facilitate claims for veterans receiving Medicaid and other state public benefits which veterans are entitled to receive from the VA.
3. Calculate ten percent of the general revenue savings during fiscal year 2014 that was the result of pursuing PARIS information, which will be appropriated to the Texas Veterans Commission in fiscal year 2015.

Additionally, the 2014-15 GAA, S.B. 1, 83rd Legislature, Regular Session, 2013 (Article IX, Miscellaneous Provisions, Section 17.04) requires HHSC, DADS, TVC and VLB to:

1. Enter into an interagency contract to establish an ongoing staff workgroup between the agencies to coordinate the use and to investigate and analyze the data received from PARIS and develop new strategies to use PARIS data that could generate savings for the state and improve communication and services to veterans.
2. Submit a report to the LBB and Governor describing the state's use of PARIS data and include any savings or cost avoidance amounts resulting from PARIS information from the previous biennium, as well as recommendations regarding its future use.

The PARIS system operated by the ACF of the United States Department of Health and Human Services is a federal-state partnership which provides states with detailed information and data to assist them in maintaining program integrity and detecting improper payments. HHSC executed a model agreement with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs through ACF to participate in the PARIS Veterans matching system. HHSC creates a file of active recipients in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and Medicaid programs. This 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 HHSC.

Cost Avoidance Methodology

HHSC is directed to calculate the cost avoidance resulting from the VA PARIS match activity conducted by the collaborating state agencies. Cost avoidance is a cost reduction opportunity that results from an intentional action, negotiation, or intervention.¹ The methodology used to calculate the cost avoidance of the PARIS VA match project is:

1. TVC sends an interagency feedback report to HHSC IG of claims adjudicated by VA, as a result of contact initiated by TVC from the PARIS VA match information.
2. HHSC IG distributes the interagency feedback report to HHSC and/or DADS eligibility staff. HHSC financial eligibility staff or DADS program 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, and/or Medicaid, or if the services and supports they receive should be reduced or eliminated based on those veterans' benefits the individual is now receiving.
3. HHSC and/or DADS will 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 determines 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 on 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. HHSC and/or DADS eligibility staff will complete the cost avoidance information on the interagency feedback report and send it to HHSC IG.
5. HHSC IG will compile general revenue cost avoidance information from the interagency feedback reports and prepare an annual summary report for HHSC Fiscal Division.

Accomplishments and Reporting Measures

The PARIS Workgroup consists of staff members from all four agencies and will continue to meet quarterly. The PARIS Workgroup determines the usage of the PARIS Veterans match data and establishes processes of sharing the match data among the agencies. Each quarter, HHSC

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

creates a file of the matched SNAP, TANF, and Medicaid recipients, and additional client information is added by HHSC and DADS. HHSC and TVC developed and implemented a secured file transfer process (FTP) whereby TVC retrieves the file from HHSC's secured FTP server. An interagency feedback report was developed by the workgroup as a communication tool for TVC to report to HHSC and DADS veterans' claim information, and for HHSC and DADS to capture cost avoidance 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 2015.

Fiscal Year 2015 PARIS VA Matches

PARIS VA Match Quarter	Number of HHSC and DADS Recipients Submitted to PARIS VA	Number of Matched HHSC and DADS Recipients Returned from PARIS VA
August 2014	6,218,888	23,248
November 2014	6,336,798	N/A ²
February 2015	6,214,496	N/A ²
May 2015	6,164,164	N/A ²

NOTE: During each quarterly match, veterans previously identified are not filtered out. The match always begins with all identified recipients and veterans in the system during the time period.

Progress in Identifying and Obtaining VA Benefits for Veterans

For fiscal year 2015, TVC worked the statewide PARIS May 2014 and August 2014 files. A new MOU between Texas HHSC and federal PARIS ACF was recently signed and TVC anticipates the August 2015 file delivery in the first quarter of fiscal year 2016. The methodology of screening out those clients contacted in the previous file from the new file still yields a statewide screening within the fiscal year of new clients.

The TVC screened 13,086 cases during the first 11 months of fiscal year 2015. Among those screened 7,530 cases were current clients of TVC who had filed a power of attorney (POA) appointing TVC to represent them throughout the claims process. The POA allowed TVC access to VA disability records and personal contact information.

TVC was also able to contact 3,291 clients, who did not have a POA on file with the VA, from the limited information contained in their PARIS files.

The remaining 2,265 clients were determined to have appointed other representation with the VA. 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 VA records and may not use personal contact information provided in the PARIS file.

² The computer matching agreement with Veterans Affairs expired in October 2014. The November 2014, February 2015, and May 2015 Veterans Match did not occur.

Of the 10,821 clients eligible to be contacted by TVC’s PARIS team, TVC contacted 5,507 clients by mail, telephone, email, and/or facsimile. Of those, 3,275 were contacted regarding the opportunity for Pension Aid and Attendance benefits, and the other 2,232 were contacted for possible increases for service-connected disabilities or dependency claims.

Of the 3,275 possibly eligible for Pension Aid and Attendance benefits, TVC has filed 158 new claims for Aid and Attendance. Of the 2,232 veterans contacted for possible new service-connected disability increase or updated dependency status, TVC has filed 151 claims. A total of 309 claims have been sent to the VA thus far in fiscal year 2015 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; having claims for an increase or dependency pending with the VA; having appeals pending with the VA; being rated below the threshold for dependency claims; or determined to already be receiving the maximum benefit.

Claims Awarded and Cost Avoidance Measures

For the federal fiscal year 2015 (beginning October 1, 2014), TVC has forwarded 309 claims for new or additional benefits to the VA. Of those claims, 215 have been adjudicated in favor of the claimant for \$1,151,438 annually with \$457,269 in retroactive payments made to Texas veterans and/or their eligible dependents (VA denied benefits to 94 claimants). Another 75 claims are pending adjudication by the VA with a projected annual increase of \$193,146 to Texas veterans.

Since implementing the PARIS Project, TVC has sent 848 claims to the VA. There are 75 still pending, and 529 were granted to Texas veterans and their stakeholders. An annual total of \$2,859,901 in payments and \$907,406 in retroactive payments have been realized. A projected annual total of \$3,053,047 from claims pending adjudication is expected.

Many of DADS’ services have limited enrollment and have lists of individuals interested in receiving services. Upon receipt of the PARIS Veterans match data DADS staff review services received by the individuals which may result in the termination of DADS services. This opens a spot for another individual to receive needed services.

The cost avoidance realized in fiscal year 2015 is shown in the following chart.

Fiscal Year 2015 PARIS VA Match Cost Avoidance

Program Type	Total Amount of Cost Savings	Total Amount of Cost Savings for General Revenue
SNAP	\$14,918.00	0
TANF	0	0
Medicaid	\$1,049.00	\$440.06
DADS programs	\$20,401.50	\$8,369.98

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 HHSC. If the veteran is receiving home attendant services through DADS 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 has CHAMPVA or TRICARE insurance 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.

Efforts to Expand the Use of PARIS

The PARIS Veterans match project 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 Veterans match was expanded to include Children's Health Insurance Program recipients beginning with the November 2013 match.

DADS individuals receiving Title XX Social Services Block Grant services were added to the report to expand the opportunities for matching beginning in May 2014.

TVC Outreach to Targeted Populations

The TVC PARIS team screens every county in Texas for eligible clients from the HHSC PARIS Match File provided within one year. The team makes an earnest effort to contact not only those veterans and dependents with a TVC POA but also sends completed VA Form 21-22 (Appointment of Veterans Service Organization), which only requires a signature, to those clients with no POA. This usually elicits a phone call to the team, which has an opportunity to advise and counsel the client.

TVC encourages veterans to utilize the VA Health Care System as any diagnosis, therapies, medications, devices, 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 is filed. This paperless exchange of information also provides the state savings in the VA healthcare services provided.

The team also promotes TVC services, as the VA's process and content change monthly. Most veterans do not realize that state employees are in VA Medical Centers and clinics to counsel veterans. There are also two TVC counselors in every workforce center for employment, TVC women's coordinators, and statewide TVC education counselors to aid with post-9/11 GI Bill and Hazelwood claims. TVC knows that a trained, healthy, and employed veteran benefits all Texans.

In addition, TVC informs veterans and widows of County Service Officers about their mission. They know the local organizations, churches, and philanthropists that can help veterans with

daily living activities and requirements. They know who can help at the public utility district for water and electric bill relief, those organizations eligible for Veterans Assistance Funds, and they can provide a helping hand or a compassionate ear when needed. There is more than cost savings in their effort.

Conclusion

All four agencies are participating in the PARIS Workgroup quarterly and entered into a MOU to coordinate and share information from the usage of the PARIS VA match system on December 1, 2011. The PARIS Workgroup continues to analyze data to expand usage of the system to maximize benefits for veterans and savings to the state. As a result of the interagency coordination of the PARIS Veterans match data, many veterans are receiving VA benefits or pending receipt of VA benefits that they otherwise would not have known were available to them. This report fulfills the legislative requirement of H.B. 2562, 83rd Legislature, Regular Session, 2013, and the 2014-15 General Appropriations Act, S.B. 1, 83rd Legislature, Regular Session, 2013 (Article IX Miscellaneous Provisions, Section 17.04).