

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

**October 1, 2020**



**Required by Government Code § 531.0998(e) and  
the FY2020-2021 General Appropriations Act HB 1,  
86<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), the Veterans Land Board (VLB), and the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC), 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), HB 1, 86<sup>th</sup> Legislature, Regular Session, 2019 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, to maximize benefits for veterans and savings to the state.

Article I, Veterans Commission (Rider 7) requires \$54,574 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. It also mandates that ten (10) percent of the savings out of General Revenue during fiscal year 2020

that were the result of pursuing information from PARIS as calculated by HHSC shall be credited by the Comptroller to the Texas Veterans Commission Fund for Veterans' Assistance Account No. 368, from which expenditures were originally made, in fiscal year 2021.

Under the GAA, HHSC is required to submit information quarterly to the U.S. Health & Human Services Department's Administration for Children and Families (ACF) for participation in the PARIS Veterans and Federal Files information exchange. It also specifies that the HHSC 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 PARIS to the appropriate state agencies for follow up and further investigation.

### **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 the 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. HHS sends this excel file of active recipients 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 the 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**

HHSC calculates 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:

1. HHSC sends a file of individuals receiving HHS benefits, including SNAP,

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

- TANF, Medicaid, and CHIP to the PARIS contractor (DMDC) on a quarterly basis.
2. The DMDC matches the recipient data and returns a file of Texans identified as both HHS benefit recipients and as veterans eligible for VA benefits.
  3. TVC initiates contact with the veterans identified as being on HHS benefits and eligible for VA benefits to enroll them in VA benefits.
  4. TVC sends an interagency feedback report to HHSC OIG of veterans added to VA benefits each month as a result of contact initiated by TVC from the PARIS VA match information.
  5. The OIG distributes the interagency feedback report to HHSC 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.
  6. HHSC 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.
  7. Eligibility staff complete the total savings and general revenue cost savings information on the interagency feedback report and return it to the OIG.
  8. 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 HHSC 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. HHSC and TVC developed and implemented a secure file transfer process whereby TVC retrieves the file from HHSC's secure file transfer process (SFTP) server. An interagency feedback report was developed by the workgroup as a communication tool for TVC to report veterans' claim information to HHSC, and for HHSC 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 years 2019 and 2020.

**Fiscal Years 2019 and 2020 PARIS VA Matches**

<b>PARIS VA Match Quarter</b>	<b>Number of HHS Recipients Submitted to PARIS VA</b>	<b>Number of Matched HHS Recipients Returned from PARIS VA</b>
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
August 2019	6,316,661	37,200
November 2019	6,300,721	37,067
February 2020	6,248,497	36,415
May 2020	6,717,595	39,977

\*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 2020, TVC worked the statewide PARIS August 2019, November 2019, February 2020, and May 2020 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 17,332 PARIS VA Match File clients for fiscal year 2020. This included 9,052 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 4,076 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, TVC had a <5% success rate in contacting this population.

The remaining 4,204 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 9,052 clients eligible to be contacted by TVC’s PARIS team, TVC has contacted 3,658 clients by mail, telephone, email, and/or facsimile. Of those contacted, 1,938 were contacted regarding the opportunity for Pension Aid and Attendance benefits and

the other 1,720 were contacted for possible increases for service-connected disabilities or dependency claims.

Out of 1,938 possibly eligible Pension Aid and Attendance benefits, TVC filed 104 new claims for Aid and Attendance. Of the 1,720 veterans contacted for possible new service-connected disability increase or updated dependency status, TVC filed 225 claims. A total of 329 claims were sent to the VA throughout fiscal year 2020 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.

### **Veterans with PARIS Matches Contacted by TVC**

	<b>Number of Veterans</b>	<b>Claims Filed</b>
<b>PARIS VA Match File clients screened</b>	<b>17,332</b>	
<b>Clients of TVC</b>	9,052	
<b>TVC Clients Contacted</b>		
Pension Aid and Attendance benefits	1,938	104
Service-connected disabilities or dependency claims	1,720	225
<b>Clients with other representation or limited contact information</b>		
Clients of other entities	4,204	
No Power of Attorney	4,076	

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

For fiscal year 2020 (beginning September 1, 2019 to August 31, 2020), TVC has forwarded 329 claims for new or additional benefits to the VA. Of those claims, 288 have been adjudicated in favor of the claimant for \$1,487,284 in increased benefits annually and \$398,536 in retroactive payments made to Texas veterans and/or their eligible dependents (VA denied benefits to 52 claimants). Another 19 claims are pending adjudication by the VA with a projected annual increase of approximately \$95,400 to Texas veterans.

### Claims Submission Results

	Number of Veterans	Value of Claims
<b>Claims Filed</b>	<b>329</b>	
Adjudicated in favor of veteran	288	\$1,885,820
In process	19	\$95,400
Denied	52	

In the 98 months that the PARIS Project has been active, TVC has sent 2,391 claims to the VA. There are still 19 pending and 1,767 were granted to Texas veterans and their stakeholders. An annual total of \$8,772,682 and \$2,454,280 in retroactive payments has been realized, with a projected annual total of \$8,868,881 when claims pending adjudication are included.

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 2020 is shown in the chart below.

#### Fiscal Year 2020 PARIS VA Match Cost Avoidance

Program Type	Total Amount of Cost Savings	Total Amount of Cost Savings for General Revenue
DADS Legacy Programs	\$ 5,505.00	\$ 2,176.99
Medicaid	\$ 578.40	\$ 224.88
SNAP	\$ 2,638.00	\$ -
<b>Total State Savings</b>	<b>\$ 8,721.40</b>	<b>\$ 2,401.87</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.