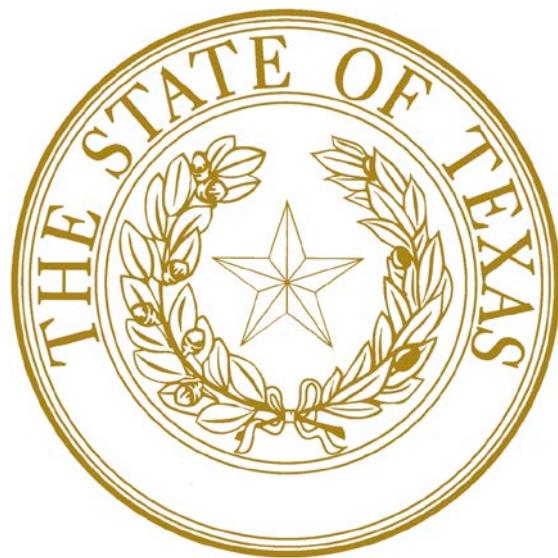


**Public Assistance Reporting Information System
(PARIS)**
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Match Report

October 1, 2017



**Required by Government Code 531.0998(e) and the FY2016-2017
General Appropriations Act H.B. 1, 84th Legislature**

**Health and Human Services Commission
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 the results of the PARIS match data and Texas Veterans Commission (TVC) efforts to obtain benefits for Texas veterans.

In FY17, PARIS matches were run for the first two quarters, with over thirty-five thousand matches identified each quarter. PARIS matches were not completed in the third and fourth quarter due to the MOU with the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) of the United States Department of Health and Human Services expiring.

Fiscal Year 2017 PARIS VA Matches

PARIS VA Match Quarter	Number of HHSC Recipients Submitted to PARIS VA	Number of Matched HHSC Recipients Returned from PARIS VA
August 2016	6,255,862	35,772
November 2016	6,419,180	37,183
February 2017	6,499,585	N/A
May 2017	6,499,305	N/A

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.

From the matches identified, TVC screened 19,585 cases for the first 11 months of fiscal year 2017. TVC then contacted 4,106 clients. Of those contacted, 2,433 were contacted regarding the opportunity for Pension Aid and Attendance benefits and TVC has filed 100 new claims. The other 1,673 were contacted for possible increases for service-connected disabilities or dependency claims and TVC has filed 173 claims. Of the 273 new claims filed, 210 have been adjudicated in favor of the claimant for \$799,901 annually with \$203,552 in retroactive payments. The VA denied benefits to 63 claimants. Another 44 claims are pending adjudication by the VA with a projected annual increase of \$161,728 to Texas veterans.

HHSC uses the information provided by TVC to determine cost avoidance in Medicaid, SNAP, TANF and long term care programs. The All Funds savings for FY17 totaled \$9,968 and General Revenue savings were \$4,522.

Background

Legislative History and Requirements

In 2011, the 82nd Legislature passed HB2562, which added Government Code 531.0998 (e), directing the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC), Texas Veterans Commission (TVC), Veterans Land Board (VLB) and Department of Aging and Disability Services (DADS)¹ to coordinate on the collection and utilization of data from the federal Public Assistance Reporting Information System (PARIS).

This statute directs HHSC, TVC and VLB on 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.

HHSC, TVC and VLB have worked under a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) since December 1, 2011 to coordinate the collection of information about the use and analysis of data received from PARIS and to develop new strategies for using the 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 2016-2017 General Appropriations Act (GAA), H.B. 1, 84th Legislature, Regular Session, 2015 also addresses the use of PARIS data and the appropriation of savings realized from its use through three different riders.

Article I, Veterans Commission, Rider 8 requires the following:

- TVC is required to use \$52,624 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.

¹ DADS client services were transferred to the Health and Human Services Commission on September 1, 2016 and the agency ceased to exist on September 1, 2017. All references to HHSC include functions previously performed by DADS.

- Ten percent of General Revenue savings during fiscal year 2016 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 2017.

Article II, HHSC, Rider 42 directs HHSC to:

- 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.
- Transfer \$50,000 in general revenue funds in fiscal years 2016 and 2017 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.
- Calculate ten percent of the general revenue savings during fiscal year 2016 that was the result of pursuing PARIS information, which will be appropriated to the Texas Veterans Commission in fiscal year 2017.

Article IX, Miscellaneous Provisions, Section 17.03 requires HHSC, TVC and VLB to:

- 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.

Public Assistance Reporting Information System (PARIS)

The PARIS system operated by the Administration for Children and Families (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.

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.

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 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.² 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 eligibility staff. HHSC 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 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 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.

² NASPO Benchmarking Workgroup Research Brief 2007, *Benchmarking Costs Savings & Cost Avoidance*, National Association of State Procurement Officials

Accomplishments and Reporting Measures

The PARIS Workgroup consists of staff members from all three agencies and meets 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 creates a file of the matched SNAP, TANF, and Medicaid recipients, and adds additional client information. 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 veterans' claim information, and for HHSC and 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 2017.

Fiscal Year 2017 PARIS VA Matches

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August 2016	6,255,862	35,772
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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 the first 11 months of fiscal 2017 (beginning September 1, 2016 to August 1, 2017), TVC worked the statewide PARIS February 2016, August 2016 and November 2016 files. After a new MOU with ACF is signed, TVC anticipates receipt of the August 2017 file for work in the first quarter of fiscal year 2018. The methodology of screening out those clients contacted in the previous file from the new file still yields a statewide screening of all clients within the fiscal year.

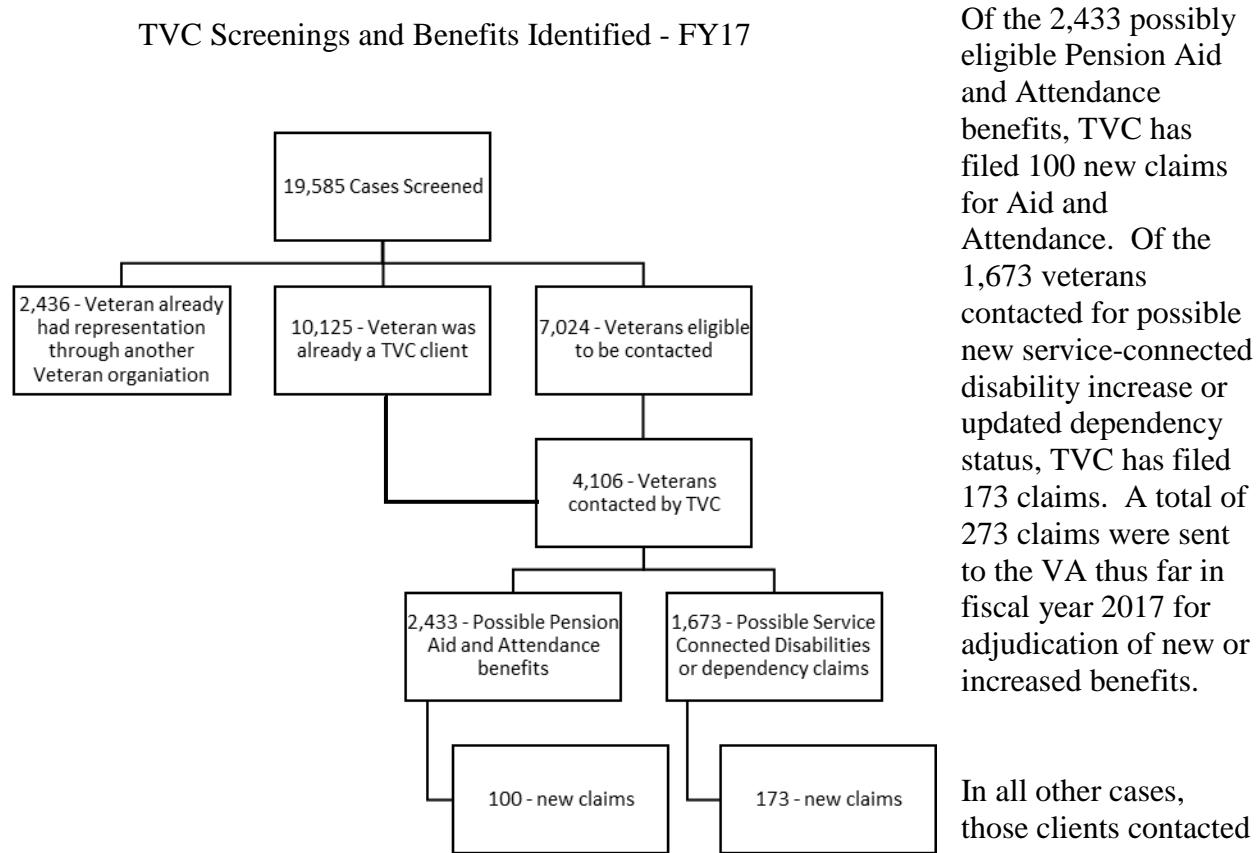
The TVC screened 19,585 cases for the first 11 months of fiscal year 2017. Those included 10,125 cases who were already clients of TVC, meaning they had filed a power of attorney (POA) with the VA appointing TVC as their representative throughout the claims process, which allowed TVC to gain full access to VA records and personal contact information.

Another 7,024 clients had no POA on file with the VA, meaning that these clients could be contacted by TVC with what limited personal contact information the PARIS file contained. TVC cannot access their records in the VA system.

³ The computer matching agreement with Veterans Affairs expired. The February 2017 and May 2017 Veterans Match did not occur.

The remaining 2,436 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 file.

Of the 17,149 clients eligible to be contacted by TVC's PARIS team, TVC has contacted 4,106 clients by mail, telephone, email and/or facsimile. Of those contacted, 2,433 were contacted regarding the opportunity for Pension Aid and Attendance benefits and the other 1,673 were contacted for possible increases for service-connected disabilities or dependency claims.



or appealed rating decisions for service-connected disabilities; already having claims for an increase or dependency pending with the VA; already having appeals pending with the VA; rated below the threshold for dependency claims; or, determined to already receiving the maximum benefit.

Claims Awarded and Cost Avoidance Measures

For FY 2017, TVC has forwarded 273 claims for new or additional benefits to the VA. Of those claims, 210 have been adjudicated in favor of the claimant for \$799,901 annually with an additional \$203,552 in retroactive payments made to Texas veterans and/or their eligible dependents (VA denied benefits to 63 claimants). Another 44 claims are pending adjudication by the VA with a projected annual increase of \$161,728 to Texas veterans.

In the 62 months that the PARIS Project has been active, TVC has sent 1400 claims to the VA. There are still 44 pending and 934 were granted to Texas veterans and their stakeholders. A total of \$4,671,226 and \$1,483,100 in retroactive payments have been realized and a projected total of \$4,832,954 when claims pending adjudication are included.

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

The cost avoidance realized in fiscal year 2017 is shown in the following chart.

Fiscal Year 2017 PARIS VA Match Cost Avoidance

Program Type	Total Amount of Cost Savings	Total Amount of Cost Savings for General Revenue
SNAP	\$5,793.00	\$2,723.00
TANF	\$0.00	\$0.00
Medicaid	\$2,330.80	\$999.21
Long term care programs	\$1,845.00	\$800.77
Total State Savings	\$9,968.80	\$4522.98

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 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 Veterans and Stakeholders

The TVC PARIS team screens every county in Texas for eligible clients that are listed on the HHSC PARIS Match File within the fiscal year. The team makes a diligent effort to contact veterans and dependents with TVC POAs, and sends a completed VA Form 21-22 (Appointment

of Veterans Service Organization) that only requires a signature, to each client that does not have a POA. This action usually elicits a phone call to the TVC team, which then presents an opportunity to advise and counsel the client.

TVC encourages veterans to utilize the VA Health Care System, where all diagnoses, 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 has been filed. In addition, the VA provides healthcare services at minimal or no cost to Texas veterans, which results in savings to the state.

The team also promotes TVC services. The VA's process and documents change on a monthly basis and most veterans do not realize that the TVC team works free of charge to counsel veterans in the VA Medical Centers and clinics. There are also TVC counselors in workforce centers for employment, TVC Women's Coordinators and statewide 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 veterans outreach events across central Texas, the TVC PARIS team informs veterans and widows about County Veteran Service Officers (CVSO) and their mission. They are familiar with local organizations, churches and philanthropists that can help veterans with daily living activities and requirements. CVSO know who can help at the public utility district for water and electric bill relief, organizations eligible for Veterans Assistance Funds, and they also provide a helping hand and compassionate ear when needed. There is more than just cost savings in their effort.

Conclusion

The interagency coordination of the PARIS Veterans match data and subsequent efforts by TVC has resulted in significant benefits for Texas veterans that they otherwise would not have known were available to them.