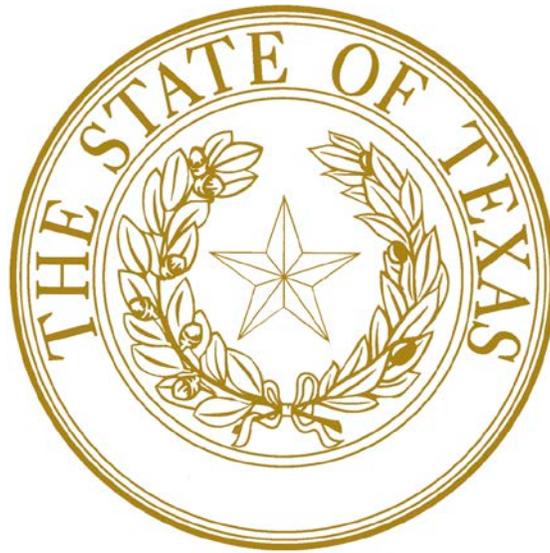


**Public Assistance Reporting Information System
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Match Report**

October 1, 2018



**Required by Government Code 531.0998(e) and the
FY2016-2017 General Appropriations Act HB 1, 85th
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 legislation.

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

Background

In 2011, legislation from the 82nd 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, 85th 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.¹ The methodology used to calculate the cost avoidance in the PARIS VA report includes these steps:

¹ 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 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, HHSC 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 HHSC'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 HHSC, 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 2018.

Fiscal Year 2018 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

*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 2018, TVC worked the statewide PARIS November 2016, November 2017, February 2018, and July 2018 files. Since a new MOU with AFC was signed in 2017, TVC has received new quarterly match files expeditiously since November 2017. 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 10,436 PARIS VA match clients for fiscal year 2018. This included 6,030 veterans and surviving spouses who are clients of TVC. That means 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 and personal contact information, and is the new targeted population for TVC PARIS.

Another 2,920 clients had no POA on file with the VA, meaning these clients could be contacted by TVC with limited personal contact information contained in the PARIS file. Moreover, TVC cannot access their records in the VA system. Historically, this population had a less than 5 percent response rate and is now avoided.

The remaining 1,486 clients were determined to have appointed other representation with the VA outside of TVC's jurisdiction. These include veterans and stakeholders with POAs through Disabled American Veterans, Paralyzed Veterans of America, Wounded Warrior Project, 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 6,030 clients eligible to be contacted by TVC's PARIS team, TVC has contacted 3,109 clients by mail, telephone, email, and/or facsimile. Of those contacted, 2,036 were contacted regarding the opportunity for Aid and Attendance

benefits, and the other 1,073 were contacted for possible increases for service-connected disabilities or dependency claims.

Out of 2,036 possibly eligible for Aid and Attendance benefits, TVC filed 90 new claims for Aid and Attendance benefits. Of the 1,673 veterans contacted for possible new service-connected disability increases or updated dependency status, TVC filed 206 claims. A total of 296 claims were sent to the VA throughout fiscal year 2018 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 were determined to be receiving the maximum benefit.

Claims Awarded and Cost Avoidance Measures

In fiscal year 2018, TVC forwarded 296 claims for new or additional benefits to the VA. Of those claims, 242 have been adjudicated in favor of the claimants for \$1,033,653 annually, with \$216,479 in retroactive payments made to Texas veterans and/or their eligible dependents. The VA denied benefits to 54 claimants. Another 35 claims are pending adjudication by the VA with a projected annual increase of \$122,222 to Texas veterans.

In the 74 months that the PARIS project has been active, TVC has sent 1,724 claims to the VA. There are still 35 pending claims and 1,199 were granted to Texas veterans and their stakeholders. A cumulative total of \$5,847,357 and \$1,723,703 in retroactive payments has been realized, with a projected cumulative total of \$5,969,579 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 2018 is shown in the chart below.

Fiscal Year 2018 PARIS VA Match Cost Avoidance

Program Type	Total Amount of Cost Savings	Total Amount of Cost Savings for General Revenue
SNAP	\$7,961	\$0
TANF	\$0	\$0
Medicaid	\$209	\$90
Legacy DADS Programs	\$20,814	\$9,102
Total State Savings	\$28,984	\$9,192

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 Targeted Populations

TVC PARIS screens every county in Texas for eligible clients from the HHSC 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 change monthly.

TVC encourages veterans to use the VA healthcare system as any diagnosis, therapy, medication, device, etc. is 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, this provides the state savings as the VA provides healthcare services at minimal or no cost to the state's veterans.

TVC PARIS also promotes myriad TVC services. Many veterans are not aware that TVC employees who counsel veterans in the VA medical centers, clinics, and regional offices are state employees and serve at no charge to veterans. TVC employees in workforce centers offer help with employment and the Military Veteran Peer Network, and work as TVC women's services coordinators and education counselors to aid with Post 911 GI bill and Hazelwood claims.

In addition to participating in veterans outreach events across central Texas, TVC PARIS informs veterans, and veterans' widows and widowers about 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, and the organizations eligible for veterans assistance funds who can provide a helping hand or a compassionate ear when needed.