

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

**September 29, 2023**



**Required by Government Code § 531.0998(e)**

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**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> Legislature, 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.

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.

The General Appropriations Act, HB 1, 88<sup>th</sup> Legislature, 2023, Article I, Veterans Commission (Rider 7) requires \$54,574 out of the Fund for Veterans Assistance Account No. 368 and 1.0 Full Time Equivalents (FTE) per fiscal year to investigate and analyze information/data received from the federal Public Assistance Reporting Information System (PARIS). It also mandates that ten (10) percent of the savings out of General Revenue during fiscal year 2024 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 2025.

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

PARIS, operated by the Administration for Children and Families (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), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and medical 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 in the mid-2000s. Additionally, the PARIS VA report was expanded to include Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) recipients in November 2013. 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, 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

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

- 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, CHIP, 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 2022 and 2023.

**Fiscal Year 2023 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 2022	7,871,726	47,669
November 2022	8,111,872	50,000
February 2023	8,228,887	51,048
May 2023	8,341,081	51,949

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

For fiscal year 2023, TVC reviewed the August 2022, November 2022, February 2023 and May 2023 PARIS files received from HHSC.

TVC screened 9,475 PARIS VA Match files for fiscal year 2023. This included 2,256 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 is the targeted population for TVC PARIS.

Another 242 clients had no POA on file with the VA and were not contacted. The remaining 6,977 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.

Of the 2,256 clients eligible to be contacted by TVC's PARIS team, TVC has contacted 336 clients by mail, telephone, email and/or facsimile. Of those contacted, 68 were contacted regarding the opportunity for Pension Aid and Attendance benefits, and the other 268 were contacted for possible increases for service-connected disabilities or dependency claims.

Out of 68 possibly eligible Pension Aid and Attendance benefits, TVC filed 27 new claims for Aid and Attendance. Of the 268 veterans contacted for a possible new service-connected disability increase or updated dependency status, TVC filed 31 claims. A total of 58 claims were sent to the VA throughout fiscal year 2023 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 already be receiving the maximum benefit.

## Veterans with PARIS Matches Contacted by TVC

	Number of Veterans	Claims Filed
<b>PARIS VA Match File clients screened</b>	<b>9,475</b>	
<b>Clients of TVC</b>	2,256	
<b>TVC Clients Contacted</b>		
Pension Aid and Attendance benefits	68	27
Service-connected disabilities or dependency claims	268	31
<b>Clients with other representation or limited contact information</b>		
Clients of other entities	6,977	
No Power of Attorney	242	

### Claims Awarded and Cost Avoidance Measures

For fiscal year 2023 (beginning September 1, 2022 to August 31, 2023), TVC has forwarded 58 claims for new or additional benefits to the VA. Of those claims, 35 have been adjudicated in favor of the claimant for \$553,344 in increased benefits annually and \$131,164 in retroactive payments made to Texas veterans and/or their eligible dependents (VA denied benefits to 19 claimants). Another four claims are pending adjudication by the VA with a projected annual increase of approximately \$63,239 to Texas veterans.

### Claims Submission Results

	Number of Veterans	Value of Claims
<b>Claims Filed</b>	<b>58</b>	
Adjudicated in favor of veteran	35	\$553,344
In process	4	\$63,239
Denied	19	

In the 134 months that the PARIS Project has been active, TVC has sent 2,535 claims to the VA. There are still four pending and 1,837 were granted to Texas veterans and their stakeholders. Since the project's inception, TVC has helped clients obtain \$9,422,225 in both active and retroactive benefits, an amount projected to increase to \$9,485,464 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. There was no cost avoidance realized in FY 2023.

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 their dependent(s) qualifies for CHAMPVA and is still eligible for Medicaid, when the veteran is enrolled in managed care, the state will continue to pay a monthly premium for the veteran's Medicaid irrespective of whether or not services were provided, thus 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, since 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, 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 TVC staff 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 veterans 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. Although the cost savings realized by the PARIS VA Match efforts is minimal under the managed care model, the benefits of the program and associated outreach extend beyond direct cost savings.