

# TEXAS VETERANS NEEDS ASSESSMENT

## COMPREHENSIVE STUDY FINDINGS



**Presented to:**

Texas Veterans Commission

**Presented by:**

Public Policy Research Institute, Texas A&M

August 15, 2024



TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY  
Public Policy  
Research Institute



# Agenda



**Study Goals & Methodology**



**Statewide Findings**



**Findings by the 8 FVA Regions**



**Differences from 2020 Study**



**Concluding Thoughts & Actionable Takeaways**

# Needs Assessment Goals & Methods

## Goals

Employ a well-defined, inclusive and participatory methodology

Identify the top service needs and associated barriers for Texas veterans



**8 FVA Regions**

## Surveys & Focus Groups

18,412 valid responses from veterans

507 valid responses from  
440 unique organizations

15 virtual focus groups with  
139 veterans and 131 organizational  
representatives

## Data Triangulation & Report Development

Service Needs & Related Barriers

Sources of Service Information

Disadvantaged Groups

FVA Grants

**Mandated by Texas Legislature:** Every four years (Texas Government Code 434.017 (c1) and (c2)) to help set priorities for TVC's FVA (*Funds for Veteran Assistance*) grants.



# Texas Statewide Findings



## Top Responses from Surveys and Focus Groups

### Top Service Needs According to Veterans

Mental Health Counseling

Business Training

Alternative Therapy

### Top Service Barriers According to Veterans

Not Understanding Benefits & Qualifications

Not Knowing Where to Get Help

Life Responsibilities Limiting Time

### Top Sources of Information According to Veterans

Internet Search

TVC Website

VA Healthcare

### Disadvantaged Groups

Women Veterans

Black & Hispanic Veterans

Low-income, Unemployed, and/or Veterans with Disabilities

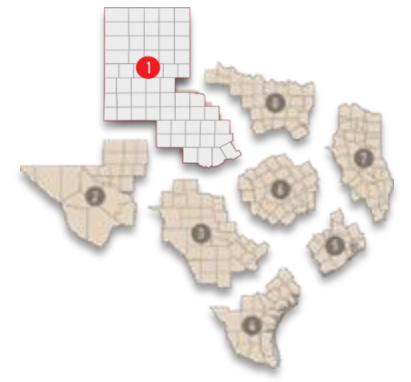
### FVA Grants

Most Organizations have *not* Applied for a TVC Grant

Application Process is Challenging

Over Half of Organizations Receive Other External Funding

**Data Triangulation:** Information collected from 18,412 surveys of Texas Veterans, 507 surveys of Veteran-Serving Organizations in Texas, and 15 Virtual Focus Group sessions.



# FVA Region 1 – Panhandle

### Top Needs According to Veterans

- Elder Care**
- Alternative Therapy**  
*(matches statewide)*
- Mental Health Counseling**  
*(matches statewide)*

### Service Barriers According to Veterans

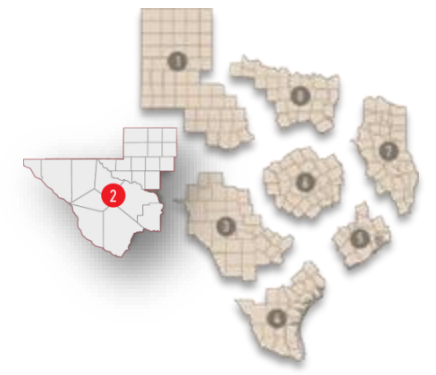
- Not Understanding Benefits**  
*(matches statewide)*
- Not Knowing Where to Get Help**  
*(matches statewide)*
- Potential Costs**

### Region-Specific Findings from Focus Groups

- Need for outreach and connections with shelters, mail, and the community.**
- Transportation needs: bus systems shut down early and make infrequent weekend runs.**
- Organizational members stressed the need for inter-agency coordination.**

### Needs According to Organizations

- Financial Assistance**
- Homeless Housing**
- Home Repair**  
*(tied with Mental Health Counseling)*



# FVA Region 2 – West Texas

### Top Needs According to Veterans

- 1  
**Mental Health Counseling**  
*(matches statewide)*
- 2  
**Alternative Therapy**  
*(matches statewide)*
- 3  
**Home Repair / Modification**

### Service Barriers According to Veterans

- 1  
**Not Understanding Benefits**  
*(matches statewide)*
- 2  
**Not Knowing Where to Get Help**  
*(matches statewide)*
- 3  
**Life Responsibilities**  
*(matches statewide)*

### Region-Specific Findings from Focus Groups

- Over 70% of Veteran Survey Respondents in West Texas have a Service-Connected Disability**
- Mental Health Counseling reported higher than most other regions**
- Veterans in rural areas and older veterans may struggle to access information online.**

### Needs According to Organizations

- 1  
**Homeless Housing**
- 2  
**Financial Assistance**
- 3  
**Transportation**



# FVA Region 3 – Alamo

## Top Needs According to Veterans

1  
Mental Health Counseling  
*(matches statewide)*

2  
Alternative Therapy  
*(matches statewide)*

3  
Legal Help

## Service Barriers According to Veterans

1  
Not Understanding Benefits  
*(matches statewide)*

2  
Not Knowing Where to Get Help  
*(matches statewide)*

3  
Life Responsibilities  
*(matches statewide)*

## Region-Specific Findings from Focus Groups

**Women, Hispanic, and Disabled veterans were *less likely* to report having their needs met.**

Veterans struggle to find **accurate information** without feeling **overwhelmed**.

**Veterans feel unprepared for civilian life.**

## Needs According to Organizations

1  
Mental Health Counseling  
*(matches statewide)*

2  
Financial Assistance

3  
Homeless Housing



# FVA Region 4 – South Texas

### Top Needs According to Veterans

- 1 Home Repair
- 2 Mental Health Counseling  
*(matches statewide)*
- 3 Business Training

### Service Barriers According to Veterans

- 1 Not Understanding Benefits  
*(matches statewide)*
- 2 Not Knowing Where to Get Help  
*(matches statewide)*
- 3 Few Providers

### Region-Specific Findings from Focus Groups

Focus Groups emphasized **poor information and misinformation regarding benefits**

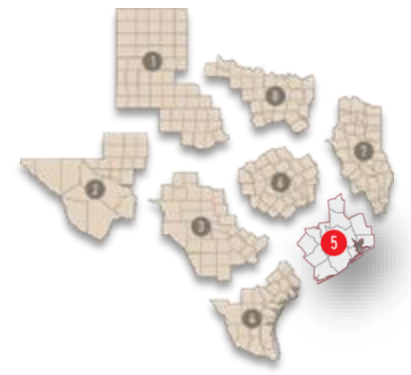
**Over 48 percent** of veteran survey respondents in South Texas identified as **Hispanic**

**Women** veterans in the region were **substantially more likely** to report **mental health counseling needs**

### Needs According to Organizations

- 1 Financial Assistance
- 2 Mental Health Counseling  
*(matches statewide)*
- 3 Home Repair





# FVA Region 5 – Gulf Coast

### Top Needs According to Veterans

- 1 Mental Health Counseling  
*(matches statewide)*
- 2 Business Training
- 3 Legal Help

### Service Barriers According to Veterans

- 1 Not Understanding Benefits  
*(matches statewide)*
- 2 Not Knowing Where to Get Help  
*(matches statewide)*
- 3 Life Responsibilities  
*(matches statewide)*

### Region-Specific Findings from Focus Groups

- Black veterans** in the region were *more likely* to report needing **financial assistance**.
- Women veterans** in the region were *more likely* to report **mental health counseling needs**
- Higher rates of using friends and/or family members for information than most regions.**

### Needs According to Organizations

- 1 Mental Health Counseling  
*(matches statewide)*
- 2 Financial Assistance
- 3 Addiction / Substance Abuse Counseling



# FVA Region 6 – Central Texas

### Top Needs According to Veterans

- 1**  
Mental Health Counseling  
*(matches statewide)*
- 2**  
Alternative Therapy  
*(matches statewide)*
- 3**  
Legal Help & Business Training *(tied)*

### Service Barriers According to Veterans

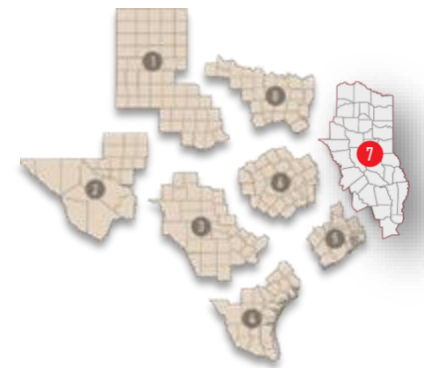
- 1**  
Not Understanding Benefits  
*(matches statewide)*
- 2**  
Not Knowing Where to Get Help  
*(matches statewide)*
- 3**  
Life Responsibilities  
*(matches statewide)*

### Region-Specific Findings from Focus Groups

- 1**  
Organization members emphasized the necessity of providing services outside regular business hours
- 2**  
Veterans in the focus groups reported feeling overlooked and not taken seriously
- 3**  
Veterans with disabilities were more likely to report limited appointment availability as a barrier

### Needs According to Organizations

- 1**  
Financial Assistance
- 2**  
Mental Health Counseling  
*(matches statewide)*
- 3**  
Employment Services



# FVA Region 7 – East Texas

### Top Needs According to Veterans

- 1 Elder Care
- 2 Mental Health Counseling  
*(matches statewide)*
- 3 Business Training

### Service Barriers According to Veterans

- 1 Not Understanding Benefits  
*(matches statewide)*
- 2 Not Knowing Where to Get Help  
*(matches statewide)*
- 3 Few Providers

### Region-Specific Findings from Focus Groups

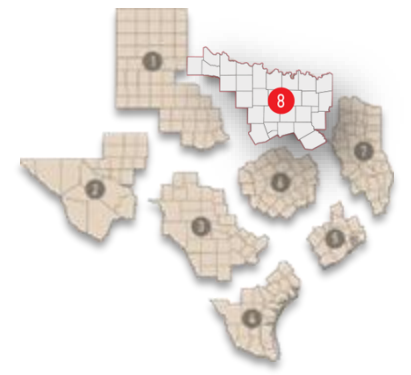
Over 55% of all veteran survey respondents were over the age of 65

Veterans in the region reported *higher* rates of unwelcoming environments of service providers

Focus Group members suggested sending a mobile TVC unit to target outreach to rural areas

### Needs According to Organizations

- 1 Financial Assistance
- 2 Homeless Housing
- 3 Mental Health Counseling  
*(matches statewide)*



# FVA Region 8 – North Texas

### Top Needs According to Veterans

- 1 Mental Health Counseling  
*(matches statewide)*
- 2 Business Training
- 3 Alternative Therapy  
*(matches statewide)*

### Service Barriers According to Veterans

- 1 Not Understanding Benefits  
*(matches statewide)*
- 2 Not Knowing Where to Get Help  
*(matches statewide)*
- 3 Life Responsibilities  
*(matches statewide)*

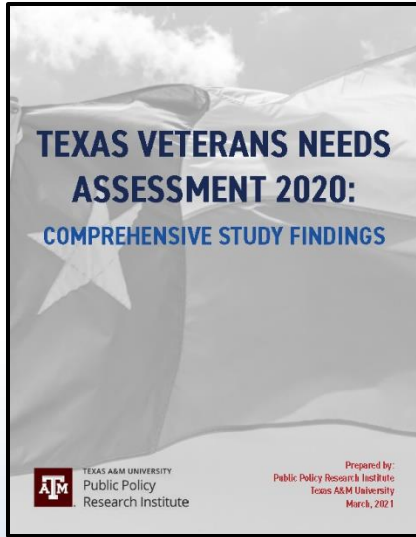
### Region-Specific Findings from Focus Groups

- Hispanic veterans in the region were *more likely* to report not knowing where to get help
- Veterans in the focus groups preferred to receive information face-to-face from other veterans
- Previous negative experiences with service providers made veterans reluctant to seek help

### Needs According to Organizations

- Mental Health Counseling  
*(matches statewide)*
- Financial Assistance
- Homeless Housing

# Notable Differences from the 2020 Study



## Service Needs

Employment Services and Short-Term Financial Assistance needs have *generally* decreased

These needs *remain high for disadvantaged groups* (disabled veterans, low-income veterans, minority veterans, women veterans, homeless veterans).

Healthcare Support was a Priority Need in 2020. It is still a high need area in 2024, but Mental Health Counseling and Integrative Therapies were highly reported.

Rehabilitation of Homeless Veterans and their financial support emerged as a key need area

## Service Barriers

Lack of Knowledge Remains the Top Barrier

## Sources of Information

Internet Searches and Social Media Use *Increased*

TVC Website was used *more frequently* by organizations but concerns about website usability still emerged.

Specifically lack of maneuverability, navigability, and user-friendliness

**Note:** Data and Methodological changes make direct comparison difficult, however broad differences in observations are noted here.



# Actionable Takeaways



**Prioritize Healthcare Support**



**Address Veteran Rehabilitation**



**Creatively Diversify Outreach**



**Ensure Service Quality and Consistency**



**Uphold Service Equity**



**Provide Adequate Transition Counseling**



**Conduct Data-Driven Outcome Evaluation of FVA Grants**



**Needs Assessment of Texas Veterans**

**2024 Findings**

*May 31, 2024*



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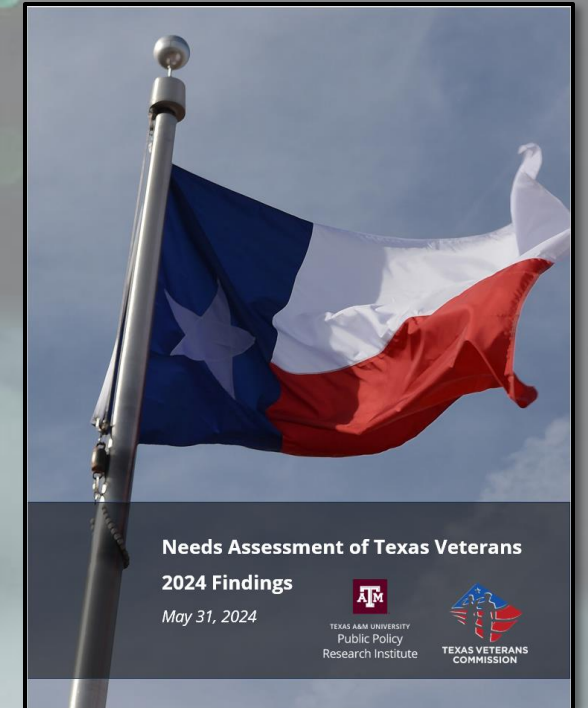
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COMMISSION



## Study PI Contact Information:

Nandita Chaudhuri Ph.D.  
Research Scientist  
Public Policy Research Institute  
Texas A&M University

(979) 845-6759  
[nchaudhuri@ppri.tamu.edu](mailto:nchaudhuri@ppri.tamu.edu)



## PPRI Study Team:

Andrea Sesock, Anthony Jackson, Megumi Tanabe, Ziqiao Chen, Zack Brattin, Theresa Hernandez, Ph.D., Ashleigh Williams, Ph.D.