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Texas Leaders Announce Texas Veterans + Family Alliance

*A bold, new effort aimed at improving access to mental health care services
for veterans and military families*

AUSTIN, TX – Veterans Day 2015 marks the launch of a bold initiative by the State of Texas to address the mental health needs of veterans and military families: Texas Veterans + Family Alliance.

Texas Veterans + Family Alliance is a new and innovative program, within the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC), which will support community mental health programs providing services and treatment to veterans and military families. Texas Veterans + Family Alliance was created by Senate Bill 55 and is funded with \$20 million appropriated by the Texas Legislature, which will be matched by local and private funds, to provide a total of \$40 million in mental health support for veterans and their families.

"I am pleased that this important initiative to help Texas veterans gain access to critical mental health services at the local level was approved and funded by the 84th Legislature," said Governor Abbott. "As the home to nearly two million veterans, it is imperative that Texas be at the forefront of caring for our servicemen and women. I am proud that Texas Veterans + Family Alliance is helping to lead the way in developing solutions to the mental health challenges that our veterans and their families face on a daily basis."

The Texas Veterans + Family Alliance program is beginning with a pilot phase funded by \$1 million in state funds and will focus on community collaborations that address the mental health needs of veterans and military families that are not currently being met.

"We all celebrate the commitment and bravery of our veterans in combat, but their courage and heroism does not end when they return to civilian life. For too many, the scars of battle are both physical and emotional and it's an on-going struggle to treat," Lieutenant Governor Patrick said. "The Texas Veterans + Family Alliance program will let veterans know they aren't fighting alone. I salute this initiative and I look forward to continuing to serve our veterans by doing whatever I can to celebrate and honor their sacrifice."

Speaker Straus added, "One of the things that unites us as Texans is our shared appreciation for our Veterans, as well as our concern for their well-being. This initiative will make it easier for Veterans to find and access services in their communities. The way we treat our Veterans is a reflection on all of us, and I'm very proud that we are working together at the state and local levels to improve care for these brave heroes."

The State of Texas has partnered with the Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute (MMHPI) to serve as administrator for the pilot phase of the grant program. MMHPI is committed to working with organizations to identify matching funds for the pilot project that can contribute to support the mental health needs of veterans and military families in their communities.

Projects funded by the pilot grant program will be selected through a competitive statewide request for proposal process. The request for proposals will be released this fall. The objective is to award state funding to programs throughout Texas, with decisions on successful applicants for the pilot phase complete by early 2016.

"We are honored to have been selected as administrator for the pilot phase of this program," says Tom Luce, Chief Executive Officer of MMHPI. "Our vision is that Texas veterans and military families will be able to access the mental health care services they need close to home. This exciting new program will help achieve that vision and it is our goal to provide HHSC with the assistance needed to develop and implement a successful pilot phase."

For more information about Texas Veterans + Family Alliance, please visit www.texasstateofmind.org/tvfa.

About The Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute

The Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization that supports the implementation of policies and programs that help Texans obtain effective, efficient mental health care when and where they need it. The Institute's vision is for Texas to be the national leader in treating people with mental health needs. For more information about the Meadows Institute, please visit texasstateofmind.org.

About Texas Health and Human Services Commission

The mission of HHSC is to maintain and improve the health and human services system in Texas and to administer its programs in accordance with the highest standards of customer service and accountability for the effective use of funds. HHSC oversees the operations of the health and human services system, provides administrative oversight of Texas health and human services programs, and provides direct administration of some programs. For more information about HHSC, please visit hhsc.state.tx.us