

From: [Sunset Advisory Commission](#)
To: [Brittany Calame](#)
Subject: FW: Public Input Form for Agencies Under Review (Public/After Publication)
Date: Thursday, April 26, 2018 4:51:07 PM

-----Original Message-----

From: sundrupal@capitol.local [<mailto:sundrupal@capitol.local>]
Sent: Thursday, April 26, 2018 4:37 PM
To: Sunset Advisory Commission
Subject: Public Input Form for Agencies Under Review (Public/After Publication)

Agency: TEXAS VETERANS COMMISSION TVC

First Name: Laura

Last Name: Clark

Title: County Veteran Service Officer

Organization you are affiliated with: Wise County Texas

Email: Laura.Clark@co.wise.tx.us

City: Decatur

State: Texas

Your Comments About the Staff Report, Including Recommendations Supported or
Opposed:

Regarding training:

Thank you for hearing the testimony of the four County Veteran Service Officers on April 25. As I stated, or tried to, in my closing remarks I did not use my notes that I had intended to use when testifying, so I would like to touch on them in my written testimony.

The original and primary duty of the TVC was claims for VA compensation. VA compensation is federal dollars spent here in Texas. That is money from claims filed by TVC claims counselors and CSOs! CSOs that, for over 70+ years, have been trained by TVC. The claims program is the foundation for all of new programs that TVC has taken on!

Some of the new programs under the TVC umbrella are duplicates of other agencies. For example, the TVC Health Advocacy Program mirrors the VHA mandated Patient Advocate Program. The TVC Employment Program mirrors the Texas Workforce Commission. Because the TVC state-wide training conference includes all the programs under TVC jurisdiction the cost of training has risen significantly. However, there is no cross-training or collaboration. Each program branches off to train separately. The only network training is done by the claims counselors and the CSOs. This is where the real networking and training begins!

Because the conference is attended by approximately 700 personnel, the locations that can accommodate that large of a crowd is severely restricted, thus driving up the cost of the conference. TVC should redirect funds back to the annual conference for TVC claims counselors and CSOs and have the other programs train via other suggested means. It seems counter-productive to restrict or limit training from the one program that is responsible for bringing in federal dollars and the one program that ultimately drives the other programs. A veteran who interviews with a TVC claims counselor or CSO is referred to the other programs based on the information gathered from the initial interview with the veteran. Initial interviews, I might add, that are discussed, trained, analyzed and tweaked as

needed by those same stories that began with "I have a veteran"...

Immediately after this report was made public the first thing TVC did was cancel state-wide training. Although the report suggested that TVC only restructure, track and analyze training, their first reaction was to cancel training altogether. 70+ years of history out the window! Canceling training without examining the repercussions that will be felt by the veterans of Texas who are expecting the superior help Texas is known for! It is mentioned that TVC has one of the highest turn-over rates of all programs within the state. And that is high turnover WITH training. Imagine what the turnover rate will be with no access to training and networking! It was blazingly obvious after the testimony yesterday that TVC has stated the turnover rate was because of the low salary; however one of the County Service Officers that testified yesterday does this job as a volunteer. A volunteer that only begged for face to face training in order to do his job.

By TVC's own reporting, many veterans are turned away because of workload restrictions. However, TVC's self-evaluation suggests CSOs should have "less emphasis on claims processing and a greater emphasis on resource, referral and replacement." Isn't that what all of the other programs that TVC has taken on are doing? Now TVC is asking for CSO help with employment, education, peer to peer and health care numbers. We have proven by TVC stats that we have increased their numbers for claims processing, so now they need our help with the other program numbers also? What TVC obviously doesn't realize is we do all of those things already, as well as file claims. I would request the Committee ask TVC to separate the numbers of claims and appeals filed by CSOs and see how our numbers increase their overall status.

County Service Officers do this job from their heart, not their paychecks.

As I have stated, some of the best training does not happen in the class room, it happens with the networking, face to face time, and stories that begin with "I have a veteran..."

Thank you.

Any Alternative or New Recommendations on This Agency:

Provide training for only the "Bread and Butter" program of TVC. Attendees will be the TVC claims counselors and the County Service Officers, reducing the need of Training personnel, training time, and training budget by allowing the training to be held in smaller venues.

All new TVC programs can be completed on-line or in regions as suggested.

My Comment Will Be Made Public: I agree

From: [Sunset Advisory Commission](#)
To: [Brittany Calame](#)
Subject: FW: Public Input Form for Agencies Under Review (Public/After Publication)
Date: Tuesday, April 10, 2018 5:15:25 PM

-----Original Message-----

From: sundrupal@capitol.local [<mailto:sundrupal@capitol.local>]
Sent: Tuesday, April 10, 2018 5:06 PM
To: Sunset Advisory Commission
Subject: Public Input Form for Agencies Under Review (Public/After Publication)

Agency: TEXAS VETERANS COMMISSION TVC

First Name: Laura

Last Name: Clark

Title: Veteran County Service Officer

Organization you are affiliated with: Wise County Texas

Email: Laura.Clark@co.wise.tx.us

City: Decatur

State: Texas

Your Comments About the Staff Report, Including Recommendations Supported or Opposed:

Reference 2.3 (Removal of military service requirement for Veteran County Service Officers) I believe this is a bad suggestion because of a situation that happened to me the first year I was appointed as Service Officer. In 2007 I took over the office. There were three other counselors in the office, none of which were prior military. Just as when any new boss takes over there are growing pains, however my growing pains almost cost me my job! A disgruntled veteran complained to the other counselors and they suggested he write a letter to the Judge. In this letter the veteran stated that I erroneously stated I was an officer in the United States Navy. When I was interviewed by the Judge I adamantly denied ever saying such a thing. When I came back to the office I called an office meeting with all three civilian counselors. I asked each one of them if they had ever heard me call myself an officer. All three of them said yes they had heard me say that! I was shocked until I realized what they had heard. I would tell clients that I was a retired Petty Officer in the United States Navy... that is what they heard..... Not realizing a Petty Officer is an enlisted rank in the Navy! This small yet incredibly minute detail could have cost me my job! These civilians had no idea about the ranking structure of the military and tried to say I had bragged of being an officer! (Keep in mind that in my office was not only retirement photos that show an enlisted uniform but my retirement certificates that clearly show my enlisted rank.) The ranking structure is something that is important when it comes to dealing with veterans. The next 9 years I was the only military person in the office and many of the veterans would specifically state they wanted to talk to another veteran and did not feel comfortable talking to a 'civilian'.

There were many times that I would have to translate the military acronyms, slang terminology, military customs and traditions to my civilian workers.

You cannot teach that!

Any Alternative or New Recommendations on This Agency:

You state the VA has additional training requirements for accreditation; however the VA trains for the job, not for the lifestyle. It is learned, instilled and becomes a part of you! It doesn't matter what branch of service you were

in... we military members always stick together and taking the requirement as a military member from this job will most definitely be doing a disservice to all veterans in the future!

My Comment Will Be Made Public: I agree