

**From:** [Sunset Advisory Commission](#)  
**To:** [Brittany Calame](#)  
**Subject:** FW: Public Input Form for Agencies Under Review (Public/After Publication)  
**Date:** Wednesday, April 25, 2018 3:12:00 PM

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

From: sundrupal@capitol.local [<mailto:sundrupal@capitol.local>]  
Sent: Wednesday, April 25, 2018 3:12 PM  
To: Sunset Advisory Commission  
Subject: Public Input Form for Agencies Under Review (Public/After Publication)

Agency: TEXAS VETERANS COMMISSION TVC

First Name: Kathryn

Last Name: Fasci

Title: Director of Veteran Services and County Veteran Service Officer

Organization you are affiliated with: Texas Veterans Commission

Email:

City: Cleburne

State: Texas

Your Comments About the Staff Report, Including Recommendations Supported or Opposed: As TX County Veteran Service Officers, by law we must be trained by TVC for our required Initial Certification Training and Certification Training. We can choose additional training to be Accredited by either TVC (State) or a choose from a host of other Veteran Service Organizations (all others are National-having offices throughout the US). Given the fact that the claims we work on are largely processed out of Texas now, TVC should recognize and accept our Accred. from the National Agencies by allowing CVSO's into their VA claims computerized systems to perform their CVSO work. Currently, only those Accredited by TVC can utilize the VA computer systems - yet interestingly we are all listed on TVC's website as STAFF (although we are employed and work directly for our designated counties throughout Texas).

I strongly believe that it would be a grave error to eliminate the one off site fall conference CVSO's attend each year. This is the only time we have the opportunity to learn beside other CVSO's throughout the state, get up to date training for our jobs (including incorporating all changes our Federal, State or County government makes that directly affect our jobs providing assistance to Veterans and their families in obtaining the plethora of Veterans benefits due them). If the claims assistance program (accomplished largely by CVSO's) truly is TVC's bread and butter and CVSO's are their Key Partners serving Veterans, CVSO training budget should not be reduced but expanded given the complexity and the requirements of our jobs. Off site training provides all CVSO's an atmosphere conducive to learning - vs trying to fit training into our already overloaded schedules as we work on the front line assisting our Veterans and their families at our work places. It also allows us to meet with TVC employees to get our questions answered and clarify issues directly related to our CVSO jobs. Aside from the training TVC provides us, to perform our jobs, each CVSO has to gain a strong working knowledge on all phases of VA Health Care - including the Choice Program for Veterans, VA direct Healthcare for Veterans/spouses/dependents in the CITI Program, ChampVA (for dependents and survivors), TriCare (retired Veterans and their families) etc. CVSO's must seek out training or train ourselves on these healthcare systems -because they are a standard (but complicated) benefit available to Veterans and their families

that requires the assistance we provide in the course of our CVSO jobs. We identify and advise them of healthcare benefits they may be entitled to and then assist them in obtaining these healthcare benefits as well as providing them assistance with a

multitude of problems they may encounter once enrolled. CVSO's are on the front lines providing direct assistance to our Veterans and their families every day as they attempt to navigate the complicated and ever changing system of benefits due them. We go to great lengths to meet with them to identify and educate our Veterans and their families on their eligibility for each benefit they may be entitled to, the requirements to obtain and retain these benefits as well as assisting them in gathering the government and civilian records required, offer them a sound understanding the entire claims/appeals process, explain the specific forms and documents required, detail what is required of them in all phases and offer our advice/expertise to them throughout the entire process. This involves all phases of claims

for: service connected disabilities, pensions for qualified Veterans or spouses/survivors, educational benefits, all VA insurances (health, home etc), VA housing grants, Vocational Educational Training, the Hazlewood Education Benefits, VA Land purchases, assistance with all burial benefits, placement in VA Nursing Homes throughout Texas, assistance correcting/updating VA & DoD records (DD 214's, medical records etc), State Benefits (i.e. Veterans license plates, Military Scholarships, State Park benefits, ID's etc), property tax exemptions due Veterans or their survivors, each healthcare system available to Veterans/spouses/survivors/dependents and much more. We have to have a working knowledge of each of these benefits and keep up with the constant barrage of changes involved with all of these benefits, then incorporate each of these changes into the direct assistance we offer cost free to our Veterans and their families. Because the VA and TVC no longer provide informational handouts for our Veterans and their families, we also create and offer a multitude of handouts needed to simplify and inform our Veterans and their families on the county/state/federal benefits they are entitled to. In consideration of this, the training budget of CVSO's should be expanded and not curtailed or reduce in any way if we are to honor our Veterans by giving them and their families assistance for the benefits these brave men and women have already earned - but will never know about or receive without their County Veteran Service Officers assistance.

Any Alternative or New Recommendations on This Agency: In an attempt to improve customer service, TVC should begin with the front line: County Veteran Service Officers throughout Texas by: recognizing and supporting our state organization - VCSOAT, manning the TVC phone backline during work hours or at least make it possible for all CVSO's to leave a message/ providing a CVSO up-to-date-accessible website that includes essential resources such

as: previous training materials, previous CVSO training examinations, updates on Federal, State or County policies, procedures and laws involving Veterans Benefits/request CVSO feedback or suggestions and allow them to be given anonymously/list all accredited CVSO's on their website-not just those accred. by them/ Death Lists of our County Veterans should be sent to all Texas Counties in a timely fashion so counties can contact the families of Veterans to file VA Claims:substitution, accrued benefits etc/TVC should not be allowed to change their training reimbursement policy for CVSO's without giving each CVSO time to request the additional funds in their county budgets or approach their perspective county to get the additional funds needed for them to attend training (this causes financial hardship for CVSO's needing and desiring training/have a designated place where all CVSO's can make suggestions to improve services or bring their idea's to for consideration or inform the TVC of perceived wrongs or problems/provide the finances necessary for programs targeting female veterans/ identify and promote research and programs that will reverse the fast growing number of homeless female veterans across this nation with the same dedication/emphasis/supportive action given to male homeless veterans that has resulted in the sharp decline of homeless male veterans throughout the US/very importantly simplify and streamline the complicated and time consuming process for CVSO's to apply and be awarded TVC grants from the Grant Assistance Program designed to help those like us dedicated to assist our Veterans: TVC knows exactly what our CVSO positions require of us in our county offices, have access to the detailed VA published reports of the monies we are instrumental in bringing into each of our counties each year and have the exact numbers of the Veteran population we serve in addition to a detailed job description for each CVSO.

They are fully aware of our dedication, long hours, and hard work CVSO's put in as we serve our Veterans. Our limited county Veterans Department budgets are published annually-showing our financial limitations. Not unlike other CVSO's, I have had to personally bring in my own computer to work because the county I worked for would not provide one/fund my expenses for all Outreach I

performed for Veteran Benefits, pay for my travel expenses to attend the training conferences I was required by state to attend and the list goes on and on. If TVC streamlined and simplified the process of applying for these grants, deserving CVSO's would be able to get the funds necessary to attend more training's for our jobs, print more of the handouts our Veterans and their families need, purchase the Lexis Nexus law books each CVSO office needs,

have the equipment necessary for our work and perhaps even raise some CVSO salaries to a basic acceptable level. More funds means we can assist more of our deserving Veterans - CVSO's are givers and have proven to be consistently dedicated, faithful, motivated and knowledgeable in our services to our Veterans and their families. We can do more to help our Veterans and their families get and keep the benefits they deserve with your assistance in guiding the TVC to provide additional funding for all CVSO's working on the front line as we strive to serve our Veterans with the excellence they deserve.

My Comment Will Be Made Public: I agree