

VETERANS

EXPANSION OF VETERANS COURT ELIGIBILITY

- *Full Legislative History:* **SB 1474**
- *Statute:* **TEX. GOV'T. CODE ch. 174**
Health & Human Resources Chapter 53
- *Summary:*

More than 1.6 million veterans live in Texas. Some veterans have difficulty transitioning from military service to everyday life and suffer from conditions such as addiction and post-traumatic stress disorder. These ailments often lead to negative consequences including unemployment, homelessness, and criminal convictions.

Since 2009 Texas has led the nation in creating specialized veterans courts. These special court dockets provide structured treatment and accountability for veterans in an effort to keep them out of the criminal justice system. There are currently 20 veterans courts in the state.

Under current statute, only veterans who have served in a combat zone or other similar hazardous duty area are eligible to participate in a veterans court. Some veterans, although they have not seen actual combat, may experience other traumas as part of their service such as a shooting or sexual assault, but under current statute would be ineligible to enter a veterans court treatment program.

S.B. 1474 broadens the eligibility for veteran participation in veterans courts. The bill would provide the courts with more flexibility over who was admitted into the program by removing the requirement that any illness or injury have occurred “in a combat zone or other similar hazardous duty area.”

MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAMS FOR VETERANS WHO HAVE COMMITTED FAMILY VIOLENCE

- *Full Legislative History:* **HB 19**
- *Statute:* **TEX. HUM. RES. CODE ch. 53**
- *Relevant text:*

Sec. 53.002. VETERANS AND MILITARY FAMILIES PREVENTIVE SERVICES PROGRAM.

(a) The department shall develop and implement a preventive services program to serve veterans and military families who have committed or experienced or who are at a high risk of:

- (1) family violence; or
- (2) abuse or neglect.

(b) The program must:

- (1) be designed to coordinate with community-based organizations to provide

prevention services;

(2) include a prevention component and an early intervention component;

(3) include collaboration with services for child welfare, services for early childhood education, and other child and family services programs; and

(4) coordinate with the community collaboration initiative developed under Subchapter I, Chapter 434, Government Code, and committees formed by local communities as part of that initiative.

(c) The program must be established initially as a pilot program in areas of the state in which the department considers the implementation practicable. The department shall evaluate the outcomes of the pilot program and ensure that the program is producing positive results before implementing the program throughout the state.

(d) The department shall evaluate the program and prepare an annual report on the outcomes of the program. The department shall publish the report on the department's Internet website.

FAMILY MEMBERS PART OF VETERANS COURT

- *Full Legislative History:* **HB 3729**
- *Statute:* **TEX. GOV'T. CODE 124.001(a)**
- *Summary:*

House Bill 3729 amends the Government Code to specify that an essential characteristic of a veterans court program, among others, is the inclusion of a program participant's family members who agree to be involved in the treatment and services provided to the participant under the program.