



## **FACT SHEET**

### **Texas State Veterans Homes**

As state senator, Jerry Patterson authored the legislation that created the Texas State Veterans Home system in 1997. Since then, a total of seven Texas State Veterans Homes have been built to serve veterans across Texas with high-quality, low-cost long-term care.

Texas State Veterans Homes offer a broad spectrum of health care services, comprehensive rehabilitation programs, special diets, recreational activities, social services, libraries, and certified, secured Alzheimer's units, each with its own secured outdoor courtyard.

Currently, there are Texas State Veterans Homes in Amarillo, Big Spring, Bonham, El Paso, Floresville, McAllen and Temple. Construction on a home in Tyler begins this summer. There is a total of 1,080 total beds available in the Texas State Veterans Home System, with each home having 160 beds except for the Amarillo home, which has 120 beds. The daily census at the homes rises and falls, but generally the homes are more than 90 percent full.

Texas State Veterans Homes operate to a higher standard of care than private long-term facilities in Texas, as they are subject to regulation and regular visits by both state and federal inspectors. The TSVH program is operated under a coordinated umbrella of oversight, regulation and management by four entities: U.S. Dept. of Veteran Affairs, Centers for Medicare-Medicaid Services (CMS), Texas Department of Aging and Disability Services (DADS) and the Texas Veterans Land Board (VLB).

The federal CMS rating system for long-term care facilities is an overly-simplistic, restaurant-style five star rating system that takes into account staffing levels and other overall quality measures. Current ratings may not indicate actual home conditions, as there is a three-year lag between ratings. For example, a home with a poor score will keep that score for three years, regardless of any improvements made. A home with a high score, conversely, may receive a bad inspection yet retain a five-star rating for as long as three years.

The Texas State Veterans Homes serve a population unlike those of private nursing homes. The Veteran Home populations are mostly male, former military with many combat veterans, and have special health challenges like Alzheimers or other long-term care issues. This is important to remember when considering any rating system comparing the Veterans Homes to other similar facilities.



## INCIDENTS IN BIG SPRING AND AMARILLO

Allegations of abuse are taken very seriously at every Texas State Veterans Home. Such allegations are rare but not unexpected in any long-term care facility.

The Dallas Morning News story by James Drew on April 4, depicted abuse at the Big Spring home but provided few details. Here is a brief timeline of events following the alleged abuse:

- The alleged abuse was reported the evening of Thursday, November 8, 2007. The employees in question were immediately suspended.
- An internal investigation team from the operator arrived the next morning (November 9<sup>th</sup>).
- The Big Spring Police Department was called to the home the same day. The responding officer spoke with staff at the home and read statements gathered by the operator. The office spoke with a supervisor and then left the home after 20 minutes.
- An investigation team from the Texas Veterans Land Board arrives on Monday, Nov. 12<sup>th</sup>.
- An investigation team from the Department of Aging and Disability Services (DADS) arrives on Tuesday, the 13<sup>th</sup>. The employees were terminated soon afterwards.
- Under DADS guidelines (Provider Letter #06-43) any alleged violations involving mistreatment, abuse, neglect, exploitation, and other incidents must be reported immediately (within 24 hours).
- The VLB investigation confirmed that the operator followed state and federal policies, procedures and guidelines when they investigated and reported the allegation of abuse.
- Two independent investigations by DADS and VLB concluded that the alleged abuse did not take place.
- On January 16, 2008 under the Informal Dispute Resolution process between the operator and state regulators, all seven Immediate Jeopardy (IJ) allegations were deleted from the Statement of Deficiencies by CMS.
- DADS referred the case to HHSC, who then referred the case to the OAG in April of 2008. The OAG referred the case to Howard County District Attorney's office on April 29, 2009. A Howard County grand jury handed down indictments against two former employees on March 10, 2010.
- The investigation and final report into the allegations of abuse were completed on January 16, 2008 clearing the Big Spring home of any wrongdoing.