



United Way of San Antonio
and Bexar County

Doing what matters.

**TEXAS SENATE VETERANS AFFAIRS & MILITARY INSTALLATIONS COMMITTEE
INTERIM CHARGE #6**

May 12, 2010 Betty King Committee Room

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Subject: The Texas Military Family Access Project or Military 2-1-1 (TMFAP)

San Antonio, Texas is also known as Military City USA. We are home to the gateway to the Air Force, Lackland AFB, where every new recruit gets to spend their first six weeks; the crown jewel of Randolph AFB; and home of the 5th Army, Fort Sam Houston. Our newest treasure as a result of base realignment is BAMC – Brooke Army Medical Center, who is expanding its size to the equivalent of 30 new Walmart stores - to become San Antonio Military Medical Center. Already home to the world renowned BAMC Burn Unit and technological marvel the Center for the Intrepid, this new facility is expected to bring more than 7000 families to live and work in San Antonio, in addition to the anticipated 10,000 military personnel to be trained annually at this state of the art facility.

United Way of San Antonio & Bexar County has long been honored to work with our local military personnel. As the largest Combined Federal Campaign outside of Washington, DC the annual CFC campaign raises \$5.4 million. In the early 1990's with the first rounds of BRAC and the closure of San Antonio's Kelly AFB, United Way designed and implemented the Transition Life Advisor Program, which was decentralized in the two directorates at Kelly, so that rather than waiting for military and civilian staff to seek assistance through the Family Support Centers, trained Master's level counselors worked through the rank file to ensure successful transition. There was not a single suicide or attempt during the Kelly closure due to this intervention.

United Way of San Antonio & Bexar County also has a long history of information and referral dating back some 30+ years, first with our Helpline (227-HELP) and later as the designated regional Area Information Center for the statewide 2-1-1. We currently have the state 2-1-1 contract for Bexar and the surrounding counties. As a result of this, the San Antonio Area Foundation approached United Way in 2008 to pilot a specialized information & referral for Texas Military families. The Texas Military Family Access Project or Military 2-1-1 at United Way of San Antonio & Bexar County is now in its third year and has provided specialized case management services to over 6000 families. Funding is provided through the SAAF's Texas Resources for Iraq-Afghanistan Deployment Fund or TRIAD fund, which is scheduled to end in June 2011.

Background:

The United Way of San Antonio and Bexar County (UWSA) is the largest and most respected, private health and human care service organization in the region. Founded in 1939, UWSA is a non-profit 501(c) 3 corporation governed by a volunteer Board of Trustees composed of key business and community leaders in San Antonio. UWSA raises funds through workplace giving to support well-managed programs at over 70 agencies that help people with basic needs and changes lives. One of these programs is the 2-1-1 program which is a 24-hour/seven days a week informational and referral help center that can be accessed by dialing 2-1-1. The Alamo Area Information Center at UWSA is part of the statewide network with 24 other regional call centers within Texas interconnected by a voice over Internet protocol system. The network freely and seamlessly provides the ability to transfer callers.

The deployment of military service members has a significant immediate and long-term impact on individuals, families and communities creating a demand for social services such as: financial assistance, anger management, counseling, subsidized child care and legal services. Texas is the third highest in the nation in the number of military service members in Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO). Due to concerns the stigma sometimes associated with reintegration, military personnel and their families are often hesitant to ask for needed social services. Clinical studies indicate that 30% of returning individuals who have served in Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO) will experience behavioral health issues ranging from depression to anxiety to severe post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Compounding the challenges, returning veterans experience significantly higher divorce rates, substance abuse, family violence, and suicide and vehicle accidents/deaths. Our project aims to help in these complex issues.

As of April 20, 2010, Alamo AIC has supported over 6,100 OIF/OEF clients including some that have requested help while forward deployed in Afghanistan and Iraq.

The Military 2-1-1 model that we have developed at UWSA is comprised of several unique features:

1. A Peer-to- Peer model – we hire combat veterans and re-train them as Certified Information and Referral Specialists;
2. 100% client follow up
3. Intense Outreach to military personnel and their families
4. Expanded database of services for military service members and their families.

STAFFING: The current Texas Military Family Access Project (TMFAP) (also referred to as Military 2-1-1) in San Antonio provides Texas Veterans and their families access to health and human care services 24 hours a day, seven days a week via UWSA's 211 Military Call Specialists and/or online community resource

portal. A unique feature of our Military 2-1-1 model is that it is a peer-to-peer model that employs former OIF/OEF military members who have been re-trained as Certified Information and Referral Specialists.

FOLLOW UP: Our peer-to-peer program is the only one of its kind that conducts 100% client follow-up as a means to ensure positive outcomes and to provide additional assistance as needed. In addition, through its ongoing customer satisfaction, our program can quantitatively measure and demonstrate that clients were effectively connected to needed services. Most often during the follow up, the Military 211 Specialist discovers additional needs of the family such as my husband just his job again, or, we are still waiting for the VA check and are about to be evicted. Through this pro-active follow up we are able to handle additional needs as they arise before they become a crisis.

OUTREACH: Using our experienced military staff and the relationships they have developed since TMFAP began, our outreach to the military community has continued to develop and mature. Our experience working with the military population suggests the key to success is the trust that is established when clients receive the help they need and deserve. An important component of TMFAP has been the Intense and aggressive outreach by Military 211 Specialists reaching out to local venues with military family populations. Military 211 Specialists do intense outreach and are part of the Texas Guard deployment cycle (we attend all their deployment and re-deployment events, sharing resources with families.

One of the most effective low cost techniques is asking 211 callers if they or a loved one is a Veteran of the Armed Forces. By adding this question to our initial assessment, given over 267,000 calls per year through 2-1-1, we have been able to identify hundreds of individuals that would otherwise not even know about specific veteran related support resources

DATABASE: The Military 2-1-1 program have developed and maintains a current comprehensive health and human care database containing specific services for military service members. We have cultivated national resources that we regularly tap for client help. These key relationships enable us to provide a wider range of services targeted at military families. These national resources will allow us to continue to after TRAIID funding is gone.

STATEWIDE POTENTIAL:

Currently there are 24 Area Information Centers (AIC) within the Texas Information and Referral Network all of which are contracted with the state at varying levels of remuneration. The Alamo AIC pioneered Military 2-1-1 and has been successful in leveraging private donor dollars to do so. Additionally, Alamo AIC has trained other AIC's across the state in implementing a Military 211 in their region.

There has been some degree of success in other parts of the state in replicating Military 2-1-1 however Alamo remains the subject matter expert and is comprised of the highest number of OIF/OEF retired and former military (combat veterans) Military 211 Specialist staff in the state.

The Alamo AIC outcomes have documented over 6,100 OIF/OEF clients since beginning the project in January 2008 which represents more positive outcomes than all the centers across the state - combined.

A key to Alamo AIC success has been its work in developing national relationships with non-profit organizations aligned in supporting our American Veterans. As local, private Veteran resources dependent on TRIAD revenue for support shut down, Alamo AIC is best positioned to leverage the support needed to meet Veterans needs given its diverse resource relationships.

Alamo regularly receives call transfers from other centers involving military families seeking support they are unable to provide. Over 1250 clients have been supported by Alamo AIC that were transferred from other statewide AICs. Given the existing 2-1-1 network and relationships, specialized support to military families is simplified through the transfer process as well as through the only international 2-1-1 live chat portal hosted by the Alamo AIC.

As state leaders are considering ways to provide support to Texas Veterans and their families, it is logical that the Alamo AIC, given our extensive expertise, be designated the sole statewide Military 2-1-1 center and receive the required state funding for an expanded role.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO SENATE INTERIM CHARGE 6:

1. Centralize Military 2-1-1 with the Alamo Area Information Center and establish a sole source contract for the added role with additional state matching funds. Costs to conduct specialized Military I&R statewide is estimated to be approximately \$750,000 per year. This cost is to cover the call specialists, outreach staff, leadership and travel and related costs. The contract could be executed through UWSA's existing contract with the Texas Information and Referral Network (TIRN).
2. DHHS to continue to fund the telephony and associated network related expenses.
3. DHHS to establish a statewide policy that 211 calls where veterans are identified and resources cannot be locally identified – that call center would transfer the call to Alamo AIC.
4. Retain the autonomous nature of other centers in Charge 6 (e.g. TVC, TVLB, etc.) as each is highly specialized in nature and serves a niche support role. Each offers important resources that Alamo AIC regularly refers to as clients needs align.

