

# Memorandum



CITY OF DALLAS

DATE April 20, 2026

Honorable Members of the Quality of Life, Arts, and Culture Committee: Zarin D.

TO Gracey (Chair), Laura Cadena (Vice Chair), Adam Bazaldua, Paul Ridley, Bill Roth, Chad West, Gay Donnell Willis

SUBJECT **Integrated Assessment of Veteran Services in Dallas**

The purpose of this memorandum is to brief the Quality of Life, Arts, and Culture Committee on the key findings of the Integrated Assessment of Veteran Services in Dallas, commissioned by the City of Dallas Office of Housing and Community Empowerment in collaboration with the Veterans Affairs Commission. The assessment offers guidance on how the City can align existing services, and partnerships to be a more welcoming and responsive city for the more than 40,000 service members, veterans, and their families who call Dallas home.

## Overview of Findings

Conducted by Southern Methodist University (SMU), the Integrated Assessment of Veteran Services in Dallas was designed to better understand how veteran support systems function across Dallas and to provide actionable insights for policy, coordination, and service delivery. The assessment found that veterans are too often left to navigate disconnected systems at the very moments when timely assistance matters most.

Across the 10 interconnected themes identified in the assessment, the following key areas emerged:

- Navigation and coordination barriers across systems: Veterans often face difficulty identifying appropriate services, navigating referrals, and moving between agencies and providers with clear guidance.
- Interconnected service needs: Mental health, housing, healthcare, employment, benefits, legal issues, and transition-related challenges are closely linked and often reinforce one another.
- Transition and stability challenges: The transition to civilian life unfolds over time and can affect identity, housing, employment, and access to benefits.
- Protective supports matter: Community connection, peer mentor networks, and family support play an important role in reducing isolation and improving long-term wellbeing.

## Next Steps

Taken together, the findings suggest that improving outcomes for veterans in Dallas will depend less on creating entirely new systems and more on strengthening coordination across the support network already in place. Based on the assessment, OHCE and the Veterans Affairs Commission will consider opportunities to improve referral and service linkage practices, strengthen visibility of veteran-serving resources, expand military cultural competency across systems, and improve alignment among partners serving veterans and their families.

To operationalize next steps and measure impact, OHCE intends to use the Drivers of Opportunity framework as a guiding structure for aligning follow-up actions with the Veterans Affairs Commission and community partners. VAC will continue to advise and help ground the work in veteran experience.

### **Background**

The Veterans Affairs Commission (VAC) was established in January 2021 to represent the City's military veteran community by evaluating and recommending programs, policies, and practices designed to address challenges related to basic needs, housing, employment, and mental health support. The Commission also serves as a clearinghouse for information related to the status of veterans in Dallas. The VAC currently includes 10 members who have served or are currently serving in the U.S. military. The Commission helped inform the scope of this assessment and provided guidance throughout SMU's work to help ensure that veteran perspectives were reflected in the process.

The Integrated Assessment of Veteran's Services in Dallas provides an important foundation for strengthening how the City and its partners support veterans and their families. For the City of Dallas, the findings offer a practical opportunity to strengthen alignment across existing services, partners, and referral pathways in ways that better support veterans and their families. OHCE will continue working with the Veterans Affairs Commission and community partners to review the assessment's recommendations and use the Drivers of Opportunity framework to help organize next steps.

Should you have any questions or concerns, please contact myself or Thor Erickson, Director, Office of Housing and Community Empowerment at 214-670-3632. or [thor.erickson@dallas.gov](mailto:thor.erickson@dallas.gov).

Service First, Now!



M. Elizabeth (Liz) Cedillo-Pereira  
Assistant City Manager

### **[Exhibit A: Integrated Assessment of Veteran's Services in Dallas via Qualitative and Quantitative Research Methods](#)**

- c: Kimberly Bizer Tolbert, City Manager  
Tammy Palomino, City Attorney  
Mamatha Sparks, City Auditor (I)  
Biliera Johnson, City Secretary  
Preston Robinson, Administrative Judge  
Baron Eliason, Inspector General (I)  
Dominique Artis, Chief of Public Safety
- Dev Rastogi, Assistant City Manager  
Alina Ciocan, Assistant City Manager  
Donzell Gipson, Assistant City Manager  
Robin Bentley, Assistant City Manager  
Jack Ireland, Chief Financial Officer  
Ahmad Goree, Chief of Staff to the City Manager  
Directors and Assistant Directors