

1-1 By: Blanco, Minjarez (Senate Sponsor - Rodríguez) H.B. No. 865
 1-2 (In the Senate - Received from the House April 26, 2017;
 1-3 May 12, 2017, read first time and referred to Committee on Criminal
 1-4 Justice; May 19, 2017, reported favorably by the following vote:
 1-5 Yeas 9, Nays 0; May 19, 2017, sent to printer.)

1-6 COMMITTEE VOTE

	Yea	Nay	Absent	PNV
1-7				
1-8	X			
1-9	X			
1-10	X			
1-11	X			
1-12	X			
1-13	X			
1-14	X			
1-15	X			
1-16	X			

1-17 A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
 1-18 AN ACT

1-19 relating to establishing a veterans services coordinator for the
 1-20 Texas Department of Criminal Justice and a veterans reentry dorm
 1-21 program for certain state jail defendants confined by the
 1-22 department.

1-23 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:

1-24 SECTION 1. Subchapter A, Chapter 501, Government Code, is
 1-25 amended by adding Section 501.025 to read as follows:

1-26 Sec. 501.025. VETERANS SERVICES COORDINATOR. (a) The
 1-27 department shall establish a veterans services coordinator to
 1-28 coordinate responses to the needs of veterans under the supervision
 1-29 of the department, including veterans who are released on parole or
 1-30 mandatory supervision. The veterans services coordinator, with the
 1-31 cooperation of the community justice assistance division, shall
 1-32 provide information to community supervision and corrections
 1-33 departments to help those departments coordinate responses to the
 1-34 needs of veterans placed on community supervision. The veterans
 1-35 services coordinator shall coordinate veterans' services for all of
 1-36 the department's divisions.

1-37 (b) The veterans services coordinator, in collaboration
 1-38 with the attorney general's office, shall provide each incarcerated
 1-39 veteran a child support modification application.

1-40 SECTION 2. Subchapter B, Chapter 507, Government Code, is
 1-41 amended by adding Section 507.034 to read as follows:

1-42 Sec. 507.034. VETERANS REENTRY DORM PROGRAM. (a) The
 1-43 department, in coordination with the Texas Veterans Commission,
 1-44 shall establish and administer a voluntary rehabilitation and
 1-45 transition program for defendants confined in state jail felony
 1-46 facilities:

1-47 (1) who are veterans of the United States armed
 1-48 forces, including veterans of the reserves, national guard, or
 1-49 state guard; and

1-50 (2) who suffer from a brain injury, a mental illness, a
 1-51 mental disorder, including post-traumatic stress disorder, or
 1-52 substance abuse, or were victims of military sexual trauma, as
 1-53 defined by Section 124.002, that:

1-54 (A) occurred during or resulted from their
 1-55 military service; and

1-56 (B) may have contributed to their criminal
 1-57 activity.

1-58 (b) The program established under this section must:

1-59 (1) provide for investigating and verifying the
 1-60 veteran status of each defendant confined in a state jail felony
 1-61 facility by using data made available from the Veterans Reentry

2-1 Search Service (VRSS) operated by the United States Department of
2-2 Veterans Affairs or a similar service;
2-3 (2) be available to male defendants and, if resources
2-4 are available, female defendants;
2-5 (3) include provisions regarding interviewing and
2-6 selecting defendants for participation in the program;
2-7 (4) allow a defendant to decline participation in the
2-8 program or to withdraw from the program at any time;
2-9 (5) house defendants participating in the program in
2-10 housing that is designed to mimic the squadron structure familiar
2-11 to veterans;
2-12 (6) coordinate and provide available services and
2-13 programming approved by the department, including:
2-14 (A) individual and group peer support
2-15 programming, as appropriate;
2-16 (B) access to military trauma-informed licensed
2-17 mental health professional counseling, as appropriate;
2-18 (C) evidence-based rehabilitation programming;
2-19 and
2-20 (D) reemployment services; and
2-21 (7) to the extent feasible, not later than the 60th day
2-22 before the date a defendant participating in the program is
2-23 scheduled for release or discharge from the department:
2-24 (A) match the defendant with community-based
2-25 veteran peer support services to assist the defendant in
2-26 transitioning into the community; and
2-27 (B) transfer the defendant to a state jail felony
2-28 facility located near the defendant's home community, or the
2-29 community in which the defendant intends to reside after the
2-30 defendant's release or discharge, to begin establishing transition
2-31 relationships with community-based veteran peer support service
2-32 providers and family members.

SECTION 3. This Act takes effect September 1, 2017.

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