

By: Blanco

H.B. No. 865

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

1  
2 relating to establishing a veterans services coordinator for the  
3 Texas Department of Criminal Justice and a veterans rehabilitation  
4 dorm program for certain state jail defendants confined by the  
5 department.

6 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:

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

9 Sec. 501.025. VETERANS SERVICES COORDINATOR. (a) The  
10 department shall establish a veterans services coordinator to  
11 coordinate responses to the needs of veterans under the supervision  
12 of the department, including veterans who are released on parole or  
13 mandatory supervision. The veterans services coordinator, with the  
14 cooperation of the community justice assistance division, shall  
15 provide information to community supervision and corrections  
16 departments to help those departments coordinate responses to the  
17 needs of veterans placed on community supervision. The veterans  
18 services coordinator shall coordinate veterans' services for all of  
19 the department's divisions.

20 (b) The veterans services coordinator, in collaboration  
21 with the attorney general's office, shall provide each incarcerated  
22 veteran a child support modification application.

23 SECTION 2. Subchapter B, Chapter 507, Government Code, is  
24 amended by adding Section 507.034 to read as follows:

1       Sec. 507.034. VETERANS REHABILITATION DORM PROGRAM. (a)

2       The department shall establish a voluntary rehabilitation and  
3       transition program for defendants confined in state jail felony  
4       facilities:

5               (1) who are veterans of the United States armed  
6       forces, including veterans of the reserves, national guard, or  
7       state guard; and

8               (2) who suffer from a brain injury, a mental illness, a  
9       mental disorder, including post-traumatic stress disorder, or  
10       substance abuse that:

11                       (A) occurred during or resulted from their  
12       military service; and

13                       (B) may have contributed to their criminal  
14       activity.

15       (b) The program must:

16               (1) house defendants participating in the program in  
17       housing that is designed to mimic the squadron structure familiar  
18       to veterans;

19               (2) provide rehabilitation programming in developing  
20       healthy relationships, anger management techniques, and substance  
21       abuse treatment; and

22               (3) to the extent feasible, not later than the 30th day  
23       before the date a defendant participating in the program is  
24       released or discharged from the department:

25                       (A) match the defendant with a Military Veteran  
26       Peer Network peer service coordinator to assist the defendant in  
27       transitioning into the community; and

1                   (B) transfer the defendant to a state jail felony  
2 facility located near the defendant's home community, or the  
3 community in which the defendant intends to reside after the  
4 defendant's release or discharge, to begin establishing transition  
5 relationships with the peer service coordinator and family members.

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