Veterans' Healthy Minds Advisory Council – South Texas (VHMACST)

19 Nov 2026, 1300, Meeting Minutes

THURSDAY, 20 Aug 2026, 1300. This month's meeting is being held only on ZOOM.

Type of Meeting: Monthly Council Meeting

- **Call to Order – (Acting Chair)**
- **Call the Role –**

  Fred Thomas
  Robert Kozel
  Cliff McGlotten
  Dr. Betsy Davis
  Dr. Dave La Point (signed in)

- **(Introductions of new members, guest speaker, etc.)**
  - **Guest Speaker; Dr. Monica Escamilla**
  - **New Member(s); None at this meeting**
  - **Other Guests;**

- **Accept/Approve Previous Minutes as Published – Meeting not held in October**

- **Old Business**
- VHMACST Executive Vice President, (**Fred Thomas; Non-Profit Sub-Committee Chair**) **See notes below.**
- Treasurer Report – **(not present)**
- Secretary Comments – **(Currently - Open Position)**
- Website/Communications **(Kevin Crozier provided data on the website prior to the meeting)**
- Unaccompanied Burial Memorial Service **()**
- Veterans' Health Education and Information Committee -
- Care Giver Program –
- Veterans Resilience and Recovery Collaborative -
- National VMHC -
- Mental Health Community of Practice Meeting –
- Community Engagement and Partnership Coordinator –
- "Check-In Program**": -**
-

- **New Business**
  - **Guest Speaker(s): Dr. Monica Escamilla, Brain Injury Screenings**
    US Department of Veterans Affairs

Dr. Monica Escamilla (her Powerpoint presentation will be shared with the group)

Dr. Escamilla outlined the current system of care involving the Polytrauma Center. There are five program ranging from acute to outpatient services. The model follows an episode of care approach and individuals are discharged back into their existing healthcare upon completion of an episode of care.

Dr. Escamilla emphasized the depth of services with many disciplines involved. Polytrauma falls under Rehabilitation Medicine, but other services and therapies are matrixed into the existing services as required. The role of Social Workers as a bridge to effective transition was also emphasized.

Unlike Spinal Cord Injury services where there may be scheduled periodic return to clinic, Polytrauma services are dependent to an additional referral based on change or needs once the individual has been discharged.

Service are provided for a wide range of diagnosis involving acquired brain injuries. Our original inquiry was related to Traumatic Brain Injury, however there is a need for services for other conditions such as stroke. Currently, the caseload includes active duty and Veterans. There is close cooperation with the military.

The Polytrauma Center is one of five in the VA system and has a large catchment area. Dr. Escamilla informed the group that preliminary planning has already started for the proposed new facility that will include the Polytrauma Center.

- Reports from recent community events ()

Mr. Kozel reported on the participation at the 24 October event at St. Philips. Mr. Kozel and Mr. Crozier attended the event and manned the VHMACST table.

Presently, the possibility of participating at an AACOG event in December is being explored.

- Update on 990 Procedures

Mr. Thomas explained how the 990 (forms needed to be filed by a Non-Profit entity) are handled.

- To hold a Dec 17, meeting or postpone until January (holiday considerations)

The membership of the Council will be queried about whether to hold a December meeting. The question involves the proximity of a 17 December meeting due to the holidays.

- Open discussion on transition

Dr. La Point has discussed his need to step down as Chair of the Council. This leads to several potential follow on actions:

1. The need to start the process of electing new officers.

2. Dr. La Point is the representative to several committees. There is a need to clarify if that arrangement will continue or if that needs to be addressed. Dr. La Point intends to continue with the Counsel, so this action is to define details of needed follow up actions.

- Council Members Input, Updates, Questions
- Other

- **Upcoming Training**: None at this time

- **Upcoming Events:**
  - **Unaccompanied Burial Memorial Service, 3rd Wednesday of the month, each quarter, Fort Sam Houston. Announcement and map will be sent to all Council Members. ()**

- **Upcoming Outreach Functions:** AACOG Veterans Directed Care event in December.

- **Other/Miscellaneous**

For the next meeting:

We asked that two things be explored:

1. Do existing VA inpatient Mental Health Rehabilitation facilities meet the accessibility needs of spinal cord injury Veterans?*
2. What accommodations are available for visually impaired Veterans in this setting?

*Background information: The Take Care of America's Veteran Act, passed by the House of Representatives on 11 November 2026, had a provision mandating the VA to explore this issue. This bill may not pass in this Congress, but it is a concern worth clarification.

Mr. Gilbert Lauriano, Field Marketing Representative, Safeguard Veterans will be invited to the next meeting to detail the VA's pilot program. If he is not available for the next meeting he will be invited to a later meeting.

The discussion also turned to the increased needs of Veterans due to present economy conditions. The food bank at the VA was discussed. This led to discussing the Military/Veteran food banks on military bases initiative by the Mission United (United Way) and Soldier's Angels monthly food bank and weekly food pantry.

This information has already been shared by with the VA's coordinator of the program. She has responded with the additional resources she has collected. There is likely to be additional cooperation on this item. The information will be shared with the entire Counsel.

- **Next Meeting –**

  VHMACST Monthly Meeting, 12/17/26 1300 to be determined
  VHMACST Monthly Meeting, 01/21/27, 1300

- **Adjournment**

.