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Major, US Army (Retired)
Chairman



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US Army Veteran
Member

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Commander, US Navy (Retired)
Secretary

KEVIN BARBER
US Army Veteran
Member

DANIEL P. MORAN
Captain, USMC (Retired)
Member

THOMAS P. PALLADINO
Colonel, US Army (Retired)
Executive Director

TEXAS VETERANS COMMISSION CLAIMS REPRESENTATION AND COUNSELING

TO: County Judge and County Commissioners Court
FROM: Thomas P. Palladino, Executive Director *T.P.P.*
DATE: July 18, 2017
SUBJECT: 70th Annual Statewide Training Conference

Each year, the Texas Veterans Commission conducts a statewide conference and provides training for our state's Veterans County Service Officers (VCSOs), appointed VCSO Assistants and newly appointed VCSOs. The training focuses on veterans' programs and on filing claims and applications for Federal and State veterans' benefits. The services provided by the VCSOs are extremely valuable to our state and this training will better enable those who attend to assist the veterans, their dependents and survivors residing in your communities to obtain the benefits to which they are entitled.

We encourage all County Commissioners Courts to authorize their VCSO(s) to attend this very important training. In addition, Section 434.038(a), Texas Government Code, requires VCSOs to attend Commission Training to maintain certification in order to remain in office. Certification is also required for those wishing to begin participation in the Commission's Accreditation Program.

The 70th Annual Statewide Training Conference will be held at the Galveston Island Convention Center, 5600 Seawall Blvd., in Galveston, Texas. The Conference begins Monday, September 18, 2017, and will adjourn at noon on Thursday, September 21, 2017. The designated travel day will be Monday morning. Allowances have been made for those whose office is located 250 or more miles from Galveston so they can arrive on Sunday evening. Our opening session will begin promptly at 1:00 p.m. on Monday, September 18. Classroom training starts at 7:30 a.m. on Tuesday and continues through Thursday at noon.

TVC has blocked accommodations for VCSOs at the Moody Gardens Hotel and Spa, 1 Hope Blvd., Galveston, Texas. We have also arranged overflow accommodations at three other venues. All details regarding these accommodations and links to securing reservations were sent to your VCSO(s) on Friday, June 30, 2017. Details on conference registration, reimbursement policy and course selection procedures were also sent to your VCSO(s). Absolute cut-off for registration and reservations is August 9, 2017.

The room rate at the Moody Gardens for single occupancy*, which includes complimentary Wi-Fi, self-parking and a refrigerator, is as follows:

\$ 100.00	Room Rate
+ 15.00	Occupancy Tax (15%)
\$ 115.00	Total per night*

* Room rate for other than single occupancy is slightly higher. The additional rate will not be reimbursed to VCSO(s) unless the additional occupant(s) is also a duly appointed VCSO(s). Each VCSO will be eligible for a reimbursement of per diem if they meet statutory requirements (see information on page 2 of this letter and the enclosed reimbursement policy). Room rates at overflow facilities were provided to the VCSO(s) in correspondence sent on June 30, 2017, and are similar to these mentioned above. A detailed guide to the rates at all venues contracted by TVC is enclosed. *Note: Complimentary shuttle service will be provided for transportation between all hotels and the convention center throughout the conference.*

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BY: *JPB*

Financial assistance to partially defray the costs of attending the training may be available to VCSOs who meet the statutory requirements under Section 434.033, Texas Government Code. Reimbursed expenses include hotel room, tax and per diem (at the designated State per diem rate). **If your VCSO is newly appointed and attending our initial training, their hotel reservation will be made and paid for by the Texas Veterans Commission** and their reimbursement will consist of Per Diem and mileage from their designated office to Galveston and returning to their designated office. Newly appointed VCSOs should **not** contact the hotel, but contact Nancy Gamroth, VCSO Liaison or Melissa Thomas, Program Specialist, at vcso.liaison@tvc.texas.gov as soon as possible.

We have enclosed a copy of the facility map and the VCSO Reimbursement Policy for your convenience.

If you have any questions, please contact Nancy Gamroth or Melissa Thomas at (512) 463-6564 or email them at vcso.liaison@tvc.texas.gov.

TPP/njg

Enclosures

cc: Mr. Victor Polanco, IV, Director
TVC Claims Representation & Counseling

Ms. Nancy Gamroth, VCSO Liaison
TVC Claims Representation & Counseling

Ms. Melissa Thomas, Program Specialist
TVC Claims Representation & Counseling

TEXAS VETERANS COMMISSION

Reimbursement Policy for Veterans County Service Officers (VCSOs)

(Policy and rates subject to change)

Initial Training

- Mileage from your home office to training site and return unless mileage is such that airfare and airport transportation reimbursement would be less costly for the State of Texas (claiming cost of airfare and airport transportation in lieu of mileage cost).
- Mileage rate determined by State Comptroller's guidelines, which is currently \$.535 per mile.
- Self-parking is included. While valet parking is available, TVC will not reimburse for valet parking.
- Per diem (meal) expenses - \$64 for day of travel, \$64 for days of training and \$64 for return trip. Per diem rate determined by GSA rate for city where event is held.
- All incidentals are self-pay prior to check out. You must provide a hotel receipt showing all incidentals, i.e. movie rental, room service, valet parking, etc. are paid. If you were authorized Sunday night stay by TVC, you must provide a copy of a Mapquest map showing your office location is 250 or more miles from event location.
- Training must be successfully completed prior to any other reimbursement for travel.

Certification or Accreditation Training

- Hotel room expense up to \$100/single occupancy only per night plus tax. If hotel charges additional fees for other than single occupancy, TVC will only reimburse at single rate unless both occupants are duly appointed VCSOs (proof required). TVC will reimburse only one VCSO for the double occupancy rate. **ONLY THOSE ATTENDING INITIAL TRAINING ARE AUTHORIZED HOTEL EXPENSE BE DIRECT BILLED TO TVC.**
- All incidentals are self-pay prior to check out. You must provide a hotel receipt showing all incidentals, i.e. movie rental, room service, valet parking, etc. are paid. If you were authorized Sunday night stay by TVC, you must provide a copy of a Mapquest map showing your office location is 250 or more miles from event location.
- Self-parking is included. While valet parking is available, TVC will not reimburse for valet parking.
- Per diem (meal) expenses - \$64 for day of travel, \$64 for days of training and \$64 for return trip. Per diem rate determined by GSA rate for city where event is held.
- Training must be successfully completed prior to any other reimbursement for travel.

ADDITIONAL IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Only VCSOs meeting the requirements for appointment set forth in Section 434.033, Texas Government Code, will be Certified or Accredited and are eligible for reimbursement from the Texas Veterans Commission.

Veterans County Service Officer:	Eligible for Reimbursement (once per calendar year)	Eligible for Certification or Accreditation
Meets Statutory appointment requirements.	YES	YES
Does <u>not</u> meet statutory appointment requirements; appointed before June 19, 2009 (grandfathered).	YES	NO
Does not meet statutory appointment requirements; appointed after June 19, 2009.	NO	NO

You must submit the TVC CL-T4-VCSO Annual Training Request for Reimbursement Form in order to receive a reimbursement.

The form will be available at the conference registration table prior to the adjournment.

Remember, when you check out of the hotel, please obtain a copy of your hotel receipt showing payment of all incidentals, i.e. movies, room service, valet parking, etc.

Comparison of Hotel Venues & Guest Room Accommodations: Veteran County Service Officers

Hotel Venue	Room Rate	Occupancy Tax	Amenities	Items with Additional Costs ¹	Check-Times Check-Out Times	Reservation Method	Reservation Cutoff Date
Moody Gardens <i>Seven Hope Blvd Galveston 77554</i> Primary Venue	\$100 single occupancy ² \$149 double occupancy	15%	Comp Wi-Fi Self-Parking Refrigerator		Check-In: 4 p.m. Check-Out: 12 p.m.	Call in: 888-388-8484 Code: <i>Texas Veterans Commission</i>	8/27/2017
Hotel Galvez <i>2024 Seawall Blvd Galveston 77554</i> Limited Availability	\$100 single occupancy \$145 double occupancy	15%	Comp Wi-Fi Self-Parking	Refrigerator Pets	Check-In: 4 p.m. Check-Out: 12 p.m.	Call in: 409-515-2154 Code: <i>Texas Veterans Commission</i>	8/27/2017
TownePlace Suite <i>9540 Seawall Blvd Galveston 77554</i> Limited Availability	\$100 single occupancy \$100 double occupancy	15%	Comp Wi-Fi Self-Parking Kitchens Microwaves Pet Friendly		Check-In: 4 p.m. Check-Out: 12 p.m.	Call in: 409-497-2840 Reservation Link Code: <i>Texas Veterans Commission</i>	9/2/2017
Courtyard by Marriott <i>9550 Seawall Blvd Galveston 77554</i> Limited Availability	\$100 single occupancy \$100 double occupancy	15%	Comp Wi-Fi Self-Parking Refrigerator		Check-In: 3 p.m. Check-Out: 12 p.m.	Call in: 409-497-2850 Reservation Link Code: <i>Texas Veterans Commission</i>	9/2/2017

¹ Cost for items are non-reimbursable to staff or VCSOs.

² Guests must provide proof of government employment at time of check-in. Acceptable forms of ID include: badges, PIV cards, pay stubs, and letters of employment from HR. Failure to provide proof of government employment may result in higher room rates, portions of which may be non-reimbursable.