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County Manager to present two key hires for Commissioners Court approval

County Manager David Smith presented two new additions to the Bexar County team — a Mental Health Director and a Veterans Service Officer.

Gilbert Gonzales will be Bexar County's first Director of Mental Health overseeing a new Mental Health Department that was created and adopted by Commissioners Court during the most recent budget planning cycle in September. Gonzales will begin working with the County on Dec. 20.

Gonzales will serve as the subject matter expert and advocate for Commissioners Court. He will lead a three-person department charged with reviewing, revising and providing policy direction on all mental health initiatives, and identifying viable solutions to community needs and issues.

Gonzales has more than three decades of experience in the field in private practice, clinical and residential programs, and broader community programs. In his most recent position as director of communications and diversion initiatives at the Center for Health Care Services, Gonzales oversaw the expansion of mental health and substance abuse diversion programs that have helped keep nonviolent offenders in crisis out of emergency rooms and jail by putting them in treatment.

"Mr. Gonzales' work at the Center for Health Care Services with jail diversion, the Crisis Care Center and the Crisis Intervention Team initiatives has helped foster an environment where mental illness is not automatically criminalized," said County Manager David Smith. "We want him to help us identify even more ways that we can be better stewards of our finite mental health resources and provide better solutions for our most vulnerable residents and families."

The County Manager identified the improved provision of mental health services — particularly to the indigent — as a priority when he took the office in July 2011.

The County formed the Bexar County Mental Health Consortium to bring mental health providers and stakeholders together in an effort to coordinate activities and better leverage resources. The new department will continue that work by identifying service delivery needs and gaps in the community's mental health service network to ensure the investment of public money is applied in the most productive manner.

During its meeting today Commissioners Court approved the appointment of Queta Marquez to serve as the County's next Veterans Services Officer, a statutory position required by the state. Marquez, a highly decorated retired Marine Corps Captain, is the first woman to serve in this capacity for Bexar County.

Marquez served in various leadership positions during her 10 years in the Marine Corps, including Manpower Operations Officer, which had her responsible for personnel planning and operations in support of more than 25,000 Marines, Sailors and civilians deployed throughout the Middle East. As the administration and legal officer while stationed in Okinawa, Marquez provided annual training and counseling on benefits, military programs and family readiness for more than 350 personnel.

Marquez holds a bachelor's degree in government and politics from the University of Maryland, and completed military courses for administrative officers, legal officers, postal officers, equal opportunity for managers, basic officers and intelligence analysts.

The Veterans Services Office assists veterans and their survivors in obtaining benefits from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and the Texas Veterans Commission. Maneuvering through the process of accessing benefits and specialized services can often be overwhelming for service members or their survivors. The office assists clients by identifying their needs and accessing the appropriate resources to address those needs. The office also assists veterans who have prepared their own claims by reviewing the claim before it is submitted to the VA.

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