

**SUBJECT:** Requiring trauma-informed care training for certain juvenile justice staff

**COMMITTEE:** Corrections — favorable, without amendment

**VOTE:** 4 ayes — Parker, White, Riddle, J.D. Sheffield

0 nays

3 absent — Allen, Rose, Toth

**SENATE VOTE:** On final passage, April 18 — 29-1 (Nichols)

**WITNESSES:** No public hearing

**DIGEST:** SB 1356 would require the board of the Texas Juvenile Justice Department (TJJD) to require trauma-informed care training for probation officers, juvenile supervision officers, and court-supervised community-based program personnel. The TJJD would have to provide the training during the pre-service training conducted for juvenile probation officers, juvenile supervision officers, juvenile correctional officers, and juvenile parole officers.

The bill would add training on trauma-informed care and the signs and symptoms of human trafficking to the instruction that must be given during the 300-plus hours of training required for juvenile corrections officers.

The training would have to provide knowledge of how to interact with juveniles who have experienced traumatic events.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2013.

**SUPPORTERS SAY:** SB 1356 would improve the handling of youths in the juvenile justice system who had experienced trauma. By one estimate, roughly half the youths in juvenile detention facilities have experienced trauma, such as emotional, physical, or sexual abuse; witnessing violence or gang violence; humiliation; and deprivation.

Youths who experience trauma can respond to certain actions or triggers in ways that untrained staff can mistake for disobedience. These youths are sometimes disciplined for their responses with the use of restraints, seclusion, or in other inappropriate ways. This can result in more trauma for the youth and is unproductive in helping the youths rehabilitate. By providing staff with the tools to interact appropriately with youths who had experienced trauma, the bill could prevent them from returning to the juvenile or adult criminal justice systems.

While some TJJD and local juvenile justice staff may receive training in trauma-informed care, it is infrequent and not universally provided. SB 1356 would address this gap in training by requiring all local juvenile justice staff dealing with youths and all juvenile corrections offices to get information about trauma-informed care. SB 1356 also would require training in the signs and symptoms of human trafficking so that juvenile justice staff were able to recognize and help youths who had experienced trafficking.

SB 1356 would not burden the TJJD or local juvenile probation departments, which could meet the requirements of the bill within their existing resources. According to the fiscal note, the bill would have no significant fiscal impact to the state. TJJD already has some information on these issues available in a mental health education module it has developed. This could be adapted for the training required by the bill. Local departments would receive the training from TJJD and only would have to implement the training as it best fit their operations. TJJD easily could work the trauma-informed care training and information about human trafficking into its 300 hours of juvenile corrections officer training.

**OPPONENTS  
SAY:**

It could be difficult for the TJJD and local probation departments to meet the requirements of SB 1356 without additional resources. TJJD, created in 2011, is merging the work of the two previous agencies that handled juvenile offenders. The proposed fiscal 2014-15 budget would reduce appropriations for the agency, making it challenging to take on additional, unfunded tasks. Local departments also have many demands on their resources and could encounter costs in implementing the bill.