

**SUBJECT:** Expanding eligibility for the mental health first aid training program

**COMMITTEE:** Public Education — committee substitute recommended

**VOTE:** 8 ayes — Aycock, Bohac, Deshotel, Dutton, Farney, Galindo, González, K. King

0 nays

3 absent — Allen, Huberty, VanDeaver

**WITNESSES:** For — Gyl Switzer, Mental Health America of Texas; Lee Johnson, Texas Council of Community Centers; Columba Wilson; (*Registered, but did not testify*: Chris Masey, Coalition of Texans with Disabilities; Robin Peyson, Communities for Recovery; Tanya Lavelle, Easter Seals Central Texas; Coby Chase, Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute; Greg Hansch and Laura Austin, National Alliance on Mental Illness - Texas; Will Francis, National Association of Social Workers - Texas Chapter; Lauren Dimitry, Texans Care for Children; Ted Melina Raab, Texas American Federation of Teachers; Shannon Noble, Texas Counseling Association; Stacy Wilson, Texas Hospital Association; Michelle Romero, Texas Medical Association; Darren Whitehurst, Texas Medical Association; Yannis Banks, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People - Texas; Monty Exter, the Association of Texas Professional Educators; Grover Campbell, Texas Association of School Boards; Casey Smith, United Ways of Texas; Marilyn Hartman)

Against — Lee Spiller, Citizens Commission on Human Rights; Lelia Culpepper; (*Registered, but did not testify*: eight individuals)

On — (*Registered, but did not testify*: Angela Hobbs-Lopez, Department of State Health Services; Sonja Gaines, Health and Human Services Commission)

**BACKGROUND:** Health and Safety Code, sec. 1001.202 requires the Department of State Health Services (DSHS) to make grants to local mental health authorities

to contract with persons approved by the department to train employees or contractors of the authorities as mental health first aid trainers. This section limits the funding DSHS may give to a local mental health authority each fiscal year for this training to \$30,000 or 3 percent of the funds appropriated to the department for making these grants, whichever is less.

Sec. 1001.203 requires the department to make grants to local mental health authorities to provide an approved mental health first aid training program, administered by mental health first aid trainers, at no cost to educators. Each fiscal year, DSHS may grant to an authority \$40,000 or 3 percent of the funds appropriated to the department to make these grants, whichever is less.

DIGEST:

CSHB 2220 would expand the types of employees eligible to receive mental health first aid training and related grants to include school district employees and school resources officers, rather than just educators.

The bill would limit grants provided by the Department of State Health Services (DSHS) for mental health first aid training under Health and Safety Code, secs. 1001.202 *and* 1001.203 to not exceed \$70,000 or 3 percent of the total amount appropriated to the department for making grants for mental health first aid training, whichever was less.

A local mental health authority seeking a grant from the department for training school district employees and school resource officers would have to submit a plan for the use of the grant by July 1 of each fiscal year.

This bill would allow DSHS to allocate any unobligated money appropriated to make grants for mental health first aid training for supplemental grants. The department could give these supplemental grants to a local mental health authority that submitted a revised plan for a mental health first aid training program that demonstrated how the additional grant money would be used if made available.

This bill would require certain changes to the training reporting

requirements for local mental health authorities, including changing the dates the reports would be provided to the department.

This bill would repeal Health and Safety Code, sec. 1001.202(c), which limits the funding DSHS may give to a local mental health authority for mental health first aid training. The bill also would repeal Health and Safety Code, sec. 1001.203(b), which limits the funding the department may give to a local mental health authority providing this training to educators.

This bill would take immediate effect if finally passed by a two-thirds record vote of the membership of each house. Otherwise, it would take effect September 1, 2015.

**SUPPORTERS  
SAY:**

CSHB 2220 would expand the eligibility of school employees to receive important training in mental health first aid for children and teenagers. This program educates non-medical professionals in strategies and resources to be used in responding to an individual who is developing a mental health problem or experiencing a crisis. This is not a diagnostic program. Instead, this program provides adults who constantly are around children to see warning signs of any mental or emotional issues.

**OPPONENTS  
SAY:**

CSHB 2220's expanded eligibility could provide individuals, including those with minimal education on mental health issues, with authority to diagnose children. This program provides tools that a school employee could misuse in a manner that might create a burden for the child and parents. For example, school employee could conclude that a student was having an emotional or mental crisis, even if that were not the case, and unintentionally mislabel the student.