

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
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S.B. 1305
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Veteran Affairs & Military Installations
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As Filed

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

S.B. 1305 addresses the shortage of mental health care for veterans in rural areas of Texas. It amends Section 1001.202, Health and Safety Code, to include a rural veterans mental health initiative within the pre-existing mental health initiative for veterans. Of Texas' 1.67 million veterans, 30 percent (approximately 503,000) live in rural areas with limited or no access to mental health services. Veterans in these areas have been historically underserved in this capacity; it is important that these veterans are not forgotten or ignored.

Unlike veterans in larger counties, this population does not have access to support services such as veteran county service officers to connect them to health resources. Additionally, these areas of Texas have limited mental healthcare capacities. S.B. 1305 will support a variety of initiatives that have been discussed by many mental health groups as "best practices" for veteran mental healthcare, from peer-to-peer support systems to advances in telehealth.

As proposed, S.B. 1305 amends current law relating to the creation of a rural veterans mental health initiative within the mental health intervention program for veterans.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

Rulemaking authority previously granted to the Department of State Health Services is modified in SECTION 1 (Section 1001.202, Health and Safety Code) of this bill.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Reenacts Section 1001.202, Health and Safety Code, as added by Chapter 352 (H.B. 2392), Acts of the 83rd Legislature, Regular Session, 2013, and amends it, as follows:

Sec. 1001.202. GENERAL POWERS AND DUTIES. (a) Makes no change to this subsection.

(a-2) Requires the Department of State Health Services to develop a rural veterans mental health initiative as part of the mental health intervention program for veterans.

(b) and (c) Makes no change to these subsections.

SECTION 2. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2015.