

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
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S.B. 464
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Health & Human Services
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AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Department of State Health Services (DSHS) has expanded the role of local health authorities, who are tasked with disease prevention, containment, and health statistics within their jurisdiction. However, many local health departments do not have a permanent local health authority working full time. These part-time local health authorities do not have the same access to the needed data, which has led to significant hindering of communication of fatality data relating to COVID-19. Consequently, this makes the coordination of fighting COVID-19 harder to combat in several areas around the state because of a lack of timely data.

S.B. 464 ensures that any information is shared to all those who need it by requiring that reporting to or by a part-time local health authority is also to be reported to the local health department at the county level. This creates a smoother flow of information between parties who need it, and in turn will allow for a more coordinated effort in combating COVID-19 and any future diseases. Additionally, S.B. 464 requires part-time local health authorities to report to the health department that they are part-time, which will give the DSHS a greater understanding of which areas have different administrative capabilities.

As proposed, S.B. 464 amends current law relating to reports on deaths from reportable and other communicable diseases to county health authorities and health departments.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

This bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, institution, or agency.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Section 81.045, Health and Safety Code, by adding Subsection (d), to require the Department of State Health Services (DSHS), if it provides to a health authority, who serves in that office part-time as described by Section 121.0245, information on a death from a reportable or other communicable disease reported to DSHS under Section 81.045 (Reports of Death), to also provide the information to the director of the local health department for the county served by the health authority.

SECTION 2. Amends Subchapter B, Chapter 121, Health and Safety Code, by adding Section 121.0245, as follows:

Sec. 121.0245. DUTIES OF PART-TIME HEALTH AUTHORITY. (a) Requires a physician, if appointed to serve as health authority for a county and who serves in that office part-time, to coordinate with the director of the local health department for the county in the performance of the duties imposed by Section 121.024(c)(3) (relating to the duty of a health authority to report presence of epidemic diseases to DSHS) and to notify DSHS that the physician serves part-time in the office of health authority for the county.

(b) Requires DSHS, if it provides information to a physician who serves part-time as health authority for a county, to also provide the information to the director of the local health department for the county.

SECTION 3. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2021.