

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
87R2603 GCB-D

S.B. 64
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Health & Human Services
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As Filed

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

In 2019, the number of law enforcement officers (LEOs) who died by suicide (228) was nearly double the number killed in the line of duty (132). There were 19 LEO suicides in Texas alone. Several factors affect the mental health of our first responders. LEOs witness numerous critical incidents during their careers. Exposure to trauma such as these incidents can lead to several mental health conditions, including depression and posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). S.B. 64 seeks to provide support to our law enforcement officers by creating a voluntary peer-to-peer support network focused on training LEOs to provide support to each other.

As proposed, S.B. 64 amends current law relating to a mental health program that includes peer-to-peer counseling for certain law enforcement personnel.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

Rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the executive commissioner of the Health and Human Services Commission in SECTION 1 (Section 1001.232, Health and Safety Code) of this bill.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Chapter 1001, Health and Safety Code, by adding Subchapter I-1, as follows:

SUBCHAPTER I-1. MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAMS FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT

Sec. 1001.231. DEFINITIONS. Defines "law enforcement officer" and "peer" for this subchapter.

Sec. 1001.232. GENERAL POWERS AND DUTIES. (a) Requires the executive commissioner of the Health and Human Services Commission (executive commissioner; HHSC) to develop a mental health intervention program for law enforcement officers. Requires that the program include:

- (1) peer-to-peer counseling;
- (2) access to licensed mental health professionals for peer service coordinators and peers;
- (3) training approved by HHSC for peer service coordinators, licensed mental health professionals, and peers;
- (4) technical assistance for peer service coordinators, licensed mental health professionals, and peers;
- (5) identification, retention, and screening of community-based licensed mental health professionals;
- (6) suicide prevention training for peer service coordinators and peers; and

(7) coordination of mental health first aid for law enforcement officers and immediate family members of law enforcement officers.

(b) Requires the executive commissioner, as part of the mental health intervention program, to develop a mental health initiative for law enforcement officers serving in rural jurisdictions.

(c) Requires HHSC to solicit and ensure that specialized training is provided to persons who are peers and who want to provide peer-to-peer counseling or other peer-to-peer services under the program.

(d) Authorizes the executive commissioner to adopt rules necessary to implement this subchapter.

Sec. 1001.233. ANNUAL REPORT. Requires the executive commissioner to submit, not later than December 1 of each year, a report to the governor and the legislature that includes:

(1) the number of law enforcement officers who received services through the mental health intervention program for law enforcement officers;

(2) the number of peers and peer service coordinators trained;

(3) an evaluation of the services provided under this subchapter; and

(4) recommendations for program improvements.

SECTION 2. Requires the executive commissioner to develop the mental health intervention program for law enforcement officers not later than January 1, 2022, as required under Subchapter I-1, Chapter 1001, Health and Safety Code, as added by this Act.

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