

BILL ANALYSIS

C.S.H.B. 2404
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Homeland Security & Public Safety
Committee Report (Substituted)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

It has been noted that first responders provide critical services to the community and in their service are often exposed to complex, stressful, and chronic trauma-inducing situations and may experience negative mental health symptoms as a result. It has been suggested that access to adequate mental health services for first responders varies widely across the state and that the creation of an office of first responder training support services to assist with training critical incident stress management teams is necessary to improve that access. C.S.H.B. 2404 provides for this creation.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE IMPACT

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly create a criminal offense, increase the punishment for an existing criminal offense or category of offenses, or change the eligibility of a person for community supervision, parole, or mandatory supervision.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

It is the committee's opinion that rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the president of Sam Houston State University in SECTION 1 of this bill.

ANALYSIS

C.S.H.B. 2404 amends the Education Code to require the president of Sam Houston State University to establish within the Bill Blackwood Law Enforcement Management Institute of Texas an office of first responder training support and to appoint a training support coordinator as the administrative head of the office. The bill sets out certain requirements for a person appointed as the training support coordinator.

C.S.H.B. 2404 authorizes the office to coordinate with the Disaster Behavioral Health Services department within the Health and Human Services Commission to establish a program for training individuals to serve on a critical incident stress management team, defined by the bill as a trained team of peer support responders and mental health professionals who provide support to first responders using an integrated multicomponent crisis intervention system. The bill establishes that an individual may not serve on a critical incident stress management team before the individual completes training in critical incident stress management at least as comprehensive as that provided by the International Critical Incident Stress Foundation. The bill requires the office to provide assistance in gaining access to such training and sets out certain instruction topics that the training courses may include.

C.S.H.B. 2404 requires the office to provide information about the department's critical incident stress management teams to an individual who completes the office's training. The bill requires the office and the department to share with first responders who have been involved in a critical incident information regarding the availability of the Post Critical Incident Seminar. The bill requires the office to coordinate with qualified International Critical Incident Stress Foundation

instructors to provide applicable training to peer support responders. The bill's provisions expressly do not place any restrictions on the type of training provided by or to any critical incident stress management team or peer support program outside of the institute.

C.S.H.B. 2404 authorizes the office to solicit and accept gifts, grants, and donations to implement the bill's provisions and requires the president of Sam Houston State University to adopt rules to implement those provisions.

EFFECTIVE DATE

September 1, 2019.

COMPARISON OF ORIGINAL AND SUBSTITUTE

While C.S.H.B. 2404 may differ from the original in minor or nonsubstantive ways, the following summarizes the substantial differences between the introduced and committee substitute versions of the bill.

The substitute changes the name of the office from the office of first responder support to the office of first responder training support and clarifies that the support coordinator is the training support coordinator. The substitute revises the requirements for a person appointed as the support coordinator and does not include an authorization for the support coordinator to also serve as a first responder or in another position within the institute.

The substitute does not include provisions relating to:

- the creation and deployment by the office of regional peer support teams of peer counselors;
- training and certification of regional peer support team members;
- the development of a training course on critical incident stress management and other related matters for the benefit of first responders who are not members of a regional peer support team; and
- the confidential and privileged nature of communications between a peer counselor and a first responder receiving critical incident support services from the counselor.

The substitute includes provisions relating to:

- training for individuals serving on a critical incident stress management team, including an authorization for the office to coordinate with the department to establish a program for training such individuals;
- informing first responders who have been involved in a critical incident of the availability of a certain seminar; and
- the provision of certain training to peer support responders.

The substitute establishes that the bill's provisions do not place any restrictions on the type of training provided by or to any critical incident stress management team or peer support program outside of the institute.

The substitute does not include definitions of "critical incident support services" and "peer counselor" but does include definitions of "critical incident stress management team" and "peer support responder."