

SUBJECT: Requiring a suicide prevention policy in residential child-care facilities

COMMITTEE: Human Services — favorable, without amendment

VOTE: 8 ayes — Frank, Hull, Klick, Meza, Neave, Noble, Rose, Shaheen

0 nays

1 absent — Hinojosa

WITNESSES: For — Briana Sowers, National Association of Social Workers - Texas Chapter; Josette Saxton, Texans Care for Children; (*Registered, but did not testify*: Elisa Tamayo, Emergence Health Network; Christine Yanas, Methodist Healthcare Ministries of South Texas, Inc.; Greg Hansch, National Alliance on Mental Illness TX; Alison Mohr Boleware, National Association of Social Workers-Texas Chapter; Amanda Afifi, Texas Association of School Psychologists; Sarah Crockett, Texas CASA; Lee Johnson, Texas Council of Community Centers; Jan Friese, Texas Counseling Association; Clayton Stewart, Texas Medical Association; Lauren Rose, Texas Network of Youth Services; Ashley Harris, United Ways of Texas; Knox Kimberly, Upbring; Ash Hall; Thomas Parkinson; Ali Smith)

Against — None

On — (*Registered, but did not testify*: Tila Johnson, Texas Health and Human Services Commission)

BACKGROUND: Education Code sec. 38.351(o) defines "postvention" to include activities that promote healing necessary to reduce the risk of suicide by a person affected by the suicide of another.

It has been suggested that since foster youth are at a higher risk of suicide, residential child-care facilities should be required to have specific protocols in place for suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention, including suicide prevention training for care providers.

DIGEST: HB 4041 would require the executive commissioner of the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) to adopt a model suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention policy for use by a residential child-care facility. The policy would have to:

- be based on current and best evidence-based practices;
- require all employees of the facility to receive annual suicide prevention training that included understanding of safety planning and screening for risk;
- promote suicide prevention training for non-employee entities, as appropriate; and
- include procedures to support children who returned to the facility following hospitalization for a mental health condition.

Each residential child-care facility would be required to adopt this model policy or another suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention policy approved by the HHSC executive commissioner. The adopted policy could be part of a broader mental health crisis plan if the plan included suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention components. The bill would require HHSC to provide to a residential child-care facility any technical assistance necessary to adopt or implement such a policy.

HB 4041 also would require the operational plan required to be submitted to HHSC by a person applying for a license to operate a residential child-care facility to include a suicide prevention, intervention, and postvention plan that met the bill's other requirements.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2021, and the HHSC executive commissioner would have to adopt the required model policy no later than July 1, 2022.