

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center

C.S.S.B. 861
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Government Organization
4/12/2007
Committee Report (Substituted)

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

In 1983, the 68th Texas Legislature authorized all state agencies to allocate funding for employee wellness programs through the State Employee Health Fitness and Education Act. To date, the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) has health fitness plans from 61 state agencies with 60 of them approved. In a 2005 survey of 62 agencies conducted by DSHS, 15 of those agencies had an employee health fitness approved program in place and 46 did not have an approved plan but were conducting wellness activities.

The United States spends more on health care than any other country in the world. The nation's total health care costs increased from \$245 billion--an average of \$1,066 for each American--in 1980 to \$1.4 trillion--or an average of \$5,035 for each American--in 2001. The estimated cost of cardiovascular disease and stroke in 2003 is \$351.8 billion, the cost of obesity is \$117 billion, the cost of diabetes is \$132 billion, and medical expenditures attributed to smoking total more than \$75 billion. In addition, each year over \$33 billion in medical costs and \$9 billion in lost productivity due to heart disease, cancer, stroke, and diabetes are attributed to poor nutrition. Individuals with obesity have a 50 to 100 percent greater risk of premature death from all causes than do people at a healthy weight. Regular eye exams and timely treatment could prevent up to 90 percent of diabetes-related blindness.

According to the Centers for Disease Control, three modifiable health-damaging behaviors--tobacco use, lack of physical activity, and poor eating habits--are responsible for much of the suffering and early deaths of millions of Americans. In fact, approximately 33 percent of all deaths in the United States--about 80,000 deaths each year--can be attributed to these behaviors. Cities such as El Paso have implemented wellness clinics for employees enrolled in the city's health plan. The programs are geared at catching problems and intervening before a medical issue escalates. Prevention is the best practice for a healthier Texas.

C.S.S.B. 861 requires each state agency to designate an individual to be the wellness coordinator. This bill authorizes the wellness coordinator to collaborate with other agencies and sources to provide information and resources to employees. The bill also authorizes smaller state agencies under 100 employees to partner with larger agencies to provide programs and attain access to resources.

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 Chapter 664, Government Code, by adding Section 664.007, as follows:

Sec. 664.007. EMPLOYEE WELLNESS PROGRAM. (a) Requires each state agency to designate an individual as the wellness coordinator for the agency (coordinator). Authorizes the coordinator to collaborate with other agencies and sources to provide certain information and resources to employees through bulletin boards and e-mail. Authorizes the employee wellness program (program) to include certain elements.

(b) Authorizes a state agency with fewer than 100 employees to join with a state agency with 100 employees or more to create a program under this section and to share resources under the program.

(c) Authorizes a state agency to consult with the Department of State Health Services on wellness issues.

SECTION 2. Effective date: September 1, 2007.