

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center

C.S.S.B. 1325
By: Nelson
Veteran Affairs & Military Installations
4/4/2009
Committee Report (Substituted)

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

Currently, the Department of State Health Services (DSHS) does not have a formalized mental health program that is targeted to military veterans. Veterans can access mental health services through DSHS if they meet the specific requirements for the general public including income and diagnoses. However, many veterans may not have mental issues that would be covered by such services. The Veterans Administration also provides some services, but veterans are often wary of accessing treatment because they are concerned about the implications of mental health treatment on their military records and being negatively stigmatized by military peers as having a mental illness. Peer-to-peer counseling reduces the concerns about stigma or negative repercussions. Veterans can share their experiences in a supportive environment without judgment, knowing that everyone there has had similar experiences.

C.S.S.B. 1325 directs DSHS to create a military veterans peer-to-peer mental health program to provide counseling to military veterans who suffer from mental illness. The bill also requires DSHS to solicit and train volunteers to provide the peer-to-peer counseling.

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 Subchapter D, Chapter 1001, Health and Safety Code, by adding Section 1001.076, as follows:

Sec. 1001.076. MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAM FOR VETERANS. (a) Defines "veteran."

(b) Requires the Department of State Health Services (DSHS) to develop a mental health intervention program for veterans. Requires that the program provide for peer-to-peer counseling.

(c) Requires DSHS to solicit and train volunteers to provide the peer-to-peer counseling.

SECTION 2. Requires DSHS to develop the mental health intervention program for veterans as required by Section 1001.076, Health and Safety Code, as added by this Act, not later than January 1, 2010.

SECTION 3. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2009.