

## **BILL ANALYSIS**

Senate Research Center  
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S.B. 955  
By: Schwertner et al.  
Health & Human Services  
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As Filed

### **AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT**

Mental health first aid is an evidence-based, 12-hour training program that educates non-medical professionals about strategies and resources to respond to an individual who is developing a mental health problem or experiencing a crisis. Participants learn how to assess risk, listen to and support the individual in crisis, and identify professional resources and supports. The program can be taught to anyone, though it is especially relevant for key community professionals such as teachers, health care workers, police officers, and faith leaders who regularly interact with Texas youth.

Under S.B. 955, the Department of State Health Services (DSHS) will award up to \$30,000 to each of Texas's 39 local mental health authorities (LMHAs) and the North Star Program, contingent on appropriations, for the purpose of training mental health professionals to administer mental health first aid training to the general public. Training must be administered via an accredited mental health first aid provider.

Additional funds will be used to provide voluntary, no-cost training to educators, administrators, and other school faculty and staff. This training will fulfill up to 12 hours of continuing professional education required by the Texas Education Agency. Each LMHA is capped at five percent of these appropriated funds. An annual report regarding the trainees is to be sent to DSHS and the Texas Legislature.

As proposed, S.B. 955 amends current law relating to the training of employees of local mental health authorities and certain educators in mental health first aid and the establishment of the mental health first aid fund.

### **RULEMAKING AUTHORITY**

Rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the executive commissioner of the Health and Human Services Commission in SECTION 1 (Section 1001.202, Health and Safety Code) of this bill.

Rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the State Board for Educator Certification in SECTION 2 (Section 21.054, Education Code) of this bill.

### **SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS**

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

#### **SUBCHAPTER H. MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID TRAINING**

Sec. 1001.201. DEFINITIONS. Defines "educator" and "local mental health authority" in this subchapter.

Sec. 1001.202. GRANTS FOR TRAINING OF MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID TRAINERS. (a) Requires the Department of State Health Services (DSHS), to the extent funds are appropriated to DSHS for that purpose, to make grants of not more than

\$30,000 to local mental health authorities to contract with persons approved by DSHS to train employees of the authorities as mental health first aid trainers.

(b) Requires the executive commissioner of the Health and Human Services Commission (executive commissioner) to adopt rules to establish the requirements for a person to be approved by DSHS to contract with a local mental health authority to train employees of the authority as mental health first aid trainers. Requires that the rules ensure that a person who contracts with an authority is qualified to provide training in:

(1) the potential risk factors and warning signs for various mental illnesses, including depression, anxiety, trauma, psychosis, eating disorders, substance abuse disorders, and self-injury;

(2) the prevalence of various mental illnesses in the United States and the need to reduce the stigma associated with mental illness;

(3) an action plan for use by the employees that involves the use of skills, resources, and knowledge to assess a situation and develop and implement an appropriate intervention to help an individual experiencing a mental health crisis obtain appropriate professional care; and

(4) the evidence-based professional, peer, social, and self-help resources available to help individuals with mental illness.

Sec. 1001.203. GRANTS FOR TRAINING CERTAIN EDUCATORS IN MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID. (a) Requires DSHS, to the extent funds are appropriated to DSHS for that purpose, to make grants to local mental health authorities to provide a 12-hour mental health first aid training program at no cost to educators. Prohibits the amount of a grant made by DSHS to a local mental health authority under this section from exceeding five percent of the amount appropriated to DSHS to make those grants for the year in which the grant is made.

(b) Requires mental health first aid program provided by a local mental health authority under this section to:

(1) be conducted by an employee of the authority trained as a mental health first aid trainer;

(2) provide educators with the skills necessary to help an individual experiencing a mental health crisis until the individual is able to obtain appropriate professional care; and

(3) include instruction in a five step strategy for helping an individual experiencing a mental health crisis, including assessing risk, listening respectfully to and supporting the individual, and identifying professional help and other supports for the individual; an introduction to the risk factors and warning signs for mental illness and substance abuse problems; experiential activities to increase educators' understanding of the impact of mental illness on individuals and families; and a presentation of evidence-supported treatment and self-help strategies.

Sec. 1001.204. REPORTS. (a) Requires a local mental health authority, not later than February 1 of each year, to provide to DSHS a list of employees of the authority who were trained as mental health first aid trainers under Section 1001.202 and a list of educators who completed any mental health first aid training program offered by the authority under Section 1001.203 during the preceding calendar year.

(b) Requires DSHS, not later than March 1 of each year, to compile the lists submitted by local mental health authorities as required by Subsection (a) and

submit a report to the legislature containing a list of authority employees trained as mental health first aid trainers and a list of educators who completed a mental health first aid training program provided by an authority during the preceding calendar year.

SECTION 2. Amends Section 21.054, Education Code, by adding Subsection (d), to require the State Board for Educator Certification to adopt rules that allow an educator to fulfill up to twelve hours of continuing education by participating in a mental health first aid training program offered by a local mental health authority under Section 1001.203, Health and Safety Code.

SECTION 3. Effective date: September 1, 2013.