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H.B. No. 2473

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to improvements to the Texas Information and Referral
Network.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:

SECTION 1. Section 531.0312, Government Code, is amended by
amending Subsection (a) and adding Subsections (f) and (g) to read
as follows:

(a) The Texas Information and Referral Network at the
commission is the program responsible for the development,
coordination, and implementation of a statewide information and
referral network that integrates existing community-based
structures with state and local agencies. The network must:

(1) include information relating to transportation
services provided to clients of state and local agencies;

(2) be capable of assisting with statewide disaster
response and emergency management, including through the use of
interstate agreements with out-of-state call centers to ensure
preparedness and responsiveness;

(3) include technology capable of communicating with
clients of state and local agencies using one-way and two-way
electronic text messaging to:

(A) enhance client access to information and
referral services;

(B) decrease client wait times;

1 (C) improve customer service; and

2 (D) disseminate information to clients in a
3 timely manner; [and]

4 (4) include a publicly accessible Internet-based
5 system to provide real-time, searchable data about [~~the location~~
6 ~~and number of~~] clients of state and local agencies using the system,
7 including:

8 (A) the number of clients;

9 (B) the location of clients;

10 (C) [and] the types of requests made by [the]
11 clients; and

12 (D) aggregated, de-identified demographic
13 information regarding the clients and client households served by
14 the network, including, if the information is volunteered by the
15 clients after the clients have been given an opportunity to provide
16 informed and explicit consent:

17 (i) the gender, race, and ethnicity of each
18 client; and

19 (ii) whether the client or a member of the
20 client's household is:

21 (a) a veteran;

22 (b) involved in the criminal justice
23 system;

24 (c) pregnant; or

25 (d) the caregiver to a child who is
26 five years of age or younger or a kinship caregiver;

27 (5) use a standardized screening tool to identify the

1 nonmedical drivers of health for all clients who provide informed
2 and explicit consent to be screened using the screening tool;

3 (6) provide enhanced navigation services under a level
4 of care three (LOC-3) as prescribed by the Department of State
5 Health Services' Texas Resilience and Recovery Utilization
6 Management Guidelines in order to:

7 (A) better address complex client needs; and

8 (B) collaborate with community partners;

9 (7) be capable of providing closed-loop referrals to
10 support clients and track referral outcomes;

11 (8) exchange resource data with external partners,
12 including vendors, through data sharing agreements for the purposes
13 of:

14 (A) connecting clients to a requested service;

15 (B) addressing nonmedical drivers of health; and

16 (C) decreasing redundancies in the health and
17 human services system;

18 (9) comply with all applicable state and federal laws
19 relating to protecting the privacy of each client's health and
20 personal information, including the Health Insurance Portability
21 and Accountability Act of 1996 (42 U.S.C. Section 1320d et seq.);

22 (10) be part of a national repository of information
23 and referral programs and services that provides the most updated
24 information about programs and services available at the local,
25 regional, state, and national levels; and

26 (11) be capable of providing backup information and
27 referrals during a statewide disaster or system malfunction.

1 (f) Health care systems and managed care organizations may
2 partner and enter into agreements with the commission and area
3 information centers to share data using the Texas Information and
4 Referral Network to:

5 (1) facilitate client care coordination; and

6 (2) address nonmedical drivers of health, including
7 housing, transportation, food, and financial assistance programs.

8 (g) Not later than December 31 of each even-numbered year,
9 the commission shall:

10 (1) prepare and submit a report to the governor, the
11 lieutenant governor, and the speaker of the house of
12 representatives that:

13 (A) summarizes the Texas Information and
14 Referral Network's operations, including the effectiveness of the
15 network and any improvements made to the network, during the
16 preceding two state fiscal years;

17 (B) identifies existing needs and gaps in
18 services in communities in this state that could be addressed
19 through additional improvements to the network; and

20 (C) provides recommendations for improving the
21 network, including recommendations for improving data privacy and
22 client experience; and

23 (2) make the report publicly available on:

24 (A) the commission's Internet website; and

25 (B) the Texas Information and Referral Network
26 Internet site established under Section [531.0313](#).

27 SECTION 2. Subchapter B, Chapter [531](#), Government Code, is

1 amended by adding Section 531.03121 to read as follows:

2 Sec. 531.03121. AREA INFORMATION CENTERS: ACCREDITATION
3 REQUIRED. An area information center that contracts with the
4 commission to provide Texas Information and Referral Network
5 operations must be accredited by a nationally recognized
6 accreditation organization.

7 SECTION 3. Sections 531.0313(a) and (b), Government Code,
8 are amended to read as follows:

9 (a) The Texas Information and Referral Network may develop
10 an Internet site to provide information to the public regarding the
11 health and human services provided by public or private entities
12 throughout the state. An Internet site developed under this
13 section must be user-friendly and regularly updated to ensure the
14 Internet site's interface supports the navigation needs of the
15 site's users.

16 (b) The material in the Texas Information and Referral
17 Network Internet site must be:

18 (1) geographically indexed and designed to inform an
19 individual about the health and human services provided in the area
20 where the individual lives; [~~The material must be~~]

21 (2) further indexed by type of service provided within
22 each geographic area; and

23 (3) organized in such a way that the public can search
24 and navigate through the Internet site with ease.

25 SECTION 4. If before implementing any provision of this Act
26 a state agency determines that a waiver or authorization from a
27 federal agency is necessary for implementation of that provision,

1 the agency affected by the provision shall request the waiver or
2 authorization and may delay implementing that provision until the
3 waiver or authorization is granted.

4 SECTION 5. This Act takes effect September 1, 2023.