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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:

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

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

20                                       (a) a veteran;

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

23                                       (c) pregnant; or

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

26                   (5) use a standardized screening tool to identify the  
27 nonmedical drivers of health for all clients;

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

5                   (A) better address complex client needs; and

6                   (B) collaborate with community partners;

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

9           (8) exchange resource data with external partners,  
10 including vendors, through data sharing agreements;

11           (9) be part of a national repository of information  
12 and referral programs and services that provides the most updated  
13 information about programs and services available at the local,  
14 regional, state, and national levels; and

15           (10) be capable of providing backup information and  
16 referrals during a statewide disaster or system malfunction.

17           (f) Health care systems and managed care organizations may  
18 partner and enter into agreements with the commission and area  
19 information centers to share data using the Texas Information and  
20 Referral Network to:

21                   (1) facilitate client care coordination; and

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

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

26                   (1) prepare and submit a report to the governor, the  
27 lieutenant governor, and the speaker of the house of

1 representatives that:

2 (A) summarizes the Texas Information and  
3 Referral Network's operations, including the effectiveness of the  
4 network and any improvements made to the network, during the  
5 preceding two state fiscal years;

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

9 (C) provides recommendations for improving the  
10 network; and

11 (2) make the report publicly available on:

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

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

15 SECTION 2. Subchapter B, Chapter 531, Government Code, is  
16 amended by adding Section 531.03121 to read as follows:

17 Sec. 531.03121. AREA INFORMATION CENTERS: ACCREDITATION  
18 REQUIRED. An area information center that contracts with the  
19 commission to provide Texas Information and Referral Network  
20 operations must be accredited by a nationally recognized  
21 accreditation organization.

22 SECTION 3. Sections [531.0313](#)(a) and (b), Government Code,  
23 are amended to read as follows:

24 (a) The Texas Information and Referral Network may develop  
25 an Internet site to provide information to the public regarding the  
26 health and human services provided by public or private entities  
27 throughout the state. An Internet site developed under this

1 section must be user-friendly and regularly updated to ensure the  
2 Internet site's interface supports the navigation needs of the  
3 site's users.

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

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

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

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

13 SECTION 4. If before implementing any provision of this Act  
14 a state agency determines that a waiver or authorization from a  
15 federal agency is necessary for implementation of that provision,  
16 the agency affected by the provision shall request the waiver or  
17 authorization and may delay implementing that provision until the  
18 waiver or authorization is granted.

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