

## **BILL ANALYSIS**

C.S.H.B. 1067  
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Public Health  
Committee Report (Substituted)

### **BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE**

Suicide is a pervasive problem in Texas. It is the 10th leading cause of death in Texas overall, the third leading cause of death among youth 15 to 24 years of age, and the second leading cause of death among college-age students. In total, suicide claimed the lives of over 13,000 Texans between 2000 and 2005.

Preventing suicides that occur in clusters requires readily available, up-to-date information on the location of each suicide and on certain demographic factors including age, ethnic background, school attendance, if any, and method used, in order to target at-risk populations. Currently, available data on suicide deaths is at least three to four years old before it becomes public information. This delay hampers prevention efforts. Releasing such data would give suicide prevention advocates and community leaders the information they need to identify and target populations at risk for suicide and the opportunity to implement evidence-based, proven prevention strategies.

C.S.H.B. 1067 authorizes certain entities to enter into memoranda of understanding to share statistical, nonidentifying suicide data with one another, and to periodically release that data to suicide prevention advocates for suicide prevention purposes only.

### **RULEMAKING AUTHORITY**

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, department, agency, or institution.

### **ANALYSIS**

C.S.H.B. 1067 amends the Health and Safety Code to authorize an authorized entity to enter into a memorandum of understanding with another authorized entity to share suicide data that does not name a deceased individual. The bill defines "authorized entity" as a medical examiner, a local registrar, a local health authority, a local mental health authority, a community mental health center, a mental health center that acts as a collection agent for the suicide data reported by community mental health centers, or any other political subdivision of Texas. The bill authorizes the shared data to include: the deceased individual's age, race or national origin, gender, and zip code of residence; any school or college the deceased individual was attending at the time of death; the suicide method used by the deceased individual; the deceased individual's status as a veteran or member of the armed services; and the date of the deceased individual's death. The bill provides that the suicide data the authorized entity receives or provides is not confidential. The bill authorizes an authorized entity that receives suicide data under a memorandum of understanding to periodically release suicide data that does not name a deceased individual to an agency or organization with recognized expertise in suicide prevention. The bill authorizes the agency or organization to use the suicide data received by the agency or organization only for suicide prevention purposes. The bill provides that an authorized entity or an employee or agent of an authorized entity is not civilly or criminally liable for receiving or providing suicide data that does not name a deceased individual and that is

authorized to be shared under a memorandum of understanding. The bill clarifies that its provisions do not prohibit the sharing of data as authorized by other law. The bill establishes legislative intent regarding the reporting and use of suicide data.

#### **EFFECTIVE DATE**

On passage, or, if the act does not receive the necessary vote, the act takes effect September 1, 2009.

#### **COMPARISON OF ORIGINAL AND SUBSTITUTE**

C.S.H.B. 1067 omits a provision in the original authorizing an agency or organization to publish suicide data that does not identify the deceased individual or post the data on an Internet website.

C.S.H.B. 1067 adds a provision not in the original authorizing the shared suicide data to include the deceased individual's status as a veteran or member of the armed services and the date of the deceased individual's death. The substitute differs from the original by adding the clarification that the bill's provisions do not prohibit the sharing of the data as authorized by other law.