

BILL ANALYSIS

S.B. 1325
By: Nelson
Defense & Veterans' Affairs
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Currently, veterans can access mental health services through the Department of State Health Services (DSHS) if they meet requirements for the general public including income and diagnoses. However, many veterans may not be covered by such services. The Veterans Administration 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. Peer-to-peer counseling may reduce the concerns about stigma or negative repercussions. Veterans can share their experiences in a supportive environment, knowing that others have had similar experiences.

SB 1325 directs DSHS to create a military veterans peer-to-peer mental health program to provide counseling to military veterans. The bill requires DSHS to solicit and train volunteers to provide the peer-to-peer counseling.

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

SB 1325 amends the Health and Safety Code by adding Section 1001.076, to define "veteran" and require the Department of State Health Services (DSHS) to develop a mental health intervention program for veterans. Further, it requires that the program provide for peer-to-peer counseling and requires DSHS to solicit and train volunteers to provide the peer-to-peer counseling.

SB 1325 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.

EFFECTIVE DATE

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