

BILL ANALYSIS

H.B. 2610
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Human Services
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

The Health and Human Services Commission is currently in the process of implementing the Texas Integrated Eligibility Redesign System (TIERS), an online eligibility system that allows a person to electronically submit an application for certain public benefit programs. To help ensure efficiency and accuracy, applicants can receive help from a navigator, who will guide the applicant through the online application process. Faith- and community-based organizations can help to maximize the benefits of this system by serving as navigators, but need to receive proper training to effectively do so.

H.B. 2610 seeks to improve the efficiency and maximize the effectiveness of TIERS by establishing a statewide community-based navigator program to assist individuals applying for certain public assistance benefits online through TIERS or any other electronic eligibility system.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

It is the committee's opinion that rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the executive commissioner of the Health and Human Services Commission in SECTION 1 of this bill.

ANALYSIS

H.B. 2610 amends the Government Code to require the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC), in consultation with the Navigator Program Advisory Committee established by the bill and not later than September 1, 2012, to establish a statewide community-based navigator program through which HHSC will recruit, train, and certify as navigators volunteers and other representatives of faith- and community-based organizations to assist individuals applying or seeking to apply online for public assistance benefits through the Texas Integrated Eligibility Redesign System (TIERS) or any other electronic eligibility system that is linked to or made a part of that system. The bill requires HHSC to develop and administer a training program for navigators that includes training on how to complete an online application for public assistance benefits through TIERS, the importance of maintaining the confidentiality of information handled by a navigator; the importance of obtaining and submitting complete and accurate information when completing an application for public assistance benefit online through TIERS; the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families program, the supplemental nutrition assistance program, Medicaid, the child health plan program, and any other public assistance benefits program for which an individual may complete an online application through TIERS; and how an individual may apply for other public assistance benefits for which an individual may not complete an online application through TIERS. The bill requires HHSC to maintain and publish on HHSC's Internet website a list of certified navigators.

H.B. 2610 requires the executive commissioner, not later than January 1, 2012, to establish the Navigator Program Advisory Committee to assist in the development and implementation of the navigator program. The bill requires the advisory committee to include representatives of faith- and community-based organizations and to be representative of the geographic, religious, and

racial diversity of Texas and the diversity of organization types and sizes in Texas.

H.B. 2610 requires the executive commissioner to adopt rules to implement the bill's provisions, including rules to protect the confidentiality of applicant information handled by navigators; rules regarding the qualifications and training required for certification as a navigator; rules regarding the suspension, revocation, and, if appropriate, periodic renewal of a navigator certificate; and rules regarding any other issues the executive commissioner determines are appropriate.

H.B. 2610 requires a state agency that is affected by a provision of the bill to request a federal waiver or authorization if the agency determines that a waiver or authorization is necessary for the implementation of the provision, and it authorizes the agency to delay implementation until the federal waiver or authorization is obtained.

H.B. 2610 defines "navigator" and provides for the meaning of "community-based organization" and "faith-based organization."

EFFECTIVE DATE

September 1, 2011.