

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center

S.B. 27
By: Campbell
Veteran Affairs & Border Security
6/5/2017
Enrolled

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

Local mental health authorities (LMHAs) employ licensed mental health professionals to provide clinical services in local communities. Most communities, however, do not have dedicated staff with knowledge or licensure to provide mental health services to veterans. The 84th Legislature directed the Texas Veterans Commission and the Health and Human Services Commission to create the Veterans Mental Health Program. The program subcontracts for field clinicians to provide short-term mental health service in conjunction with the Military Veteran Peer-to-Peer Network. However, there are currently only three full-time and one part-time field clinicians who exclusively serve veterans and/or the families of veterans, and thus, they are not able to provide services to all of the requests for assistance that they receive.

S.B. 27 allows for the addition of licensed mental health professionals at the LMHAs to provide clinical interventions for veterans and their families. It will increase access to mental health services, provide support to suicidal veterans, and decrease the overall cost associated with military-related traumas.

S.B. 27 amends current law relating to the mental health program for veterans and to the authority to establish a trauma affected veterans clinical care and research center at The University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

This bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, institution, or agency.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Subchapter D, Chapter 74, Education Code, by adding Section 74.155, as follows:

Sec. 74.155. NATIONAL CENTER FOR WARRIOR RESILIENCY. (a) Defines "board" and "center."

(b) Authorizes the board of regents of The University of Texas System (board) to establish the National Center for Warrior Resiliency (center) at The University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio for certain purposes.

(c) Authorizes the board to solicit, accept, and administer gifts and grants from any public or private source for the use and benefit of the center.

SECTION 2. Amends Section 434.351, Government Code, by adding Subdivision (2-a) to define "peer service coordinator."

SECTION 3. Amends Section 434.352(b), Government Code, as follows:

(b) Requires the Texas Veterans Commission, for the mental health program for veterans, to identify, rather than recruit, to train, and communicate with community-based licensed mental health professionals, rather than community-based therapists, with community-

based organizations, and with faith based organizations. Changes references to volunteer coordinators to peer service coordinators.

SECTION 4. Amends Section 434.353(a), Government Code, to make conforming changes.

SECTION 5. Amends Section 1001.221, Health and Safety Code, by adding Subdivision (1-a) to define "peer service coordinator."

SECTION 6. Amends Section 1001.222(a), Health and Safety Code, as follows:

(a) Requires that the mental health intervention program include training approved by the Department of State Health Services (DSHS) for peer service coordinators, licensed mental health professionals, and peers; technical assistance for peer service coordinators, licensed mental health professionals, and peers; identification, retention, and screening of community-based licensed mental health professionals, rather than community-based therapists; and veteran jail diversion services, including veterans treatment courts. Changes references to volunteer coordinators to peer service coordinators. Redesignates existing Subdivisions (7) and (8) as Subdivisions (6) and (7). Deletes existing text requiring that the program include grants to regional and local organizations providing services under this subchapter.

SECTION 7. Amends Section 1001.224, Health and Safety Code, as follows:

Sec. 1001.224. ANNUAL REPORT. Deletes existing text requiring that DSHS's report to the governor and the legislature include a summary of the grants awarded and services provided through those grants. Makes conforming changes and redesignates existing Subdivisions (4) and (5) as Subdivisions (3) and (4).

SECTION 8. Repealer: Section 434.351(4) (relating to the definition of "volunteer coordinator"), Government Code.

Repealer: Section 1001.221(3) (relating to the definition of "volunteer coordinator"), Health and Safety Code.

Repealer: Section 1001.223 (Grants), Health and Safety Code.

SECTION 9. Effective date: September 1, 2017.