

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
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S.B. 1124
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Health & Human Services
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AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

With the large number of crossings between Texas and Mexico, border public health departments are on the front line to safeguard the state and nation from new and emerging public health threats. As these areas also face challenges associated with access to care, trans-migratory populations, poverty and lack of health insurance, border public health departments must take these challenges into account when responding to a public health threat. Considering the demographics, rapid growth, and cross-border dynamics of the Texas-Mexico border region, there are unique challenges to the region's infrastructure that are not found in non-border regions of Texas.

S.B. 1124 addresses these concerns by directing the Department of State Health Services (DSHS) to establish a Border Public Health Multi-Disciplinary Response Team (response team) to deploy in response to outbreaks, public health threats and disasters in the border counties. S.B. 1124 provides that the response team is authorized to consist of an epidemiologist, a sanitarian, a nurse, and a public health specialist to assess border health infrastructure and response capabilities for emerging threats, as well as develop appropriate counter measures. Additionally, S.B. 1124 provides that DSHS offer, as appropriate, the necessary training, equipment, and support to the response team to enhance intervention and border health response efforts along the border in order to mitigate and contain any future public health threats.

As proposed, S.B. 1124 amends current law relating to establishment of a border public health response team.

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 Chapter 161, Health and Safety Code, by adding Subchapter X, as follows:

SUBCHAPTER X. BORDER PUBLIC HEALTH RESPONSE TEAM

Sec. 161.701. DEFINITIONS. Defines "border county," "disaster," "response team," and "sanitarian."

Sec. 161.702. BORDER PUBLIC HEALTH RESPONSE TEAM. Requires the Department of State Health Services (DSHS) to establish a border public health response team to deploy in response to public health threats declared by the commissioner of state health services (commissioner) and declared disasters in border counties.

Sec. 161.703. COMPOSITION OF RESPONSE TEAM. Authorizes the response team to be composed of the following members appointed by the commissioner:

- (1) an epidemiologist;

- (2) a sanitarian;
- (3) a nurse;
- (4) a public health specialist; and
- (5) any other person the commissioner considers appropriate.

Sec. 161.704. DEPARTMENT DUTIES. (a) Requires DSHS, in consultation with the response team, to, as necessary, enter into memoranda of understanding with other state agencies to develop policies, plans, and procedures to facilitate an effective response to a declared public health threat or disaster.

(b) Requires DSHS to provide, or contract to provide, training, equipment, and support staff to the response team to enhance the team's response efforts, as appropriate.

Sec. 161.705. RESPONSE TEAM DUTIES. Requires the response team, during a declared public health threat or disaster in a border county, to, as appropriate, assess health infrastructure and response capabilities for the threat or disaster in a border county, develop appropriate responses for the threat or disaster in a border county, and address language, cultural, and environmental factors that are unique to responding to the threat or disaster in a border county.

Sec. 161.706. FUNDING. (a) Requires DSHS to coordinate with the Health and Human Services Commission, the Office of the Governor, the federal government, and any other appropriate entity for funding to support the response team's activities.

(b) Authorizes DSHS to accept on behalf of the response team a gift, grant, or donation from any source to carry out the purposes of this subchapter.

SECTION 2. Requires DSHS to establish the border public health response team as required by Subchapter X, Chapter 161, Health and Safety Code, as added by this Act, not later than December 1, 2019.

SECTION 3. Effective date: September 1, 2019.