

BILL ANALYSIS

C.S.H.B. 2903
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Defense & Veterans' Affairs
Committee Report (Substituted)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

It has been noted that many veterans in Texas face mental health consequences as a result of their service. Consequently, loved ones of these veterans may feel ill-equipped or overwhelmed as they attempt to provide support and care, as supporting someone with mental illness can take a physical, mental, and emotional toll. There have been calls to provide these caregivers better tools to effectively manage their situations. C.S.H.B. 2903 seeks to address this issue by providing for the creation of an instruction guide for family members and caregivers of veterans who have mental health disorders.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE IMPACT

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly create a criminal offense, increase the punishment for an existing criminal offense or category of offenses, or change the eligibility of a person for community supervision, parole, or mandatory supervision.

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. 2903 amends the Government Code to require the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) and the Texas Veterans Commission (TVC) to jointly produce and make publicly available an instruction guide for family members and caregivers of veterans who have mental health disorders. The bill requires the instruction guide to include the following:

- general education about different mental health disorders;
- techniques for handling crisis situations and administering mental health first aid to persons suffering from mental health disorders;
- techniques for coping with the stress of living with a person with a mental health disorder; and
- information about related services available for family members and caregivers of veterans who have mental health disorders that are provided by HHSC, the TVC, other state agencies, community organizations, and mental health services providers.

The bill requires HHSC and the TVC each to publish the guide on the respective commission's website.

EFFECTIVE DATE

On passage, or, if the bill does not receive the necessary vote, September 1, 2021.

COMPARISON OF ORIGINAL AND SUBSTITUTE

While C.S.H.B. 2903 may differ from the original in minor or nonsubstantive ways, the following summarizes the substantial differences between the introduced and committee substitute versions of the bill.

The original referred to the required publication as an educational training guide and listed the Department of State Health Services (DSHS) as one of the guide's producers and disseminators, including for purposes of Internet publication, whereas the substitute uses the term instruction guide and omits the references to DSHS involvement. The substitute requires HHSC, rather than DSHS, to publish the guide on its website.