87R7193 MCF-D

By:  White H.B. No. 3447

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to certain procedures concerning the welfare of prisoners confined in county jails.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:

SECTION 1.  Chapter 511, Government Code, is amended by adding Sections 511.022, 511.023, and 511.024 to read as follows:

Sec. 511.022.  FAMILY LIAISON OFFICER. (a) The commission shall require the sheriff of a county to designate one employee at the county jail to serve as the family liaison officer for the jail to facilitate the maintenance of ties between prisoners and their families for the purpose of reducing recidivism.

(b)  The family liaison officer shall:

(1)  provide prisoners' relatives with information about the classification status, location, and health of prisoners at the county jail;

(2)  notify prisoners about emergencies involving their families and provide prisoners with other necessary information relating to their families;

(3)  assist prisoners' relatives and other persons during visits with prisoners and aid those persons in resolving problems that may affect permitted contact with prisoners; and

(4)  inform individuals who possess a reference number described by Section 511.023 when the applicable prisoner requires any medical attention outside of routine medical checks.

Sec. 511.023.  MEDICAL AUTHORIZATION FORM. (a) The commission shall adopt a medical authorization form for a prisoner to authorize the release of the prisoner's medical information by the county jail to an individual named in the form.

(b)  On request of a prisoner, a county jail shall submit to the commission a medical authorization form signed by the prisoner. As soon as practicable after receiving the form, the commission shall provide a reference number by mail or facsimile to:

(1)  the individual named by the prisoner in the form; and

(2)  the county jail that submitted the form.

(c)  An individual named in a medical authorization form may obtain medical information concerning the prisoner from the applicable county jail, including the family liaison officer for the county jail, by providing the reference number described by Subsection (b) to the county jail.

Sec. 511.024.  COMPLAINT INSPECTIONS AND REPORT. (a) On receipt by the commission of a complaint alleging abuse or neglect of a prisoner, including medical neglect, or unsafe conditions at a county jail, the commission shall check on the health and well-being of prisoners at the jail.

(b)  Not later than February 1 of each year, the commission shall submit to the governor and the presiding officer of each house of the legislature a report on the complaints described by Subsection (a) that the commission received during the preceding year. The report must include, for each county jail, the total number of:

(1)  complaints submitted;

(2)  complaints submitted for each category of allegation, including complaints alleging medical neglect and complaints alleging that the family liaison officer for the jail failed to disclose medical information to an individual who possesses a reference number described by Section 511.023; and

(3)  complaints that were resolved by the commission.

(c)  The commission may submit the report required under Subsection (b) with the report required under Section 511.015.

SECTION 2.  As soon as practicable after the effective date of this Act, the Commission on Jail Standards shall adopt the form required by Section 511.023, Government Code, as added by this Act.

SECTION 3.  This Act takes effect September 1, 2021.