

## **BILL ANALYSIS**

C.S.H.B. 2233  
By: Spiller  
Public Health  
Committee Report (Substituted)

### **BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE**

First responders and law enforcement officers provide critical services to the community and during their service are often exposed to complex, stressful, and chronic trauma-inducing situations. These first responders and officers may experience negative mental health symptoms as a result of that exposure and may benefit from mental health awareness training. C.S.H.B. 2233 seeks to require first responder and certain law enforcement training programs to include training on mental health awareness.

### **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. 2233 amends the Health and Safety Code to require a person who provides to first responders and first responder trainees a first responder training program to include as part of the program at least six hours of training on mental health awareness that covers certain prescribed information and to require first responders and first responder trainees to successfully complete that training as part of the training program. For purposes of this mental health awareness training requirement, the bill provides the following:

- the Texas A&M Engineering Extension Service must develop or adopt a curriculum for the first responder mental health awareness training and require a person to use that curriculum in providing the training;
- the extension service, in developing or adopting the curriculum, must collaborate with state agencies that certify or license first responders, including the Texas Commission on Fire Protection, the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement (TCOLE), and the Department of State Health Services (DSHS);
- each state agency that certifies or licenses first responders must ensure that the applicable first responder training program required for certification or licensure uses the curriculum developed or adopted by the extension service and that each first responder and first responder trainee completes the required training; and
- "first responder" means a public safety employee whose duties include responding rapidly to an emergency, including:
  - a peace officer whose duties include responding rapidly to an emergency;
  - fire protection personnel;
  - an individual certified as emergency medical services personnel by DSHS;
  - an emergency response operator or emergency services dispatcher who provides

- communication support services for an agency by responding to requests for assistance in emergencies, including a telecommunicator; and
- other emergency response personnel employed by a state agency.

C.S.H.B. 2233 amends the Occupations Code to require TCOLE, as part of the minimum curriculum requirements for law enforcement officer training schools, to require an officer to complete the mental health awareness curriculum developed or adopted by the extension service. The bill requires that the training required for a telecommunicator license also include the mental health awareness curriculum.

### **EFFECTIVE DATE**

September 1, 2023.

### **COMPARISON OF INTRODUCED AND SUBSTITUTE**

While C.S.H.B. 2233 may differ from the introduced in minor or nonsubstantive ways, the following summarizes the substantial differences between the introduced and committee substitute versions of the bill.

The substitute changes the entity responsible for developing or adopting the mental health awareness training curriculum from the Health and Human Services Commission, as in the introduced, to the extension service.

The substitute changes the definition of "first responder" as used in the bill's Health and Safety Code provisions. Whereas the introduced defined "first responder" by reference to state law governing the governor's interoperable radio communications program, the substitute sets out its own definition for the term. The definition assigned in the introduced listed the following as specific first responders included in the definition of the term:

- a peace officer whose duties include responding rapidly to an emergency;
- fire protection personnel;
- a qualifying volunteer firefighter;
- an individual certified as emergency medical services personnel by DSHS;
- an emergency response operator or emergency services dispatcher who provides communication support services for an agency by responding to requests for assistance in emergencies; and
- other emergency response personnel employed by an agency.

The definition set out in the substitute omits specific reference to volunteer firefighters and includes a specification that, with respect to the inclusion of emergency response operators and emergency services dispatchers as first responders, a telecommunicator falls into that category.

The substitute includes a provision absent from the introduced specifying certain state agencies that must be included among the agencies with which the extension service collaborates in developing or adopting the mental health awareness curriculum, whereas the introduced did not include any specific agencies.

The substitute includes a provision not in the introduced requiring the training for a telecommunicator license to include the mental health awareness curriculum.