

BILL ANALYSIS

C.S.H.B. 2935
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Corrections
Committee Report (Substituted)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

There is a lack of reentry and reintegration services that can adequately provide support and assistance to veterans who have served time in prison as they reintegrate into society and work to rebuild their lives. Veterans who have been incarcerated may require additional support such as employment, education, housing, financial support for the inmate's family, and medical or mental health care, to which they may be entitled on account of their veteran status. C.S.H.B. 2935 seeks to remedy this situation by requiring a reentry and reintegration plan to be developed for veterans that utilizes all benefits to which the veteran is eligible.

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. 2935 amends the Government Code to require the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) to develop a comprehensive plan to ensure the successful reentry or reintegration from TDCJ into the community following discharge or release on parole or to mandatory supervision of inmates whose veteran status has been verified by TDCJ. The bill requires the plan to utilize all benefits that the inmate is eligible for to provide for the following, as applicable, after the inmate's discharge or release:

- housing;
- employment;
- education;
- financial support for the inmate's family; and
- medical or mental health care.

The plan must require TDCJ to maintain written documentation in the inmate's file that describes each benefit the inmate is eligible for and how the plan utilizes the benefit.

C.S.H.B. 2935 authorizes TDCJ to contract with private vendors or other entities to implement the comprehensive reentry and reintegration plan. The bill requires TDCJ to use the best available federal data to assist inmates who are veterans in applying for state benefits or compensation for which the inmates may be eligible under any state law or program.

C.S.H.B. 2935 requires the community justice assistance division of TDCJ to require each community supervision and corrections department to develop and implement a comprehensive plan to:

- determine if a defendant placed on community supervision is a veteran; and
- assist the defendant in obtaining any federal or state veterans benefits for which the defendant is eligible to provide for the following, as applicable, during the defendant's term of community supervision:
 - housing;
 - employment;
 - education;
 - financial support for the defendant's family; and
 - medical or mental health care.

EFFECTIVE DATE

September 1, 2023.

COMPARISON OF INTRODUCED AND SUBSTITUTE

While C.S.H.B. 2935 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.

Whereas the introduced required TDCJ to develop a reentry and reintegration plan for offenders who are veterans and discharged from TDCJ, the substitute requires TDCJ to develop such a plan for inmates who are veterans and discharged or released on parole or to mandatory supervision from TDCJ.

The substitute includes a requirement absent from the introduced for the plan to require TDCJ to maintain written documentation in the inmate's file that describes each benefit the inmate is eligible for and how the plan utilizes the benefit.