

## **BILL ANALYSIS**

Senate Research Center

S.B. 1841  
By: Hinojosa  
Criminal Justice  
6/7/2023  
Enrolled

### **AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT**

Chapter 51 of the Human Resources Code, which outlines the required services for family violence centers statewide, has not been updated in over twenty years and has no required service model. Although family violence centers adhere to federal requirements, such as the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act, research shows that efficacy increases when services are offered in a framework that is voluntary and trauma-informed. Further, it is critical that Chapter 51 be adapted to include several areas of advocacy commonly cited as necessary to support survivors.

S.B. 1841 aligns Chapter 51 with services that many family violence centers and survivors cite as needed. It provides for the inclusion of advocacy services focused on children, economics and housing, criminal and civil legal systems, and physical and mental health. Additionally, S.B. 1841 proposes four required services to represent survivors' needs more accurately:

- Safety planning – With over 50 percent of survivors reporting an increased sense of safety after using services, clarifying the importance of this service is needed.
- Counseling services to support survivors and their families as they heal from violence.
- Peer support services, which include activities and efforts led by survivors of family violence that support and facilitate connection with other survivors.
- Prevention efforts to raise awareness about family violence and promote healthy relationships aimed at ending family violence in communities.

(Original Author's/Sponsor's Statement of Intent)

S.B. 1841 amends current law relating to family violence center services for victims of family violence.

### **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 Section 51.002, Human Resources Code, by amending Subdivisions (1), (2), and (9) and adding Subdivisions (1-a), (1-b), and (8-a) to define "dating relationship," "dating violence," and "trauma-informed" and redefine "family violence" and "victim of family violence."

SECTION 2. Amends Sections 51.004(a) and (b), Human Resources Code, as follows:

- (a) Requires a family violence shelter center, to be eligible for a contract under Section 51.003(a) (relating to requiring the Health and Human Services Commission to contract for services with family violence centers with consideration given to the plan for family violence services), to meet certain criteria, including demonstrating that the center is using a voluntary and trauma-informed advocacy service model that respects an individual's needs. Makes nonsubstantive changes.

(b) Requires a family violence nonresidential center, to be eligible for a contract under Section 51.003(a), to meet certain criteria, including demonstrating that the center is using a voluntary and trauma-informed advocacy service model that respects an individual's needs. Makes nonsubstantive changes.

SECTION 3. Amends Section 51.005, Human Resources Code, by amending Subsection (b) and adding Subsection (b-1), as follows:

(b) Requires that the contracts require the persons operating a family violence center to:

(1)-(2) makes no changes to these subdivisions;

(3) provide, as its primary purpose, voluntary and trauma-informed services to victims of family violence that include:

(A)-(C) makes no changes to these paragraphs;

(D) crisis and intervention services, including understanding and support, information, education, referrals, advocacy, and other resource assistance;

(E) makes no changes to this paragraph;

(F) advocacy focused on:

(i) economic and housing stability;

(ii) physical, behavioral, and mental health;

(iii) the needs of children who are victims and the children of victims; and

(iv) the civil and criminal legal systems, including certain needs;

(G) ongoing safety planning services in collaboration with the self-stated priorities and needs of the victim of family violence;

(H) community education regarding family violence and family violence prevention efforts;

(I) counseling services; and

(J) peer support services led by victims of family violence, including activities and other efforts that facilitate connections and the creation of community among victims of family violence.

Deletes existing text requiring that the contracts require the persons operating a family violence center to provide, as its primary purpose, services to victims of family violence that include intervention services, including safety planning; legal assistance in the civil and criminal justice systems; information about educational arrangements for children; information about training for and seeking employment; cooperation with criminal justice officials; community education; a referral system to existing community services; and a volunteer recruitment and training program.

(b-1) Requires that the contracts:

(1) specify that participation in services by a victim of family violence is voluntary; and

(2) prohibit the persons operating a family violence center from requiring a victim of family violence to participate in other services as a condition of receiving shelter.

SECTION 4. Makes application of this Act prospective.

SECTION 5. Effective date: September 1, 2024.