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By:  Spiller, Garcia, Howard, et al. H.B. No. 2233

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to required mental health awareness training for first responders.

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

SECTION 1.  Subtitle B, Title 9, Health and Safety Code, is amended by adding Chapter 786 to read as follows:

CHAPTER 786. MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS TRAININGFOR FIRST RESPONDERS

Sec. 786.001.  DEFINITIONS. In this chapter:

(1)  "Extension service" means the Texas A&M Engineering Extension Service.

(2)  "First responder" means a public safety employee whose duties include responding rapidly to an emergency. The term includes:

(A)  a peace officer whose duties include responding rapidly to an emergency;

(B)  fire protection personnel as defined by Section 419.021, Government Code;

(C)  an individual certified as emergency medical services personnel by the Department of State Health Services;

(D)  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 as defined by Section 1701.001, Occupations Code; and

(E)  other emergency response personnel employed by a state agency.

(3)  "First responder training program" means a program that provides training required for certification or licensure as a first responder, including the training required under:

(A)  Chapter 773;

(B)  Chapter 419, Government Code; and

(C)  Chapter 1701, Occupations Code.

Sec. 786.002.  MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS TRAINING REQUIRED. (a) A person who provides to first responders and first responder trainees a first responder training program shall:

(1)  include as part of the program at least six hours of training on mental health awareness that covers:

(A)  the most common mental health issues experienced by first responders;

(B)  the impact of chronic trauma on a first responder's duties;

(C)  signs and symptoms of mental illness; and

(D)  strategies for first responders to attain mental wellness and resiliency; and

(2)  require first responders and first responder trainees to successfully complete the training described by Subdivision (1) as part of the training program.

(b)  In providing the training described by Subsection (a), a person who provides a first responder training program must use a mental health awareness training curriculum developed or adopted under Section 786.003.

Sec. 786.003.  MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS TRAINING CURRICULUM. (a) The Texas A&M Engineering Extension Service shall develop or adopt a curriculum for the first responder mental health awareness training required by Section 786.002. In developing or adopting the curriculum, the extension service shall collaborate with state agencies that certify or license first responders, including the Texas Commission on Fire Protection, the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement, and the Department of State Health Services.

(b)  Each state agency that certifies or licenses first responders shall ensure that the applicable first responder training program required for certification or licensure as a first responder uses the mental health awareness training curriculum developed or adopted by the extension service under this section.

SECTION 2.  Section 1701.253, Occupations Code, is amended by adding Subsection (q) to read as follows:

(q)  As part of the minimum curriculum requirements, the commission shall require an officer to complete the mental health awareness training curriculum developed or adopted by the Texas A&M Engineering Extension Service under Section 786.003, Health and Safety Code.

SECTION 3.  Section 1701.3071, Occupations Code, is amended by adding Subsection (a-2) to read as follows:

(a-2)  The training required by Subsection (a)(2) must include the mental health awareness training curriculum developed or adopted by the Texas A&M Engineering Extension Service under Section 786.003, Health and Safety Code.

SECTION 4.  As soon as practicable after the effective date of this Act:

(1)  the Texas A&M Engineering Extension Service shall develop or adopt the first responder mental health awareness training curriculum required by Section 786.003, Health and Safety Code, as added by this Act; and

(2)  each state agency that certifies or licenses first responders subject to Chapter 786, Health and Safety Code, as added by this Act, shall ensure that:

(A)  each first responder training program subject to the chapter includes the mental health awareness training and curriculum required by that chapter; and

(B)  each first responder and first responder trainee subject to the chapter completes the required training.

SECTION 5.  This Act takes effect September 1, 2023.