

BILL ANALYSIS

H.B. 1955
By: Thompson
Public Health
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), when young children grow up in environments where there is violence, neglect, mental illness, or substance abuse, the stress can be toxic to their developing brains. CDC research demonstrates that connecting families to needed community-based services builds strong, loving parent-child relationships that protect and heal the brain from trauma and stress. The bill author has informed the committee that the federal Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program is a home-based mental health intervention program for children up to the age of five and their families that provides a model through which a state program pairs these families with a licensed mental health clinician and a care coordinator. The bill author has informed the committee that there are a number of states that have implemented such a program but that Texas is not one of them. H.B. 1955 seeks to establish an early childhood mental health home visiting grant program to allow the Health and Human Services Commission to award funding to organizations across the state to provide these services to Texas families.

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 rulemaking authority is expressly granted to the executive commissioner of the Health and Human Services Commission in SECTION 1 of this bill.

ANALYSIS

H.B. 1955 amends the Human Resources Code to require the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) to establish and operate an early childhood mental health home visiting grant program through which HHSC will award grants to implement, expand, and maintain early childhood mental health home visiting services in Texas to support families with a high level of need, including a history of trauma. To be eligible for a grant under the bill's provisions, an applicant must:

- demonstrate a commitment to a family-centered, system of care approach to providing comprehensive, coordinated services to children and families; and
- have experience providing successful early childhood mental health or prevention services for low-income, high-risk families, as the executive commissioner of HHSC determines by rule.

In awarding a grant, HHSC must give preference to applicants with experience in providing home-based services to children and families. HHSC may award a grant only in accordance with a contract between HHSC and the grant recipient and the contract must include provisions under which HHSC is granted sufficient control to ensure the public purpose of providing early

childhood mental health home visiting services is accomplished and Texas receives the return benefit.

H.B. 1955 requires the executive commissioner of HHSC by rule to adopt standards for grant recipients under the bill's provisions. In adopting such standards, the executive commissioner of HHSC must take into consideration applicable evidence-based early childhood home visiting service delivery models. The bill requires a grant recipient, in addition to meeting such standards, to do the following:

- strictly adhere to an evidence-based early childhood service delivery model HHSC selects in accordance with criteria set by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services for an early childhood home visiting service delivery model; and
- require that a team consisting of a licensed mental health professional and a care coordinator support families through home-based services to:
 - improve child and parent mental health;
 - promote school readiness;
 - decrease child abuse and neglect; and
 - improve the immediate and long-term health and well-being of families.

H.B. 1955 authorizes HHSC to solicit, contract for, receive, accept, or administer gifts, grants, and donations of money or property from any source to carry out the bill's provisions and authorizes the executive commissioner of HHSC to adopt rules as necessary to implement the bill's provisions.

EFFECTIVE DATE

September 1, 2025.