

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
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S.B. 1563
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Criminal Justice
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As Filed

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

As of 2019, it is estimated that veterans make up around 10 percent of the Texas' county jail population. Veterans face unique mental health and behavioral health challenges stemming from their military service and distinct culture. Due to their military experience, many veterans emerge from service with mental health disorders, substance use disorders, post-traumatic stress disorder, and significant physical injuries compared to their civilian counterparts. The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs found that in 2022, there were over 6,400 suicides among veterans. Although suicide rates have been decreasing among this population, work is still needed to address this critical issue.

In 2022, the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) estimated that approximately half of veterans are not immediately connected with resources, benefits, and services that are meant for them. Without this necessary and available support, veterans may go months or years without addressing existing or emergent behavioral health concerns. Many justice-impacted veterans may not be aware of the benefits they can still receive while incarcerated. In the end, veterans may become incarcerated as a result of the manifestation of unaddressed or unsupported behavioral health issues, struggles to adjust to civilian life, or an overall lack of access to a supportive community. With county jails serving as some of the largest mental health providers in most counties, jailers must be equipped with the knowledge and skills to support veterans.

S.B. 1563 would allow for county jailers to take a one-time training program developed by the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement in consultation with the Texas Veterans Commission. This training will go over information on how to interact with veterans, and must include best practices on reducing noncompliant behavior while avoiding injury, as well as content on veterans and military cultural competence.

As proposed, S.B. 1563 amends current law relating to county jailer training on interacting with veterans in the criminal justice system.

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 Subchapter F, Chapter 1701, Occupations Code, by adding Section 1701.273, as follows:

Sec. 1701.273. TRAINING PROGRAM RELATING TO COUNTY JAILER INTERACTIONS WITH VETERANS. Requires the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement (TCOLE), in consultation with the Texas Veterans Commission, to develop a training program for county jailers on interacting with veterans in the criminal justice system.

SECTION 2. Amends Section 1701.310(a), Occupations Code, to require that the preparatory training program, as required by TCOLE, in the operation of a county jail at a school operated or

licensed by TCOLE, meet certain requirements, including that it include the training program developed under Section 1701.273, and to make nonsubstantive changes.

SECTION 3. (a) Provides that the change in law made by this Act applies to a county jailer licensed under Chapter 1701 (Law Enforcement Officers), Occupations Code, regardless of whether the license was issued before, on, or after the effective date of this Act.

(b) Requires a county jailer who, on the effective date of this Act, holds a county jailer license, to complete the training program described by Section 1701.273, Occupations Code, as added by this Act, not later than August 31, 2027.

SECTION 4. Effective date: September 1, 2025.