

By: Thompson

H.B. No. 35

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to a peer support network for first responders.

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

SECTION 1. Chapter 418, Government Code, is amended by adding Subchapter K to read as follows:

SUBCHAPTER K. FIRST RESPONDER PEER SUPPORT NETWORK

Sec. 418.351. DEFINITIONS. In this subchapter:

(1) "Emergency medical services personnel" has the meaning assigned by Section 773.003, Health and Safety Code.

(2) "Firefighter" means a firefighter who is a permanent, paid employee of the fire department of a political subdivision. The term does not include a volunteer firefighter.

(3) "First responder" means emergency medical services personnel or a firefighter.

(4) "Peer" means a person who is a first responder or retired first responder.

Sec. 418.352. GENERAL POWERS AND DUTIES. (a) The division shall develop a first responder peer support network. The network must include:

(1) peer-to-peer support;

(2) training for peer service coordinators and peers that includes suicide prevention training;

(3) technical assistance for program development, peer service coordinators, licensed mental health professionals,

1 and peers; and

2 (4) identification, retention, and screening of  
3 licensed mental health professionals.

4 (b) As part of the first responder peer support network, the  
5 division:

6 (1) shall ensure first responders have support in both  
7 urban and rural jurisdictions through the establishment of regional  
8 peer support hubs; and

9 (2) may establish a program to connect first  
10 responders with clinical resources at no cost to the first  
11 responders.

12 (c) The division shall solicit and ensure that specialized  
13 training is provided to persons who are peers and who want to  
14 provide peer-to-peer support and other peer-to-peer services under  
15 the network.

16 Sec. 418.353. CONFIDENTIALITY OF PARTICIPANT INFORMATION.  
17 Information relating to a first responder's participation in  
18 peer-to-peer support and other peer-to-peer services under the  
19 network is confidential and not subject to disclosure under Chapter  
20 552.

21 Sec. 418.354. ANNUAL REPORT. Not later than December 1 of  
22 each year, the division shall submit a report to the governor and  
23 the legislature that includes:

24 (1) the number of first responders who received peer  
25 support through the network;

26 (2) the number of peers and peer service coordinators  
27 trained, including the number of active peers and peer service

1 coordinators and the retention rate of peers and peer service  
2 coordinators;

3 (3) the number of vacant regional director positions  
4 and the average length of time each position has been vacant;

5 (4) the number and types of community engagement  
6 events and outreach activities hosted by the network to promote  
7 first responder awareness and use of the network;

8 (5) the number of critical incident responses and  
9 wellness interventions facilitated by the network;

10 (6) an evaluation of the services provided under this  
11 subchapter; and

12 (7) recommendations for program improvements.

13 SECTION 2. Section 419.036, Government Code, is amended by  
14 adding Subsection (e) to read as follows:

15 (e) The commission may not take disciplinary action against  
16 a regulated person based on the person's participation in  
17 peer-to-peer support and other peer-to-peer services and may not  
18 consider the person's participation during any disciplinary  
19 proceeding under this chapter.

20 SECTION 3. Section 773.061, Health and Safety Code, is  
21 amended by adding Subsection (f) to read as follows:

22 (f) The department may not take disciplinary action against  
23 a person described by Subsection (a)(1) based on the person's  
24 participation in peer-to-peer support and other peer-to-peer  
25 services and may not consider the person's participation during any  
26 disciplinary proceeding under this chapter.

27 SECTION 4. This Act takes effect September 1, 2025.