

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 or a volunteer of a state agency or the fire department of a political subdivision.

(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 and implementation; and

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

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

5 (1) shall ensure first responders have support in both
6 urban and rural jurisdictions to the extent possible through the
7 use of division resources; and

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

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

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

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

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

25 (2) the number of peers trained, the number of first
26 responders the peers served, and the retention rate of peers;

27 (3) the number and location of regional network

1 facilities in operation;

2 (4) the number of critical incident events responded
3 to by the network;

4 (5) an evaluation of the services provided under this
5 subchapter; and

6 (6) recommendations for program improvements.

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

9 (e) The commission may not take disciplinary action against
10 a regulated person based on the person's participation in
11 peer-to-peer support and other peer-to-peer services and may not
12 consider the person's participation during any disciplinary
13 proceeding under this chapter.

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

16 (f) The department may not take disciplinary action against
17 a person described by Subsection (a)(1) based on the person's
18 participation in peer-to-peer support and other peer-to-peer
19 services and may not consider the person's participation during any
20 disciplinary proceeding under this chapter.

21 SECTION 4. Not later than March 31, 2026, the Texas Division
22 of Emergency Management shall develop the first responder peer
23 support network required by Subchapter K, Chapter 418, Government
24 Code, as added by this Act.

25 SECTION 5. The Texas Division of Emergency Management is
26 required to implement this Act only if the legislature appropriates
27 money specifically for that purpose. If the legislature does not

1 appropriate money specifically for that purpose, the division may,
2 but is not required to, implement this Act using other
3 appropriations available for that purpose.

4 SECTION 6. This Act takes effect September 1, 2025.

President of the Senate

Speaker of the House

I certify that H.B. No. 35 was passed by the House on May 1, 2025, by the following vote: Yeas 116, Nays 27, 1 present, not voting; and that the House concurred in Senate amendments to H.B. No. 35 on May 28, 2025, by the following vote: Yeas 95, Nays 41, 1 present, not voting.

Chief Clerk of the House

I certify that H.B. No. 35 was passed by the Senate, with amendments, on May 25, 2025, by the following vote: Yeas 31, Nays 0.

Secretary of the Senate

APPROVED: _____

Date

Governor