

By: Bucy, Frank, Capriglione, Pierson

H.B. No. 38

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to improvements to the Texas Information and Referral Network.

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

SECTION 1. Section 526.0004, Government Code, as effective April 1, 2025, is amended by amending Subsection (a) and adding Subsections (f), (g), and (h) to read as follows:

(a) The Texas Information and Referral Network is responsible for developing, coordinating, and implementing a statewide information and referral network that integrates existing community-based structures with state and local agencies. The network must:

(1) include information relating to transportation services provided to clients of state and local agencies;

(2) be capable of assisting with statewide disaster preparedness, response, and emergency management, including through the use of memoranda of understanding with state and local agencies and interstate agreements with out-of-state call centers to ensure preparedness and responsiveness;

(3) include technology capable of communicating with clients of state and local agencies using one-way and two-way electronic text messaging to:

(A) enhance client access to information and referral services;

1 (B) decrease client wait times;

2 (C) improve customer service; and

3 (D) disseminate information to clients in a
4 timely manner, including during a state of disaster; ~~and~~

5 (4) include a publicly accessible Internet-based
6 system to provide real-time, searchable data about ~~[the location~~
7 ~~and number of]~~ clients of state and local agencies using the system,
8 including:

9 (A) the number of clients;

10 (B) the location of clients;

11 (C) ~~and~~ the types of requests the clients made;
12 and

13 (D) aggregated, de-identified demographic
14 information regarding the clients and client households served by
15 the network, including, if the information is volunteered by the
16 clients after the clients have been given an opportunity to provide
17 informed and explicit consent:

18 (i) the gender, race, and ethnicity of each
19 client; and

20 (ii) whether the client or a member of the
21 client's household is:

22 (a) a veteran;

23 (b) involved in the criminal justice
24 system;

25 (c) pregnant;

26 (d) the caregiver to a child who is
27 five years of age or younger;

1 (e) a kinship caregiver providing
2 care to a child and whether the child is in the custody of the
3 Department of Family and Protective Services;

4 (f) enrolled in an institution of
5 higher education, as defined by Section 61.003, Education Code;

6 (g) 65 years of age or older; or

7 (h) a caregiver providing care to an
8 individual who is 65 years of age or older;

9 (5) use a standardized screening tool to identify the
10 nonmedical drivers of health for all clients who provide informed
11 and explicit consent to be screened using the screening tool;

12 (6) provide enhanced navigation services under a level
13 of care three (LOC-3) as prescribed by the commission's Texas
14 Resilience and Recovery Utilization Management Guidelines in order
15 to:

16 (A) better address complex client needs; and

17 (B) collaborate with community partners;

18 (7) be capable of providing closed-loop referrals to
19 support clients and track referral outcomes;

20 (8) exchange resource data with external partners,
21 including vendors, through data sharing agreements for the purposes
22 of:

23 (A) connecting clients to a requested service;

24 (B) addressing nonmedical drivers of health; and

25 (C) decreasing redundancies in the health and
26 human services system;

27 (9) comply with all applicable state and federal laws

1 relating to protecting the privacy of each client's health and
2 personal information, including the Health Insurance Portability
3 and Accountability Act of 1996 (42 U.S.C. Section 1320d et seq.);

4 (10) include call centers that operate 24 hours a day,
5 seven days a week; and

6 (11) be capable of providing backup information and
7 referrals during a statewide disaster or system malfunction.

8 (f) To enhance the network's capacity and responsiveness in
9 disaster preparation, response, and recovery, the commission shall
10 coordinate with the Homeland Security Council and the Texas
11 Division of Emergency Management to integrate the network into this
12 state's homeland security strategic plan and the state emergency
13 management plan.

14 (g) Health care systems and managed care organizations may
15 partner and enter into agreements with the commission and area
16 information centers to share data using the network to:

17 (1) facilitate client care coordination; and

18 (2) address nonmedical drivers of health, including
19 housing, transportation, food, and financial assistance programs.

20 (h) Not later than December 31 of each even-numbered year,
21 the commission shall:

22 (1) prepare and submit a report to the governor, the
23 lieutenant governor, and the speaker of the house of
24 representatives that:

25 (A) summarizes the network's operations,
26 including the effectiveness of the network and any improvements
27 made to the network, during the preceding two state fiscal years;

1 (B) identifies existing needs and gaps in
2 services in communities in this state that could be addressed
3 through additional improvements to the network;

4 (C) provides recommendations for improving the
5 network, including recommendations for improving data privacy and
6 client experience; and

7 (D) describes the commission's efforts under
8 this section to collaborate and coordinate with other state and
9 local agencies and entities, including the commission's efforts to:

10 (i) integrate the network into relevant
11 plans and programs administered by state and local agencies; and

12 (ii) exchange resource data with relevant
13 entities; and

14 (2) make the report publicly available on:

15 (A) the commission's Internet website; and

16 (B) the network Internet website established
17 under Section 526.0005.

18 SECTION 2. Subchapter A, Chapter 526, Government Code, as
19 effective April 1, 2025, is amended by adding Section 526.00041 to
20 read as follows:

21 Sec. 526.00041. AREA INFORMATION CENTERS: ACCREDITATION
22 REQUIRED. An area information center that contracts with the
23 commission to provide network operations must be accredited by a
24 nationally recognized accreditation organization.

25 SECTION 3. Sections 526.0005(a) and (b), Government Code,
26 as effective April 1, 2025, are amended to read as follows:

27 (a) The network may develop an Internet website to provide

1 information to the public regarding the health and human services
2 provided by public or private entities throughout this state. An
3 Internet website developed under this section must be user-friendly
4 and regularly updated to ensure that the website's interface
5 supports the navigation needs of the website's users.

6 (b) The material on the network Internet website must be:

7 (1) geographically indexed, including by type of
8 service provided within each geographic area; ~~and~~

9 (2) designed to inform an individual about the health
10 and human services provided in the area in which the individual
11 lives; and

12 (3) organized in such a way that the public can search
13 and navigate through the website with ease.

14 SECTION 4. If before implementing any provision of this Act
15 a state agency determines that a waiver or authorization from a
16 federal agency is necessary for implementation of that provision,
17 the agency affected by the provision shall request the waiver or
18 authorization and may delay implementing that provision until the
19 waiver or authorization is granted.

20 SECTION 5. This Act takes effect September 1, 2025.