

By: Cortez

H.B. No. 114

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to the transition of certain veterans' mental health initiatives from the Texas Health and Human Services Commission to the Texas Veterans Commission.

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

SECTION 1. Subchapter A, Chapter 434, Government Code, is amended by adding Section 434.0172 to read as follows:

Sec. 434.0172. GRANT PROGRAM FOR MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES FOR VETERANS AND THEIR FAMILIES. (a) To the extent funds are appropriated to the commission for that purpose, the commission shall establish a grant program for the purpose of supporting community mental health programs providing services and treatment to veterans and their families.

(b) The commission shall ensure that each grant recipient obtains or secures contributions to match awarded grants in amounts of money or other consideration. The money or other consideration obtained or secured by the commission may, as determined by the executive director, include cash or in-kind contributions from private contributors or local governments but may not include state or federal funds.

(c) Money appropriated to, or obtained by, the commission for the grant program must be disbursed directly to grant recipients by the commission, as authorized by the executive director.

1        (c-1) For services and treatment provided in a single  
2 county, the commission shall condition each grant provided under  
3 this section on a potential grant recipient providing funds from  
4 non-state sources in a total amount at least equal to:

5            (1) 25 percent of the grant amount if the community  
6 mental health program to be supported by the grant provides  
7 services and treatment in a county with a population of less than  
8 100,000;

9            (2) 50 percent of the grant amount if the community  
10 mental health program to be supported by the grant provides  
11 services and treatment in a county with a population of 100,000 or  
12 more but less than 250,000; or

13           (3) 100 percent of the grant amount if the community  
14 mental health program to be supported by the grant provides  
15 services and treatment in a county with a population of 250,000 or  
16 more.

17        (c-2) For a community mental health program that provides  
18 services and treatment in more than one county, the commission  
19 shall condition each grant provided under this section on a  
20 potential grant recipient providing funds from non-state sources in  
21 a total amount at least equal to:

22           (1) 25 percent of the grant amount if the county with  
23 the largest population in which the community mental health program  
24 to be supported by the grant provides services and treatment has a  
25 population of less than 100,000;

26           (2) 50 percent of the grant amount if the county with  
27 the largest population in which the community mental health program

1 to be supported by the grant provides services and treatment has a  
2 population of 100,000 or more but less than 250,000; or

3 (3) 100 percent of the grant amount if the county with  
4 the largest population in which the community mental health program  
5 to be supported by the grant provides services and treatment has a  
6 population of 250,000 or more.

7 (d) All grants awarded under the grant program must be used  
8 for the sole purpose of supporting community programs that provide  
9 mental health care services and treatment to veterans and their  
10 families and that coordinate mental health care services for  
11 veterans and their families with other transition support services.

12 (e) The commission shall select grant recipients based on  
13 the submission of applications or proposals by nonprofit and  
14 governmental entities. The executive director shall develop  
15 criteria for the evaluation of those applications or proposals and  
16 the selection of grant recipients. The selection criteria must:

17 (1) evaluate and score:

18 (A) fiscal controls for the project;

19 (B) project effectiveness;

20 (C) project cost; and

21 (D) an applicant's previous experience with  
22 grants and contracts;

23 (2) address the possibility of and method for making  
24 multiple awards; and

25 (3) include other factors that the executive director  
26 considers relevant.

27 (f) A reasonable amount not to exceed five percent of the

1 money appropriated by the legislature for the purposes of this  
2 section may be used by the commission to pay administrative costs of  
3 implementing this section.

4 SECTION 2. Section 434.352, Government Code, is amended to  
5 read as follows:

6 Sec. 434.352. GENERAL POWERS AND DUTIES. (a) The  
7 commission [~~and the Health and Human Services Commission~~] shall  
8 [~~coordinate to~~] administer the mental health program for veterans  
9 developed under this chapter [~~Chapter 1001, Health and Safety~~  
10 ~~Code~~].

11 (a-1) The mental health program for veterans must include:

12 (1) peer-to-peer counseling;

13 (2) access to licensed mental health professionals for  
14 peer service coordinators and peers;

15 (3) training approved by the commission for peer  
16 service coordinators, licensed mental health professionals, and  
17 peers;

18 (4) technical assistance for peer service  
19 coordinators, licensed mental health professionals, and peers;

20 (5) identification, retention, and screening of  
21 community-based licensed mental health professionals;

22 (6) suicide prevention training for peer service  
23 coordinators and peers;

24 (7) veteran jail diversion services, including  
25 veterans treatment courts; and

26 (8) coordination of mental health first aid for  
27 veterans training to veterans and immediate family members of

1 veterans.

2 (b) For the mental health program for veterans, the  
3 commission shall:

4 (1) provide training to peer service coordinators and  
5 peers in accordance with Section 434.353;

6 (2) provide technical assistance to peer service  
7 coordinators and peers;

8 (3) identify, train, and communicate with  
9 community-based licensed mental health professionals,  
10 community-based organizations, and faith-based organizations;

11 (4) coordinate services for justice involved  
12 veterans;

13 (5) coordinate local delivery to veterans and  
14 immediate family members of veterans of mental health first aid for  
15 veterans training; ~~and~~

16 (6) employ and train mental health professionals to  
17 administer ~~[assist the Health and Human Services Commission in the~~  
18 ~~administration of]~~ the program;

19 (7) develop a rural veterans mental health initiative  
20 and a women veterans mental health initiative; and

21 (8) solicit and ensure that specialized training is  
22 provided to persons who are peers and who want to provide  
23 peer-to-peer counseling or other peer-to-peer services under the  
24 program.

25 (c) Subject to Section 434.3525, the executive director of  
26 the commission shall appoint a program director to administer the  
27 mental health program for veterans.

1           (d) The commission shall provide appropriate facilities in  
2 support of the mental health program for veterans to the extent  
3 funding is available for that purpose.

4           (e) A state agency may not award a grant to an entity for the  
5 provision of mental health services to veterans or veterans'  
6 families unless the entity demonstrates the entity:

7               (1) has previously received and successfully executed  
8 a grant from the state agency; or

9               (2) provides training on military informed care or  
10 military cultural competency to entity personnel who provide mental  
11 health services to veterans or veterans' families or requires those  
12 personnel to complete military competency training provided by any  
13 of the following:

14                       (A) the commission;

15                       (B) the Health and Human Services Commission;

16                       (C) the Military Veteran Peer Network;

17                       (D) the Substance Abuse and Mental Health  
18 Services Administration within the United States Department of  
19 Health and Human Services;

20                       (E) the United States Department of Defense;

21                       (F) the United States Department of Veterans  
22 Affairs; or

23                       (G) a nonprofit organization that is exempt from  
24 federal income taxation under Section 501(a), Internal Revenue Code  
25 of 1986, by being listed as an exempt entity under Section 501(c)(3)  
26 of that code, with experience in providing training or technical  
27 assistance to entities that provide mental health services to

veterans or veterans' families.

(f) The commission and the Health and Human Services Commission [~~Department of State Health Services~~] shall jointly verify that each state agency authorized to award a grant subject to the requirements of Subsection (e) has adopted policies to ensure compliance with Subsection (e).

SECTION 3. Subchapter H, Chapter 434, Government Code, is amended by adding Section 434.354 to read as follows:

Sec. 434.354. ANNUAL REPORT. Not later than December 1 of each year, the commission shall submit a report to the governor and the legislature that includes:

(1) the number of veterans who received services through the mental health program for veterans;

(2) the number of peers and peer service coordinators trained;

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

(4) recommendations for program improvements.

SECTION 4. Chapter 434, Government Code, is amended by adding Subchapter J to read as follows:

SUBCHAPTER J. VETERAN SUICIDE PREVENTION ACTION PLAN.

Sec. 434.501. VETERAN SUICIDE PREVENTION ACTION PLAN. (a) The commission, in collaboration with the Texas Coordinating Council for Veterans Services, the United States Department of Veterans Affairs, the Service Members, Veterans, and Their Families Technical Assistance Center Implementation Academy of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration of the

1 United States Department of Health and Human Services, veteran  
2 advocacy groups, medical providers, and any other organization or  
3 interested party the commission considers appropriate, shall  
4 develop a comprehensive action plan to increase access to and  
5 availability of professional veteran health services to prevent  
6 veteran suicides.

7 (b) The action plan must:

8 (1) identify opportunities for raising awareness of  
9 and providing resources for veteran suicide prevention;

10 (2) identify opportunities to increase access to  
11 veteran mental health services;

12 (3) identify funding resources to provide accessible,  
13 affordable veteran mental health services;

14 (4) provide measures to expand public-private  
15 partnerships to ensure access to quality, timely mental health  
16 services;

17 (5) provide for proactive outreach measures to reach  
18 veterans needing care;

19 (6) provide for peer-to-peer service coordination,  
20 including training, certification, recertification, and continuing  
21 education for peer coordinators; and

22 (7) address suicide prevention awareness, measures,  
23 and training regarding veterans involved in the justice system.

24 (c) The commission shall make specific short-term and  
25 long-term statutory, administrative, and budget-related  
26 recommendations to the legislature and the governor regarding the  
27 policy initiatives and reforms necessary to implement the action

1 plan developed under this section. The initiatives and reforms  
2 must be fully implemented by September 1, 2027.

3 (d) This subchapter expires September 1, 2027.

4 SECTION 5. The following provisions are repealed:

5 (1) Subchapter I, Chapter 1001, Health and Safety  
6 Code; and

7 (2) Sections 531.0925 and 531.0992, Government Code.

8 SECTION 6. This Act takes effect immediately if it receives  
9 a vote of two-thirds of all the members elected to each house, as  
10 provided by Section 39, Article III, Texas Constitution. If this  
11 Act does not receive the vote necessary for immediate effect, this  
12 Act takes effect September 1, 2025.