

By: Vo

H.B. No. 4454

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to solicitation of patients and other prohibited marketing practices, the establishment of the task force on patient solicitation, and the prosecution of certain related criminal offenses.

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

SECTION 1. Subtitle E, Title 2, Health and Safety Code, is amended by adding Chapter 110 to read as follows:

CHAPTER 110. TASK FORCE ON PATIENT SOLICITATION

Sec. 110.001. DEFINITION. In this chapter, "task force" means the task force on patient solicitation created under this chapter.

Sec. 110.002. PURPOSE. The task force is established to study and make recommendations on preventing conduct that violates Chapter 164 of this code or Chapter 102, Occupations Code, and to improve enforcement of those chapters.

Sec. 110.003. MEMBERSHIP. (a) The task force is composed of eight members as follows:

(1) four members the executive commissioner appoints; and

(2) four members the attorney general appoints.

(b) Each task force member must have expertise in the field of health care or advertising.

(c) Task force members serve without compensation.

1       Sec. 110.004. ADMINISTRATIVE ATTACHMENT. The task force is  
2 administratively attached to the commission.

3       Sec. 110.005. ACCESS TO INFORMATION; CONFIDENTIALITY OF  
4 PROVIDED INFORMATION. The attorney general and the commission shall  
5 provide the task force with information the task force requests to  
6 allow the task force to fulfill its duties. Information provided  
7 under this section is confidential and is not subject to disclosure  
8 under Chapter 552, Government Code.

9       Sec. 110.006. REPORT. Not later than December 1 of each  
10 even-numbered year, the task force shall submit to the legislature  
11 a report that includes:

12               (1) a summary of civil or criminal actions brought on  
13 behalf of the state and administrative actions by state regulatory  
14 agencies in the preceding biennium for conduct that violates  
15 Chapter 164 of this code or Chapter 102, Occupations Code; and

16               (2) legislative recommendations for preventing  
17 conduct that violates Chapter 164 of this code or Chapter 102,  
18 Occupations Code, and improving enforcement of those chapters.

19       SECTION 2. Section 164.002, Health and Safety Code, is  
20 amended to read as follows:

21       Sec. 164.002. LEGISLATIVE PURPOSE. The purpose of this  
22 chapter is to safeguard the public against fraud, deceit, and  
23 misleading marketing practices and to foster and encourage  
24 competition and fair dealing by mental health facilities and  
25 chemical dependency [~~treatment~~] facilities by prohibiting or  
26 restricting practices by which the public has been injured in  
27 connection with the marketing and advertising of mental health

1 services and the admission of patients. Nothing in this chapter  
2 should be construed to prohibit a mental health facility or  
3 chemical dependency facility from advertising its services in a  
4 general way or promoting its specialized services. However, the  
5 public should be able to clearly distinguish between the marketing  
6 activities of the facility and its clinical functions.

7 SECTION 3. Section 164.003(1), Health and Safety Code, is  
8 amended to read as follows:

9 (1) "Advertising" or "advertise" means a solicitation  
10 or inducement, through print or electronic media, including radio,  
11 television, the Internet, or direct mail, to purchase the services  
12 provided by a treatment facility.

13 SECTION 4. Section 164.006, Health and Safety Code, is  
14 amended to read as follows:

15 Sec. 164.006. SOLICITING AND CONTRACTING WITH CERTAIN  
16 REFERRAL SOURCES. A treatment facility or a person employed or  
17 under contract with a treatment facility, if acting on behalf of the  
18 treatment facility, may not:

19 (1) contact a referral source or potential client for  
20 the purpose of soliciting, directly or indirectly, a referral of a  
21 patient to the treatment facility without disclosing its soliciting  
22 agent's, employee's, or contractor's affiliation with the treatment  
23 facility;

24 (2) offer to provide or provide mental health or  
25 chemical dependency services to a public or private school in this  
26 state, on a part-time or full-time basis, or the services of any of  
27 its employees or agents who make, or are in a position to make, a

1 referral, if the services are provided on an individual basis to  
2 individual students or their families. Nothing herein prohibits a  
3 treatment facility from:

4 (A) offering or providing educational programs  
5 in group settings to public schools in this state if the affiliation  
6 between the educational program and the treatment facility is  
7 disclosed;

8 (B) providing counseling services to a public  
9 school in this state in an emergency or crisis situation if the  
10 services are provided in response to a specific request by a school;  
11 provided that, under no circumstances may a student be referred to  
12 the treatment facility offering the services; or

13 (C) entering into a contract under Section  
14 464.020 with the board of trustees of a school district with a  
15 disciplinary alternative education program, or with the board's  
16 designee, for the provision of chemical dependency treatment  
17 services;

18 (3) provide to an entity of state or local government,  
19 on a part-time or full-time basis, the mental health or chemical  
20 dependency services of any of its employees, agents, or contractors  
21 who make or are in a position to make referrals unless:

22 (A) the treatment facility discloses to the  
23 governing authority of the entity:

24 (i) the employee's, agent's, or  
25 contractor's relationship to the facility; and

26 (ii) the fact that the employee, agent, or  
27 contractor might make a referral, if permitted, to the facility;

1 and

2 (B) the employee, agent, or contractor makes a  
3 referral only if:

4 (i) the treatment facility obtains the  
5 governing authority's authorization in writing for the employee,  
6 agent, or contractor to make the referrals; and

7 (ii) the employee, agent, or contractor  
8 discloses to the prospective patient the employee's, agent's, or  
9 contractor's relationship to the facility at initial contact; ~~or~~

10 (4) in relation to intervention and assessment  
11 services, contract with, offer to remunerate, or remunerate a  
12 person who operates an intervention and assessment service that  
13 makes referrals to a treatment facility for inpatient or outpatient  
14 treatment of mental illness or chemical dependency unless the  
15 intervention and assessment service is:

16 (A) operated by a community mental health and  
17 intellectual disability center the commission funds ~~[funded by the~~  
18 ~~department and the Department of Aging and Disability Services]~~;

19 (B) operated by a county or regional medical  
20 society;

21 (C) a qualified mental health referral service as  
22 defined by Section 164.007; or

23 (D) owned and operated by a nonprofit or  
24 not-for-profit organization offering counseling concerning family  
25 violence, help for runaway children, or rape; or

26 (5) contract with a marketing provider who agrees to  
27 provide general referrals or leads for the placement of prospective

1 patients with a service provider or in a recovery residence through  
2 a call center or Internet website presence, unless the terms of that  
3 contract are disclosed to the prospective patient.

4 SECTION 5. Section 164.010, Health and Safety Code, is  
5 amended to read as follows:

6 Sec. 164.010. PROHIBITED ACTS. It is a violation of this  
7 chapter, in connection with the marketing of mental health  
8 services, for a person to:

9 (1) advertise, expressly or impliedly, the services of  
10 a treatment facility through the use of:

11 (A) promises of cure or guarantees of treatment  
12 results that cannot be substantiated; or

13 (B) any unsubstantiated claims;

14 (2) advertise, expressly or impliedly, the  
15 availability of intervention and assessment services unless and  
16 until the services are available and are provided by mental health  
17 professionals licensed or certified to provide the particular  
18 service;

19 (3) fail to disclose before soliciting a referral  
20 source or prospective patient to induce a person to use the services  
21 of the treatment facility an affiliation between a treatment  
22 facility and its soliciting agents, employees, or contractors;

23 (4) obtain or disclose information considered  
24 confidential by state or federal law regarding a person for the  
25 purpose of soliciting that person to use the services of a treatment  
26 facility unless and until consent is obtained from the person or, in  
27 the case of a minor, the person's parent, managing conservator, or

1 legal guardian or another person with authority to give that  
2 authorization; ~~[or]~~

3 (5) represent that a referral service is a qualified  
4 mental health referral service unless and until the referral  
5 service complies with Section 164.007;

6 (6) make a false or misleading statement or provide  
7 false or misleading information about the treatment facility's  
8 services or location in the treatment facility's advertising media  
9 or on its Internet website; or

10 (7) provide a link on the treatment facility's  
11 Internet website that redirects the user to another Internet  
12 website containing false or misleading statements or information  
13 described by Subdivision (6).

14 SECTION 6. Section 164.011(a), Health and Safety Code, is  
15 amended to read as follows:

16 (a) If it appears that a person is in violation of this  
17 chapter, the attorney general, a district attorney, or a county  
18 attorney may institute an action for injunctive relief to restrain  
19 the person from continuing the violation and for civil penalties of  
20 not less than \$2,000 ~~[\$1,000]~~ and not more than \$25,000 per  
21 violation.

22 SECTION 7. Section 102.001(a), Occupations Code, is amended  
23 to read as follows:

24 (a) A person commits an offense if the person knowingly  
25 offers to pay or agrees to accept, directly or indirectly, overtly  
26 or covertly any remuneration in cash or in kind or any benefit or  
27 commission to or from another for securing or soliciting a patient

1 or patronage for or from a person licensed, certified, or  
2 registered by a state health care regulatory agency.

3 SECTION 8. Section 102.004, Occupations Code, is amended to  
4 read as follows:

5 Sec. 102.004. APPLICABILITY TO ADVERTISING. Section  
6 102.001 does not prohibit advertising, unless the advertising is:

7 (1) false, misleading, or deceptive; ~~or~~

8 (2) not readily subject to verification, if the  
9 advertising claims professional superiority or the performance of a  
10 professional service in a superior manner; or

11 (3) prohibited under Chapter 164, Health and Safety  
12 Code, as applicable.

13 SECTION 9. Section 102.006(a), Occupations Code, is amended  
14 to read as follows:

15 (a) A person commits an offense if:

16 (1) the person, in a manner otherwise permitted under  
17 Section 102.001, accepts remuneration, a benefit, or a commission  
18 to secure or solicit a patient or patronage for a person licensed,  
19 certified, or registered by a state health care regulatory agency;  
20 and

21 (2) does not, at the time of initial contact and at the  
22 time of referral, disclose to the patient:

23 (A) the person's affiliation, if any, with the  
24 person for whom the patient is secured or solicited; and

25 (B) that the person will receive, directly or  
26 indirectly, remuneration, a benefit, or a commission for securing  
27 or soliciting the patient.



SECTION 10. Sections 102.051(a) and (b), Occupations Code, are amended to read as follows:

(a) A person commits an offense if the person:

(1) practices the art of healing with or without the use of medicine; and

(2) employs or agrees to employ, pays or promises to pay, or rewards or promises to reward or provide any benefit or commission to another for soliciting or securing a patient or patronage.

(b) A person commits an offense if the person accepts or agrees to accept anything of value or any benefit or commission for soliciting or securing a patient or patronage for a person who practices the art of healing with or without the use of medicine.

SECTION 11. The changes in law made by this Act apply only to an offense committed on or after the effective date of this Act. An offense committed before the effective date of this Act is governed by the law in effect on the date the offense was committed, and the former law is continued in effect for that purpose. For purposes of this section, an offense was committed before the effective date of this Act if any element of the offense occurred before that date.

SECTION 12. This Act takes effect September 1, 2025.