

By: Bettencourt

S.B. No. 2818

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT

relating to training for peace officers on interacting with persons with autism spectrum disorder.

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

SECTION 1. Section 1701.253, Occupations Code, is amended by adding Subsection (u) to read as follows:

(u) As part of the minimum curriculum requirements, the commission shall require an officer to complete the training program established under Section 1701.273.

SECTION 2. Subchapter F, Chapter 1701, Occupations Code, is amended by adding Section 1701.273 to read as follows:

Sec. 1701.273. TRAINING PROGRAM ON INTERACTING WITH PERSONS WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER. (a) In this section, "autism spectrum disorder" means:

(1) a neurobiological disorder or developmental disability that significantly affects verbal communication, nonverbal communication, and social interaction and that meets the diagnostic criteria for autism spectrum disorder specified by the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5th Edition, or a later edition; or

(2) a diagnosis made using a previous edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders of autism, Asperger's syndrome, or Pervasive Developmental Disorder--Not Otherwise Specified.

1        (b) The commission by rule shall establish and maintain a  
2 training program for officers on interacting with a person with  
3 autism spectrum disorder.

4        (c) The training program must be not less than two hours.

5        (d) The training program must be evidence-based and include  
6 the following topics:

7            (1) understanding the nature of autism spectrum  
8 disorder and the differing manifestations of the disorder in a  
9 person, including:

10            (A) identifying a person with autism spectrum  
11 disorder and differentiating that person from another person who  
12 does not have the disorder and who may be uncooperative or intending  
13 to commit a criminal offense;

14            (B) knowing how age, gender, and ethnicity affect  
15 a person with autism spectrum disorder; and

16            (C) understanding the relationship between  
17 autism spectrum disorder and criminal or otherwise antisocial  
18 behavior;

19            (2) effectively communicating with a person with  
20 autism spectrum disorder, including best practices on:

21            (A) communicating without causing the person  
22 unnecessary stress;

23            (B) interviewing and interrogating the person;  
24 and

25            (C) de-escalating an interaction with the  
26 person;

27            (3) locating a person with autism spectrum disorder

1 who has run away and may be in danger;

2 (4) recognizing the circumstances under which a person  
3 with autism spectrum disorder may be abused, coerced, or criminally  
4 exploited, including radicalization of the person;

5 (5) ensuring the safety of a person with autism  
6 spectrum disorder who is confined in a correctional facility; and

7 (6) understanding the laws on taking a person into  
8 custody and applying for emergency detention under Subtitle C,  
9 Title 7, Health and Safety Code.

10 SECTION 3. As soon as practicable after the effective date  
11 of this Act, the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement shall adopt  
12 rules necessary to implement the changes in law made by this Act.

13 SECTION 4. The minimum curriculum requirements under  
14 Section 1701.253(u), Occupations Code, as added by this Act, apply  
15 only to an officer who first begins to satisfy those requirements on  
16 or after January 1, 2026.

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