

1-1 By: Zaffirini S.B. No. 2926
1-2 (In the Senate - Filed March 14, 2025; April 7, 2025, read
1-3 first time and referred to Committee on Veteran Affairs;
1-4 April 24, 2025, reported favorably by the following vote: Yeas 7,
1-5 Nays 0; April 24, 2025, sent to printer.)

1-6 COMMITTEE VOTE

	Yea	Nay	Absent	PNV
1-7				
1-8	Hancock	X		
1-9	Parker	X		
1-10	Eckhardt	X		
1-11	Gutierrez	X		
1-12	Hagenbuch	X		
1-13	Hall	X		
1-14	Menéndez	X		

1-15 A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
1-16 AN ACT

1-17 relating to the transition of certain veterans' mental health
1-18 initiatives from the Texas Health and Human Services Commission to
1-19 the Texas Veterans Commission.

1-20 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:

1-21 SECTION 1. Subchapter A, Chapter 434, Government Code, is
1-22 amended by adding Section 434.0172 to read as follows:

1-23 Sec. 434.0172. GRANT PROGRAM FOR MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES FOR
1-24 VETERANS AND THEIR FAMILIES. (a) To the extent funds are
1-25 appropriated to the commission for that purpose, the commission
1-26 shall establish a grant program for the purpose of supporting
1-27 community mental health programs providing services and treatment
1-28 to veterans and their families.

1-29 (b) The commission shall ensure that each grant recipient
1-30 obtains or secures contributions to match awarded grants in amounts
1-31 of money or other consideration. The money or other consideration
1-32 obtained or secured by the commission may, as determined by the
1-33 executive director, include cash or in-kind contributions from
1-34 private contributors or local governments but may not include state
1-35 or federal funds.

1-36 (c) Money appropriated to, or obtained by, the commission
1-37 for the grant program must be disbursed directly to grant
1-38 recipients by the commission, as authorized by the executive
1-39 director.

1-40 (c-1) For services and treatment provided in a single
1-41 county, the commission shall condition each grant provided under
1-42 this section on a potential grant recipient providing funds from
1-43 non-state sources in a total amount at least equal to:

1-44 (1) 25 percent of the grant amount if the community
1-45 mental health program to be supported by the grant provides
1-46 services and treatment in a county with a population of less than
1-47 100,000;

1-48 (2) 50 percent of the grant amount if the community
1-49 mental health program to be supported by the grant provides
1-50 services and treatment in a county with a population of 100,000 or
1-51 more but less than 250,000; or

1-52 (3) 100 percent of the grant amount if the community
1-53 mental health program to be supported by the grant provides
1-54 services and treatment in a county with a population of 250,000 or
1-55 more.

1-56 (c-2) For a community mental health program that provides
1-57 services and treatment in more than one county, the commission
1-58 shall condition each grant provided under this section on a
1-59 potential grant recipient providing funds from non-state sources in
1-60 a total amount at least equal to:

1-61 (1) 25 percent of the grant amount if the county with

2-1 the largest population in which the community mental health program
2-2 to be supported by the grant provides services and treatment has a
2-3 population of less than 100,000;

2-4 (2) 50 percent of the grant amount if the county with
2-5 the largest population in which the community mental health program
2-6 to be supported by the grant provides services and treatment has a
2-7 population of 100,000 or more but less than 250,000; or

2-8 (3) 100 percent of the grant amount if the county with
2-9 the largest population in which the community mental health program
2-10 to be supported by the grant provides services and treatment has a
2-11 population of 250,000 or more.

2-12 (d) All grants awarded under the grant program must be used
2-13 for the sole purpose of supporting community programs that provide
2-14 mental health care services and treatment to veterans and their
2-15 families and that coordinate mental health care services for
2-16 veterans and their families with other transition support services.

2-17 (e) The commission shall select grant recipients based on
2-18 the submission of applications or proposals by nonprofit and
2-19 governmental entities. The executive director shall develop
2-20 criteria for the evaluation of those applications or proposals and
2-21 the selection of grant recipients. The selection criteria must:

2-22 (1) evaluate and score:
2-23 (A) fiscal controls for the project;
2-24 (B) project effectiveness;
2-25 (C) project cost; and
2-26 (D) an applicant's previous experience with
2-27 grants and contracts;

2-28 (2) address the possibility of and method for making
2-29 multiple awards; and

2-30 (3) include other factors that the executive director
2-31 considers relevant.

2-32 (f) A reasonable amount not to exceed five percent of the
2-33 money appropriated by the legislature for the purposes of this
2-34 section may be used by the commission to pay administrative costs of
2-35 implementing this section.

2-36 SECTION 2. Section 434.352, Government Code, is amended to
2-37 read as follows:

2-38 Sec. 434.352. GENERAL POWERS AND DUTIES. (a) The
2-39 commission [~~and the Health and Human Services Commission~~] shall
2-40 [~~coordinate to~~] administer the mental health program for veterans
2-41 developed under this chapter [~~Chapter 1001, Health and Safety~~
2-42 Code].

2-43 (a-1) The mental health program for veterans must include:

2-44 (1) peer-to-peer counseling;

2-45 (2) access to licensed mental health professionals for
2-46 peer service coordinators and peers;

2-47 (3) training approved by the commission for peer
2-48 service coordinators, licensed mental health professionals, and
2-49 peers;

2-50 (4) technical assistance for peer service
2-51 coordinators, licensed mental health professionals, and peers;

2-52 (5) identification, retention, and screening of
2-53 community-based licensed mental health professionals;

2-54 (6) suicide prevention training for peer service
2-55 coordinators and peers;

2-56 (7) veteran jail diversion services, including
2-57 veterans treatment courts; and

2-58 (8) coordination of mental health first aid for
2-59 veterans training to veterans and immediate family members of
2-60 veterans.

2-61 (b) For the mental health program for veterans, the
2-62 commission shall:

2-63 (1) provide training to peer service coordinators and
2-64 peers in accordance with Section 434.353;

2-65 (2) provide technical assistance to peer service
2-66 coordinators and peers;

2-67 (3) identify, train, and communicate with
2-68 community-based licensed mental health professionals,
2-69 community-based organizations, and faith-based organizations;

- 3-1 (4) coordinate services for justice involved
- 3-2 veterans;
- 3-3 (5) coordinate local delivery to veterans and
- 3-4 immediate family members of veterans of mental health first aid for
- 3-5 veterans training; ~~and~~
- 3-6 (6) employ and train mental health professionals to
- 3-7 administer ~~[assist the Health and Human Services Commission in the~~
- 3-8 ~~administration of]~~ the program;
- 3-9 (7) develop a rural veterans mental health initiative
- 3-10 and a women veterans mental health initiative; and
- 3-11 (8) solicit and ensure that specialized training is
- 3-12 provided to persons who are peers and who want to provide
- 3-13 peer-to-peer counseling or other peer-to-peer services under the
- 3-14 program.

3-15 (c) Subject to Section 434.3525, the executive director of

3-16 the commission shall appoint a program director to administer the

3-17 mental health program for veterans.

3-18 (d) The commission shall provide appropriate facilities in

3-19 support of the mental health program for veterans to the extent

3-20 funding is available for that purpose.

3-21 (e) A state agency may not award a grant to an entity for the

3-22 provision of mental health services to veterans or veterans'

3-23 families unless the entity demonstrates the entity:

3-24 (1) has previously received and successfully executed

3-25 a grant from the state agency; or

3-26 (2) provides training on military informed care or

3-27 military cultural competency to entity personnel who provide mental

3-28 health services to veterans or veterans' families or requires those

3-29 personnel to complete military competency training provided by any

3-30 of the following:

- 3-31 (A) the commission;
- 3-32 (B) the Health and Human Services Commission;
- 3-33 (C) the Military Veteran Peer Network;
- 3-34 (D) the Substance Abuse and Mental Health
- 3-35 Services Administration within the United States Department of
- 3-36 Health and Human Services;
- 3-37 (E) the United States Department of Defense;
- 3-38 (F) the United States Department of Veterans
- 3-39 Affairs; or

3-40 (G) a nonprofit organization that is exempt from

3-41 federal income taxation under Section 501(a), Internal Revenue Code

3-42 of 1986, by being listed as an exempt entity under Section 501(c)(3)

3-43 of that code, with experience in providing training or technical

3-44 assistance to entities that provide mental health services to

3-45 veterans or veterans' families.

3-46 (f) The commission and the Health and Human Services

3-47 Commission ~~[Department of State Health Services]~~ shall jointly

3-48 verify that each state agency authorized to award a grant subject to

3-49 the requirements of Subsection (e) has adopted policies to ensure

3-50 compliance with Subsection (e).

3-51 SECTION 3. Subchapter H, Chapter 434, Government Code, is

3-52 amended by adding Section 434.354 to read as follows:

3-53 Sec. 434.354. ANNUAL REPORT. Not later than December 1 of

3-54 each year, the commission shall submit a report to the governor and

3-55 the legislature that includes:

3-56 (1) the number of veterans who received services

3-57 through the mental health program for veterans;

3-58 (2) the number of peers and peer service coordinators

3-59 trained;

3-60 (3) an evaluation of the services provided under this

3-61 subchapter; and

3-62 (4) recommendations for program improvements.

3-63 SECTION 4. Chapter 434, Government Code, is amended by

3-64 adding Subchapter J to read as follows:

3-65 SUBCHAPTER J. VETERAN SUICIDE PREVENTION ACTION PLAN.

3-66 Sec. 434.501. VETERAN SUICIDE PREVENTION ACTION PLAN. (a)

3-67 The commission, in collaboration with the Texas Coordinating

3-68 Council for Veterans Services, the United States Department of

3-69 Veterans Affairs, the Service Members, Veterans, and Their Families

4-1 Technical Assistance Center Implementation Academy of the
4-2 Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration of the
4-3 United States Department of Health and Human Services, veteran
4-4 advocacy groups, medical providers, and any other organization or
4-5 interested party the commission considers appropriate, shall
4-6 develop a comprehensive action plan to increase access to and
4-7 availability of professional veteran health services to prevent
4-8 veteran suicides.

- 4-9 (b) The action plan must:
- 4-10 (1) identify opportunities for raising awareness of
- 4-11 and providing resources for veteran suicide prevention;
- 4-12 (2) identify opportunities to increase access to
- 4-13 veteran mental health services;
- 4-14 (3) identify funding resources to provide accessible,
- 4-15 affordable veteran mental health services;
- 4-16 (4) provide measures to expand public-private
- 4-17 partnerships to ensure access to quality, timely mental health
- 4-18 services;
- 4-19 (5) provide for proactive outreach measures to reach
- 4-20 veterans needing care;
- 4-21 (6) provide for peer-to-peer service coordination,
- 4-22 including training, certification, recertification, and continuing
- 4-23 education for peer coordinators; and
- 4-24 (7) address suicide prevention awareness, measures,
- 4-25 and training regarding veterans involved in the justice system.

4-26 (c) The commission shall make specific short-term and
4-27 long-term statutory, administrative, and budget-related
4-28 recommendations to the legislature and the governor regarding the
4-29 policy initiatives and reforms necessary to implement the action
4-30 plan developed under this section. The initiatives and reforms
4-31 must be fully implemented by September 1, 2027.

4-32 (d) This subchapter expires September 1, 2027.

4-33 SECTION 5. The following provisions are repealed:

- 4-34 (1) Subchapter I, Chapter 1001, Health and Safety
- 4-35 Code; and
- 4-36 (2) Sections 531.0925 and 531.0992, Government Code.

4-37 SECTION 6. This Act takes effect immediately if it receives
4-38 a vote of two-thirds of all the members elected to each house, as
4-39 provided by Section 39, Article III, Texas Constitution. If this
4-40 Act does not receive the vote necessary for immediate effect, this
4-41 Act takes effect September 1, 2025.

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