



HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

FISCAL NOTE

HOUSE BILL NO. 1459

PRINTERS NO. 2816

PRIME SPONSOR: Schlossberg

COST / (SAVINGS)

FUND	FY 2019/20	FY 2020/21
General Fund	\$189,000	\$132,000
Emergency Medical Services Operating Fund	\$250,000	\$250,000

SUMMARY: House Bill 1459, Printer's Number 2816, amends Title 35 (Health and Safety) creating a mental wellness and stress management program for emergency responders. This legislation is effective immediately with the provision implementing the mental wellness and stress management protocol effective in 180 days.

ANALYSIS: This legislation requires the Department of Health (DOH) to:

- Develop a mental wellness and stress management protocol to assist emergency responders who:
 - Suffer or may have suffered from a posttraumatic stress injury (PTSI) or a Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI).
 - Have been exposed to a critical incident resulting from employment.
- Establish at least one regional peer-to-peer support service program within the service area of each of DOH's regional or district office.
- Establish peer-to-peer support programs, in coordination with cooperating entities and regional EMS councils, and any other entities designated by DOH.
- Ensure access to all emergency responders.

The definition of emergency responder includes any of the following:

- A current or former member of an emergency medical services agency, fire company or rescue company.
- A peace officer.
- A 911 dispatcher.
- A coroner or medical examiner who responds in an official capacity to an emergency.
- A corrections officer.

Services provided by a peer-to-peer support program shall include peer-to-peer support for all the following:

- Mental health issues including treatment and recovery support for posttraumatic stress injury (PTSI), traumatic brain injury and depression.

- Alcohol, substance abuse or chemical and dependence treatment and recovery support, including treatment planning, recovery coaching and relapse prevention.
- Sexual abuse trauma.
- Co-occurring disorders.
- Any other support services deemed necessary by DOH.

DOH is required to establish guidelines to recruit, train, and develop individuals capable of providing peer-to-peer support, including establishing minimum qualifications for credentials for trained personnel as well as procedures for the suspension or revocation of credentials.

DOH is mandated to:

- Establish a toll-free helpline to respond to calls from emergency responders in need of help.
- Obtain the number 866-1ST-HELP (866-178-4357) if available, or a substantially similar number, if unavailable.
- Permit individuals to provide information anonymously.
- Ensure confidentiality of the individuals calling.

The helpline operators must be adequately trained to identify PTSI and other emotional and psychological reactions common to emergency responders or capable of making appropriate referrals to either a peer-to-peer support program or a licensed behavioral health professional for further evaluation or treatment. Signs containing the toll-free helpline and other relevant information must be posted at all sites where emergency responders serve.

Statewide Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) Program to identify mental stressors and prepare responses to event-driven situations that affect the mental wellbeing of first responders must be established by DOH.

In addition, DOH is required to develop a program of trauma and suicide awareness and impact training and may partner or contract with a third-party entity to provide the training. DOH shall require trauma and suicide awareness and impact training as a component of initial and continuing education for emergency medical services providers and make the training available to other emergency responders. The training shall include:

- Education on stress management.
- Critical incidents.
- Signs and symptoms of PTSI.
- Vicarious trauma.
- Substance abuse and addiction.
- Warning signs of depression and suicide and any other relevant topic deemed important by DOH.
- Availability of additional resources.

HB 1459 allows DOH to contract with nonprofit agencies to offer support services and requires DOH and participating agencies to post on their websites the contact information for entities offering support services.

A peer support provider, helpline operator or coparticipant may not be compelled to disclose information without the consent by the emergency responder except in the following circumstances:

- The peer support provider or helpline operator reasonably believes a clear and present danger exists to the emergency responder or to other individuals.
- The emergency responder has given express consent to disclose information.
- The emergency responder is deceased and the surviving spouse or the executor or administrator of the estate of the deceased emergency responder has given express consent.

FISCAL IMPACT: This legislation provides DOH with the authority to use up to \$250,000 annually from the 25% of the Emergency Medical Services Operating Fund that is allocated to the Catastrophic Medical and Rehabilitation Fund for victims of trauma and for the emergency responder mental wellness and stress management protocol.

DOH estimates a fiscal impact of \$439,000 in FY 2019-20 and \$382,000 in FY 2020-21.

Fiscal Impact	FY 2019-20	FY 2020-21
Personnel - EMS Program Specialist	\$ 106,000	\$ 106,000
Infrastructure	\$ 333,000	\$ 276,000
TOTAL	\$ 439,000	\$ 382,000

PREPARED BY: Ann Bertolino
House Appropriations Committee (R)

DATE: October 30, 2019

Estimates are calculated using the best information available. Actual costs and revenue impact incurred may vary from estimates.