
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

HOUSE BILL

No. 955 Session of
2017

INTRODUCED BY DAVIS, SCHLOSSBERG, MURT, MADDEN, KINSEY,
DRISCOLL, McNEILL, SCHWEYER, READSHAW, V. BROWN, D. COSTA,
KORTZ, DeLUCA, SAINATO, SNYDER, NEILSON, DONATUCCI, DAVIDSON,
RYAN, FRANKEL, FREEMAN AND BULLOCK, MARCH 27, 2017

REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS AND EMERGENCY
PREPAREDNESS, MARCH 27, 2017

AN ACT

1 Amending Title 35 (Health and Safety) of the Pennsylvania
2 Consolidated Statutes, establishing the Emergency Workers
3 Mental Health Commission and providing for powers and duties
4 of the commission, for emergency workers hotline, for
5 emergency workers Internet website, for posters and for
6 regulations of the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency.

7 The General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
8 hereby enacts as follows:

9 Section 1. Title 35 of the Pennsylvania Consolidated
10 Statutes is amended by adding a chapter to read:

11 CHAPTER 79B

12 EMERGENCY WORKERS MENTAL HEALTH

13 Sec.

14 79B01. Short title of chapter.

15 79B02. Definitions.

16 79B03. Emergency Workers Mental Health Commission.

17 79B04. Powers and duties of commission.

18 79B05. Emergency workers hotline.

1 79B06. Emergency workers Internet website.

2 79B07. Posters.

3 79B08. Regulations.

4 § 79B01. Short title of chapter.

5 This act shall be known and may be cited as the Emergency
6 Workers Mental Health Act.

7 § 79B02. Definitions.

8 The following words and phrases when used in this chapter
9 shall have the meanings given to them in this section unless the
10 context clearly indicates otherwise:

11 "Agency." The Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency.

12 "Commission." The Emergency Workers Mental Health Commission
13 established under section 79B03 (relating to Emergency Workers
14 Mental Health Commission).

15 "Emergency worker." Any of the following individuals:

16 (1) A career or volunteer firefighter.

17 (2) A career or volunteer emergency medical services
18 provider as defined by section 8103 (relating to
19 definitions).

20 (3) A career or volunteer rescue squad member.

21 (4) A law enforcement officer.

22 § 79B03. Emergency Workers Mental Health Commission.

23 (a) Establishment.--The Emergency Workers Mental Health
24 Commission is established under the Pennsylvania Emergency
25 Management Agency.

26 (b) Composition.--The commission shall be composed of:

27 (1) The following members who shall serve by virtue of
28 their office:

29 (i) State Fire Commissioner.

30 (ii) Director of the agency.

1 (2) The following members who shall be appointed by the
2 Governor:

3 (i) A representative of the Fraternal Order of
4 Police.

5 (ii) A representative of the Pennsylvania
6 Professional Firefighters Association.

7 (iii) A representative of the emergency medical
8 services community.

9 (iv) A representative of the volunteer firefighter
10 community.

11 (v) An elected city official.

12 (vi) An elected borough official.

13 (vii) An elected township official.

14 (viii) An elected county official.

15 (ix) A medical professional with expertise in drug
16 and alcohol addiction or a mental health professional.

17 (c) Terms of office.--The members of the commission
18 appointed by the Governor shall serve for a period of three
19 years. Any member of the commission, immediately upon
20 termination of holding the position, shall cease to be a member
21 of the commission.

22 (d) Vacancies.--A vacancy on the commission shall be filled,
23 for the remainder of the unexpired term, by the respective
24 appointing authority. Any member, upon the expiration of the
25 member's term, shall continue to hold office until the successor
26 is appointed. A member may not be removed from office during the
27 member's term, except for cause, by the appointing authority.

28 (e) Compensation and expenses.--The members of the
29 commission shall serve without compensation but shall be
30 reimbursed the necessary and actual expenses incurred in

1 attending the meetings of the commission and in the performance
2 of their duties under this chapter.

3 (f) Meetings.--The commission shall meet as necessary to
4 carry out its business but not less than four times per year. A
5 quorum shall consist of six members of the commission.

6 (g) Administrative support.--The agency shall provide
7 administrative support, meeting space and any other assistance
8 required by the commission to carry out its duties.

9 § 79B04. Powers and duties of commission.

10 The commission shall have the following powers and duties:

11 (1) Create a telephone hotline as provided under section
12 79B05 (relating to emergency workers hotline) to address
13 emergency worker mental health issues.

14 (2) Create an Internet website as provided under section
15 79B06 (relating to emergency workers Internet website) to
16 address emergency worker mental health issues.

17 (3) Organize a Statewide, peer-to-peer network of
18 emergency medical workers.

19 (4) Recruit and train veteran emergency workers to speak
20 with and counsel emergency workers in need of mental health
21 support.

22 (5) Establish a network of mental health providers to
23 provide counseling services to emergency workers.

24 § 79B05. Emergency workers hotline.

25 The commission shall create a toll-free telephone hotline for
26 emergency workers to call in the event they are experiencing
27 distress due to the nature of their work. The hotline service
28 shall connect a caller with a peer-to-peer counselor in the
29 caller's geographic region. Multiple hotlines may be developed
30 to serve geographic regions established by the agency.

1 § 79B06. Emergency workers Internet website.

2 The commission shall create a publicly accessible Internet
3 website that provides information on all of the following:

4 (1) Stress associated with emergency work.

5 (2) Posttraumatic stress disorder.

6 (3) Depression.

7 (4) Addiction and self-medication.

8 (5) Contact information for mental health providers in
9 each region of this Commonwealth.

10 (6) The emergency workers hotline telephone number for
11 each region.

12 (7) Local and national support groups.

13 § 79B07. Posters.

14 (a) Development.--The commission shall develop a poster
15 containing all of the following:

16 (1) The emergency workers hotline telephone number.

17 (2) The emergency workers Internet website address.

18 (3) Common symptoms of depression and posttraumatic
19 stress disorder and related addiction.

20 (4) Contact information for all of the following in each
21 geographic region:

22 (i) A mental health care provider.

23 (ii) A local support group.

24 (b) Display.--A fire station, emergency medical service
25 headquarters or police department shall display the poster in a
26 conspicuous manner in an area where employees regularly gather.

27 § 79B08. Regulations.

28 The agency shall promulgate regulations to support the
29 commission. The regulations shall include confidentiality
30 measures to protect the identity of emergency workers who

1 utilize the services under this chapter.

2 Section 2. This act shall take effect in 60 days.