
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

HOUSE BILL

No. 985 Session of
2017

INTRODUCED BY SCHWEYER, READSHAW, KINSEY, YOUNGBLOOD, FREEMAN,
DAVIS, HAGGERTY, DRISCOLL, DEAN, GODSHALL, WATSON, O'BRIEN,
BARRAR, CALTAGIRONE, MULLERY, MURT, V. BROWN, SCHLOSSBERG,
SAINATO, McNEILL, D. COSTA, WARD AND DeLUCA, MARCH 28, 2017

REFERRED TO COMMITTEE ON VETERANS AFFAIRS AND EMERGENCY
PREPAREDNESS, MARCH 28, 2017

AN ACT

1 Establishing the Veteran Suicide Prevention Grant Program;
2 conferring powers and imposing duties on the Department of
3 Military and Veterans Affairs; and establishing the Veteran
4 Suicide Prevention Fund.

5 The General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
6 hereby enacts as follows:

7 Section 1. Short title.

8 This act shall be known and may be cited as the Veteran
9 Suicide Prevention Grant Program Act.

10 Section 2. Declaration of policy.

11 The General Assembly finds and declares that it is critical
12 to ensure that all United States military veterans in this
13 Commonwealth and their loved ones have the necessary resources
14 and support when dealing with the invisible wounds of war and
15 that struggling veterans are able to receive needed assistance
16 before reaching a point of despair and taking the irrevocable
17 step of taking their own lives.

1 Section 3. Definitions.

2 The following words and phrases when used in this act shall
3 have the meanings given to them in this section unless the
4 context clearly indicates otherwise:

5 "Department." The Department of Military and Veterans
6 Affairs of the Commonwealth.

7 "Eligible entity." Includes:

8 (1) A not-for-profit organization.

9 (2) A local government agency.

10 (3) A veterans' service organization.

11 (4) A private organization.

12 "Fund." The Veteran Suicide Prevention Fund established in
13 section 5.

14 "Program." The Veteran Suicide Prevention Grant Program
15 established in section 4.

16 Section 4. Program.

17 (a) Establishment.--The Veteran Suicide Prevention Grant
18 Program is established. The program shall be administered by the
19 department in accordance with this act. The goal of the program
20 is to provide funding for community-based services, programs and
21 activities that will reduce the rate of suicide among veterans
22 in this Commonwealth.

23 (b) Award of grants.--The department may award grants
24 annually to eligible entities. Grants shall be used to support
25 programs and activities designed to prevent veteran suicide,
26 including the following:

27 (1) Suicide prevention support groups.

28 (2) Depression screenings.

29 (3) Suicide prevention or crisis hotline.

30 (4) Suicide prevention education and outreach.

(5) Any other related services that provide suicide prevention and support to veterans and their families.

(c) Amount.--The amount of a grant may not exceed \$25,000 for each eligible entity approved by the department.

(d) Compliance.--The department shall document compliance of each grant recipient with the requirements of this act.

(e) Application forms.--Grant application forms shall be developed by the department and made available on the department's publicly accessible Internet website.

Section 5. Veteran Suicide Prevention Fund.

(a) Establishment.--The Veteran Suicide Prevention Fund is established in the State Treasury.

(b) Source of funding.--The fund shall consist of revenue from fees allocated under this section and gifts, grants, bequests or devises from any source, including the Federal Government and the State government.

(c) Fee increase.--The fee imposed by the Department of Health for each of the following shall be increased by \$2:

(1) The issuance of a certified copy of a birth record under section 609-A(6) of the act of April 9, 1929 (P.L.177, No.175), known as The Administrative Code of 1929.

(2) The issuance of a certified copy of a death record under section 609-A(6) of The Administrative Code of 1929.

(d) Deposit.--Two dollars of each fee specified in subsection (c) shall be deposited into the fund on a monthly basis.

(e) Use of fund.--Money in the fund shall be used exclusively for the program, and no more than 5% may be expended for costs of the department to administer the program.

Section 6. Restriction.

1 Grants may not be used for the capital needs of an eligible
2 entity.

3 Section 7. Department authority.

4 The department may promulgate regulations and issue
5 guidelines and directives as deemed necessary to carry out the
6 provisions of this act.

7 Section 8. Effective date.

8 This act shall take effect in 60 days.