

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5333

As of February 8, 2013

Title: An act relating to mental health first aid.

Brief Description: Providing mental health first-aid training to teachers and educational staff.

Sponsors: Senators Keiser, McAuliffe, Rolfes, Becker, Schlicher, Harper, Nelson, Hobbs, Frockt, Kline and Shin.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Human Services & Corrections: 2/05/13.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES & CORRECTIONS

Staff: Kevin Black (786-7747)

Background: Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) is a public education program originally developed in Melbourne, Australia, which helps the public identify, understand, and respond to signs of mental illness and substance abuse disorders. MHFA is offered in the form of a 12-hour course which presents an overview of mental illness and substance abuse disorders, introduces participants to risk factors and warning signs of mental health problems, builds understanding of their impact, and overviews common treatments. MHFA teaches a five-step strategy that can be used to support an individual in crisis and help them connect with appropriate professional, peer, social, and self-help care.

In 2008, the Legislature provided \$80,000 in the operating budget by proviso for a train-the-trainer MHFA course.

Summary of Bill: The Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) must provide funds for MHFA training targeted at teachers and educational staff. DSHS must collaborate with the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction to identify sites and modes of instruction that leverage local resources to the full extent possible for the purpose of making the MHFA training broadly available.

The sum of \$100,000 is appropriated from the general fund to DSHS for this purpose.

Appropriation: \$100,000 from the general fund to DSHS.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 28, 2013.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: Mental health should not be treated as separate from health care. The MHFA program is a good way to bring mental health to the forefront in a whole health approach. It provides a way to reduce stigma and engage young people and their families. In Washington, 2300 people have taken this course. Mental illnesses often become evident when a person is a teenager. MHFA is an evidence based-program that has been tested and found to be helpful. We wholly support all efforts aimed at early identification and early intervention. There has not been funding since 2008 to support a continuing public education effort in this area. The mental health needs of children in this country are severely under addressed.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Keiser, prime sponsor; Ann Christian, WA Community Mental Health Council; Seth Dawson, National Alliance for Mental Illness (NAMI), NAMI WA.