

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5311

As of February 2, 2015

Title: An act relating to requiring crisis intervention training for peace officers.

Brief Description: Requiring crisis intervention training for peace officers.

Sponsors: Senators Rolfes, O'Ban, Frockt, Darneille, Keiser, McCoy, Kohl-Welles, Hasegawa and Jayapal.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Law & Justice: 1/29/15.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON LAW & JUSTICE

Staff: Melissa Burke-Cain (786-7755)

Background: Law enforcement officers, especially those assigned to patrol duty, respond to incidents involving persons in distress or in crisis. During these encounters, persons may behave unpredictably, or endanger themselves or others, due to mental illness, substance use, or other causes. Crisis intervention training helps officers recognize, understand, and respond effectively to high-risk behaviors during these events using strategies to reduce potential harm.

Summary of Bill: The Criminal Justice Training Commission (CJTC) must provide at least eight hours of crisis intervention training as part of the basic training academy for all new full-time law enforcement officers hired by state or local government after July 1, 2017. After July 1, 2017, CJTC must also require that officers complete two hours of annual crisis intervention training and pass a written exam to maintain their certification. Crisis intervention training provides law enforcement officers with tools and resources designed to safeguard persons experiencing crisis as well as responding officers.

By July 1, 2019, all full-time officers certified before July 1, 2017, must receive crisis intervention training similar to the basic academy's eight-hour crisis intervention training. By December 1, 2019, 25 percent of certified officers assigned to patrol duty should have 40 hours of enhanced crisis intervention training using a curriculum developed and certified by CJTC. CJTC must adopt crisis intervention training standards by rule. CJTC must consider geographic training needs as it adopts training programs and standards.

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.

The act applies only if specific funding is appropriated in the budget.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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: Crisis intervention training (CIT) is a key component of our mental health system and helps keep people out of jail. From a family's perspective, the right intervention at the critical time when the police arrive at a scene can prevent suicide by cop. CIT does not only protect safety of persons with mental health problems, it can be used in any crisis, for example with persons who have dementia, diabetic reactions, autism, or alcohol or substance use. CIT protects officers too. This is a safety issue for the entire community. With the economic downturn in 2006-07, many jurisdictions cut police training budgets at the same time social services were cut; cuts included CIT. CIT is vital training and should be restored and expanded. This bill brings Washington into line with training standards elsewhere. The tactics and skills used by officers trained in CIT helps avoid deadly outcomes. It can happen in minutes if untrained officers overreact. What might be a minor confrontation becomes a tragedy. For families the pain of losing a loved one like this never goes away. The law enforcement response depends on the level of training. A life shouldn't depend on whether the responder has been trained or not. There are some ways to reduce the cost of the bill that stakeholders can work on together.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Rolfes, prime sponsor; Trevor Ziemba, Bainbridge Island Police Dept.; Mitch Barker, WA. Assn. of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs; David Bales, Criminal Justice Training Center; Gregory Robinson, WA Community Mental Health Council; Mary Jane Thomas, Joyce Ostling, William Ostling Claudia Wark, Wendy Burroughs, citizens.