

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5311

As of February 26, 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, 2/12/15 [DPS-WM].
Ways & Means: 2/24/15.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON LAW & JUSTICE

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5311 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Padden, Chair; Pedersen, Ranking Minority Member; Darneille, Kohl-Welles, Pearson and Roach.

Staff: Melissa Burke-Cain (786-7755)

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Staff: Travis Sugarman (786-7446)

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 (Recommended Substitute): 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 general authority law enforcement agencies after July 1, 2017. After July 1, 2017, CJTC must also require that

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general authority peace officers complete two hours of annual crisis intervention training and pass a written exam to maintain their certification.

By July 1, 2019, all general authority peace 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, at least 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.

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

EFFECT OF CHANGES MADE BY LAW & JUSTICE COMMITTEE (Recommended Substitute): The initial training requirement applies to full-time law enforcement officers employed by a general authority Washington law enforcement agency. Full-time general authority Washington peace officers must receive crisis intervention training as part of the required annual training. The training commission aims for enhanced crisis intervention training completed for at least 25 percent of patrol officers by December 1, 2019. The training commission must provide training grants to general authority Washington law enforcement agencies.

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 on Original Bill (Law & Justice): 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 (Law & Justice): 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.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony (Ways & Means): PRO: Peace officers should be provided some level of CIT training and resources for backfilling officers makes these efforts successful. The majority of the costs for this bill come from funding for backfills. A more dynamic fiscal note would provide cost offsets by reducing psychiatric hospitalizations, fewer inpatient referrals, fewer people jailed, and fewer injuries to officers. Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs support the original bill but would likely be squarely opposed to the bill if it is funded at 50 percent. A primary benefit of CIT is reduced use of deadly force and restraint by law enforcement through proactive education. Training will change officers' dealings with people in crisis. This bill would give peace officers tools to make their jobs safer.

Persons Testifying (Ways & Means): PRO: Senator Rolfes, prime sponsor; Seth Dawson, The National Alliance on Mental Illness, National Alliance on Mental Illness WA; Robert Graham, CJTC; Mitch Barker, WA Assn. Sheriffs and Police Chiefs; William Ostling, Joyce Ostling, citizens.