

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## SSB 6514

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### As Reported by House Committee On: Higher Education

**Title:** An act relating to implementing a comprehensive approach to suicide prevention and behavioral health in higher education, with enhanced services to student veterans.

**Brief Description:** Concerning suicide prevention and behavioral health in higher education, with enhanced services to student veterans.

**Sponsors:** Senate Committee on Higher Education & Workforce Development (originally sponsored by Senators Brown, O'Ban, Darneille, Palumbo and Saldaña).

#### **Brief History:**

##### **Committee Activity:**

Higher Education: 2/20/18, 2/23/18 [DPA].

#### **Brief Summary of Substitute Bill (As Amended by Committee)**

- Requires an entity within the University of Washington School of Social Work (UW) to create a statewide resource for behavioral health and suicide prevention in postsecondary institutions that includes, among other things, a training curriculum and model protocols.
- Creates a grant program to fund postsecondary institutions' behavioral health and suicide prevention efforts and requires that the first six grants be awarded to public institutions of higher education.
- Requires postsecondary institutions to submit annual reports to the UW regarding information related to behavioral health and suicide on their campuses.

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### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

**Majority Report:** Do pass as amended. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Hansen, Chair; Pollet, Vice Chair; Holy, Ranking Minority Member; Van Werven, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Haler, Orwall, Sells, Stambaugh and Tarleton.

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*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.*

**Staff:** Trudes Tango (786-7384).

**Background:**

Publicsecondary schools are required to have crisis plans that include suicide prevention. Postsecondary institutions are not statutorily required to have suicide prevention plans, but many institutions have initiatives focused on addressing behavioral health and suicide prevention on their campuses.

In 2015 the Legislature created the Task Force on Mental Health and Suicide Prevention at the Higher Education Institutions (Task Force) to determine what policies, resources, and technical assistance are needed to support the institutions in improving access to mental health services and improving suicide prevention responses. Members of the Task Force included, among others, the Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC), the Council of Presidents, the institutions of higher education, the Independent Colleges of Washington, the Department of Veteran Affairs, and the Department of Health (DOH). Forefront Suicide Prevention, an organization based at the University of Washington School of Social Work (UW), staffed the Task Force.

At the end of 2016, the Task Force reported its findings and provided recommendations to the Legislature regarding providing resources and technical assistance to postsecondary institutions. The Task Force expired July 1, 2017.

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**Summary of Amended Bill:**

Statewide Resource.

Subject to funds appropriated, an entity within the UW must collaborate with the WSAC to develop a statewide resource for behavioral health and suicide prevention for the state's postsecondary institutions. The UW will be responsible for constructing and hosting the statewide resource and linking the resource to the WSAC and the DOH websites.

At a minimum, the statewide resource must:

- be made publicly available through a web-based portal or a support line;
- provide a free curriculum to train faculty, staff, and students in suicide recognition and referral skills and in the specific needs of student veterans;
- provide a resource to build capacity within the institutions to train others who can conduct trainings in person;
- contain model crisis protocols, per sector, that include behavioral health and suicide identification, intervention, reentry, and postvention;
- contain model marketing materials and messages that promote student behavioral health;
- develop capacity for an annual conference for institutions (the UW is responsible for hosting the first conference); and
- include resources that serve diverse communities and underrepresented populations.

To establish the components of the statewide resource, the UW must convene and consult with a work group consisting of representatives from stakeholder groups. The UW must consider representatives from the entities listed in the 2015 Task Force, and at a minimum the work group must include:

- representation from a tribal college;
- representation from a veterans training support center;
- representation from students and families;
- representatives selected by the Educational Opportunity Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee;
- representation from a community behavioral health provider;
- a suicide prevention expert;
- representation from the DOH; and
- three institutional counseling center directors or executive directors, one from a public four-year institution, one from a private nonprofit institution, and one from a community and technical college.

The statewide resource must be available to postsecondary institutions by June 30, 2020.

#### Grant Program.

Subject to funds appropriated, the Suicide Prevention in Higher Education grant program (grant program) is created to provide funding for postsecondary institutions to create partnerships with health care entities providing mental health, behavioral health, and suicide prevention to students.

The WSAC must administer the grant program, in collaboration with the work group convened by the UW. The grant program must be implemented by November 1, 2019.

The WSAC must award the first six grants to public institutions of higher education. When selecting the initial grant recipients, the WSAC must consult with the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges. The WSAC must identify which institutions have the greatest need, as well as a clear and strong demonstration of leadership willingness to utilize the statewide resources and the ability to develop partnerships to enhance capacity. From those institutions identified, the WSAC must give priority to proposals that enhance treatment services to student veterans. Once the first six grants are awarded, the WSAC may award grants to other postsecondary institutions.

"Postsecondary institutions" includes the public two-year and four-year institutions of higher education, degree-granting institutions, private vocational schools, and cosmetology and barber schools.

#### Data Collection.

For the purposes of establishing a baseline for behavioral health concerns and responses, postsecondary institutions must submit annual reports to the UW beginning June 1, 2019, and ending on June 1, 2022. The report must include certain information in compliance with the UW's data collection requirements, and must indicate whether the institution does not collect or have access to the specified information.

The reports must include the following information:

- the awareness of students, faculty, and staff about behavioral health and suicide prevention resources;
- the institution's counselor-to-student ratio;
- the number of students referred to off-campus behavioral health providers;
- the number of students identifying emotional distress as reasons for withdrawal;
- the number of student suicide deaths;
- the number of student suicide attempts resulting in hospitalization;
- information about dissemination of material to students about on and off campus resources;
- confirmation of campus plans identifying the groups already receiving training and groups who will receive training in the future;
- the entity on campus that develops and maintains the campus crisis plan;
- information about behavioral health services and supports available to veterans on campus; and
- the point person responsible for the crisis plan.

The reporting requirement applies to the same institutions eligible for the grant program. The UW must aggregate the information received by sector, serve as the depository for the annual reports, and by December 1 of each year, submit an aggregated summary report to the relevant committees of the Legislature. The UW must collaborate with postsecondary institutions in establishing data collection requirements and criteria.

**Amended Bill Compared to Substitute Bill:**

The amended bill: (1) removed the requirement that the Washington State Institute for Public Policy (WSIPP) conduct a study; and (2) removed the requirement for the DOH to contract with a third party entity to create the statewide resource, convene the Task Force, and collect and report on data from postsecondary institutions.

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**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Preliminary fiscal note available.

**Effective Date of Amended Bill:** The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:**

(In support) Suicide is a topic that must be discussed in the higher education system. College creates a perfect storm for mental health issues. College years coincide with the peak period of other psychiatric issues. Medical professionals are seeing an increased number of clients experiencing anxiety disorders and suicidal behavior. The study from WSIPP is a good idea in order to study the problem and reduce stress. The main goal of this bill is to preserve life. The bill was developed in a very collaborative process with all of the institutions of higher education, including the independent colleges. Increasing support for veteran students

on campus is critical. Forefront Suicide Prevention at the UW is prepared and able to take a leadership role in implementing the bill.

(Opposed) None.

**Persons Testifying:** Senator Brown, prime sponsor; Seth Dawson, Washington State Psychiatric Association and Washington Association for Substance Abuse and Violence Prevention; Joe Holliday, State Board for Community and Technical Colleges; Jerry Fugich, Veterans Legislative Coalition; Violet Boyer, Independent Colleges of Washington; Alfie Alvarado, Washington Department of Veterans Affairs; and Marny Lombard, Forefront Suicide Prevention.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** None.