

FINAL BILL REPORT

E2SHB 1181

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Synopsis as Enacted

Brief Description: Establishing programs and measures to prevent suicide among veterans and military members.

Sponsors: House Committee on Appropriations (originally sponsored by Representatives Orwall, Boehnke, Callan, Leavitt, Davis, Dolan, Valdez, Young, Riccelli, Lekanoff, Barkis, Peterson, Shewmake, Bronoske, Macri and Morgan).

House Committee on Housing, Human Services & Veterans
House Committee on Appropriations
Senate Committee on Human Services, Reentry & Rehabilitation
Senate Committee on Ways & Means

Background:

Washington State Department of Veterans Affairs.

The Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) delivers a variety of services to veterans in Washington, including administering a suicide prevention program and providing state-funded outreach and counseling programming for veterans and family members.

Governor's Challenge.

Washington is participating in a Governor's Challenge issued by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs and the United States Health & Human Services Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration to implement a strategy for preventing veteran suicide. The Service Members, Veterans, and their Families (SMVF) Suicide Prevention Advisory Committee (Advisory Committee) was formed to develop Washington's SMVF Suicide Prevention Strategic Plan, which was submitted in December 2020.

Suicide-Safer Homes Task Force.

The Suicide-Safer Homes Task Force (Task Force) was established to raise public awareness and increase suicide prevention education. Administered by the University of

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

Washington School of Social Work, the Task Force membership was comprised of representatives of suicide prevention organizations, the firearms industry, firearms rights organizations, law enforcement, health care professionals, and others. The Task Force expired on July 1, 2021.

The 988 Crisis Hotline.

The 988 behavioral health crisis response and suicide prevention line (988 Crisis Hotline) is a crisis line to be implemented on July 16, 2022, to consolidate behavioral health crisis and suicide prevention lifeline calls statewide. The calls are answered by trained professionals at crisis call center hubs, and callers have the option to be connected with the existing Veterans Crisis Line.

License Plate Emblems.

The Department of Licensing (DOL) issues veteran and military service award emblems, which may be affixed to any license plate type. To obtain an emblem, a veteran or service member must pay a prescribed fee set by the DOL, show proof of eligibility, and must be the legal or registered owner of the vehicle on which the emblem is to be displayed.

Safe Storage of Firearms.

Secure gun storage includes use of a locked box, gun safe, or other secure locked storage space that is designed to prevent the unauthorized use or discharge of a firearm. Every registered firearms dealer is required to offer, sell, or give a purchaser or transferee of any firearm a secure gun storage device, trigger lock, or similar device. In addition, dealers must provide written warnings to customers related to penalties for unsafe storage.

Health Care Providers.

Certain licensed health professionals must complete training in suicide assessment, treatment, and management. Some of these professionals, such as counselors and psychologists, must complete the training every six years. Others, such as physicians, pharmacists, and dentists, must complete the training once.

Summary:

Governor's Challenge.

Beginning December 2022, the Governor's Challenge Team and the Advisory Committee must report to the Legislature on a biannual basis regarding implementation of Washington's SMVF Suicide Prevention Strategic Plan.

Suicide-Safer Homes Task Force.

The Task Force is reestablished until July 1, 2024, and is to be cochaired by the Director of the DVA and the Director of the Forefront Suicide Prevention Center at the University of Washington (Forefront). The DVA must provide staffing for the Task Force, and Forefront must provide technical and programmatic support.

License Plate Emblems.

A prevent veteran suicide license plate emblem must be created and made available for purchase by the general public. The emblem must incorporate the 988 Crisis Hotline in the design. The DOL may set a fee for purchase of the emblem. Revenues from the emblem sales must be deposited into the Veterans and Military Members Suicide Prevention Account.

Veterans and Military Members Suicide Prevention Account.

The Veterans and Military Members Suicide Prevention Account (Account) is created in the custody of the State Treasurer. Funds in the Account must be used for activities that are dedicated to the benefit of veteran and military member suicide education and prevention. The Account is funded through legislative appropriations, revenues received from sales of the prevent veteran suicide license plate emblem, and gifts. Donations to the Account may be made by applicants for concealed pistol licenses or by who individuals who are undergoing a background check in connection with the purchase of a firearm. The DVA must coordinate with local law enforcement, the DOL, and firearms dealers to develop a form and process to publicize and collect these voluntary donations.

Suicide Prevention Community-Based Services Grant Program.

A Suicide Prevention Community-Based Services Grant Program (grant program) is created in the DVA. The purpose of the grant program is to provide suicide prevention, peer support, and other assistance to at-risk and transitioning veterans and military members and their families. Grants may be awarded from the Account and must be prioritized for organizations using peer support models that use evidence-based, research-based, or promising practices. The DVA must consult with Forefront to establish a process for awarding the grants and report annually to the Legislature on the grants awarded and services provided. Forefront must evaluate the effectiveness of the program recipients in providing suicide prevention and peer support services.

Information and Training.

By July 1, 2022, the DVA must establish criteria for a database of information and resources that address the mental health and suicide prevention of veterans, military members, and their families. The database must be made available by July 1, 2023. The DVA must also provide suicide prevention education training and information that is accessible online.

By December 1, 2023, the DVA must create a web-based application to be shared by state agencies and primary care providers. The application must provide information and resources on benefits, mental health resources, and lethal means safety information for veterans, military members, and their families.

Safe Storage of Firearms.

Expansion of safe storage of firearms and reduced access to lethal means in the community is encouraged. A dealer who provides a service of allowing a person to temporarily store a

firearm on the dealer's premises in a storage locker, box, or container that is locked and not accessible to the dealer does not thereby create a special relationship for civil liability purposes.

Health Care Providers.

The Department of Health (DOH) must consult with the DVA to create educational materials informing licensed health care providers about the 988 Crisis Hotline. The materials must include veteran-specific information. The DOH must determine which health care professions should receive the educational materials and collaborate with the corresponding disciplinary authority that regulates those providers to ensure the educational materials are distributed electronically when a provider renews a license. Beginning July 1, 2023, health care providers are strongly encouraged to inquire with new patients entering care whether the patient is a veteran, member of the military, or a family member of either and share the educational materials if the patients answers in the affirmative.

Department of Social and Health Services Applications.

The DSHS must, when providing services or upon application or intake for services or benefits, inquire whether the individual has ever served in the United States Armed Forces or is a family or household member of someone who has ever served in the United States Armed Forces. If the answer is affirmative, the DSHS must provide information on how to contact the DVA to inquire about eligibility for available benefits, services, or programs.

The 988 Crisis Hotline Signs on Public Works.

For any building, bridge, ferry, or park constructed or replaced as a public works project after July 1, 2024, signs displaying the 988 Crisis Hotline must be installed in appropriate locations.

Global War on Terror Memorial.

The Secretary of State may solicit grants, gifts, and other funds to establish and maintain a Global War on Terror Memorial on the capitol campus. Any such memorial must recognize service members who died, including a component designed to reflect on the number of service members and veterans who died by suicide after serving in the Global War on Terror.

Votes on Final Passage:

House	97	0	
Senate	48	0	(Senate amended)
House	98	0	(House concurred)

Effective: June 9, 2022

October 1, 2022 (Section 8)

July 1, 2024 (Section 11)