
College & Workforce Development Committee

SSB 5644

Brief Description: Concerning providing quality behavioral health co-response services

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Behavioral Health Subcommittee to Health & Long Term Care (originally sponsored by Senators Wagoner and Frockt).

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Requires the University of Washington to consult with stakeholders in the field of co-response to establish regular opportunities for training and exchange of best practices related to co-response.
- Requires the University of Washington to create an assessment of current capacities and characteristics of co-response teams and recommendations for future state goals, and to report the assessment to the Governor and the Legislature.
- Requires the University of Washington to develop model curricula for training members of co-response teams.
- Requires the University of Washington to host an annual conference beginning in 2023 that draws state and national co-response teams.

Hearing Date: 2/21/22

Staff: Elizabeth Allison (786-7129).

Background:

Co-Response.

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.

Co-response is when first responders, such as fire and police, are paired with non-law enforcement behavioral health professionals when responding to emergency situations involving behavioral or mental health crises. Co-response teams can perform follow up services, case management, outreach, transportation, and resource navigation. The Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs implements the Mental Health Field Response Grant Program which provides grants to local law enforcement agencies to fund co-response programs.

Co-Responder Outreach Alliance.

The Co-Responders Outreach Alliance (CROA) is a statewide nonpartisan organization of first responders, behavioral health professionals, and project managers working in the co-response field. The organization was created in 2018 and represents police and fire agencies from across the state.

Summary of Bill:

Subject to funding, the University of Washington (the UW) must, in consultation with the CROA and other stakeholders in the field of co-response:

- establish regular opportunities for police, fire, emergency medical services, peer counselors, and behavioral health personnel working in co-response to convene for training and best practices activities, and assist the UW with such co-response activities;
- subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for this specific purpose, administer a small budget to help defray costs for training and professional development;
- develop and provide an assessment to the Governor and the Legislature by June 30, 2023, describing and analyzing various aspects of co-response such as current capacities, shortfalls, alignments, data systems, training practices, and funding strategies for statewide co-response teams and recommendations for the future state crisis response system;
- beginning in 2023, begin development of a model training curricula for individuals participating in co-response teams; and
- beginning in 2023, host an annual statewide conference that draws state and national co-responders.

Stakeholders may include: the Washington Association of Designated Crisis Responders; state associations representing police, fire, and emergency medical services personnel; the Washington Council on Behavioral Health; the state enhanced 911 system; 988 crisis call centers; and the Peer Workforce Alliance.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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