
HOUSE BILL 1181

State of Washington

67th Legislature

2021 Regular Session

By Representatives Orwall, Boehnke, Callan, Leavitt, Davis, Dolan, Valdez, Young, Riccelli, Lekanoff, Barkis, Peterson, Shewmake, Bronoske, Macri, and Morgan

Read first time 01/13/21. Referred to Committee on Housing, Human Services & Veterans.

1 AN ACT Relating to establishing programs and measures to prevent
2 suicide among veterans and military members; amending RCW 43.70.445;
3 adding new sections to chapter 43.60A RCW; adding a new section to
4 chapter 43.70 RCW; adding a new section to chapter 46.18 RCW; adding
5 a new section to chapter 43.216 RCW; adding a new section to chapter
6 74.04 RCW; adding a new section to chapter 9.41 RCW; creating a new
7 section; providing an expiration date; and declaring an emergency.

8 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

9 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** (1) Suicide is a public health issue that
10 affects many Washington families and communities daily. Over the last
11 10 years, Washington state has been at the forefront of suicide
12 prevention, investing more in upstream suicide prevention strategies
13 and supports with the goal of reducing suicide by 20 percent by 2025.

14 (2) At the request of the governor, in 2020 Washington
15 stakeholders engaged in a national and statewide initiative to end
16 veteran and military member suicide. This initiative culminated in a
17 new state plan to educate providers and help them address the unique
18 needs of veterans and military members, particularly those in
19 transition to civilian life; and to provide resources and supports
20 including improved lethal means safety training. The purpose of this
21 act is to support the implementation of that plan.

1 (3) Service members, veterans, and their families are at a higher
2 risk of being affected by suicide as experiences prior to enlistment,
3 during service, and transition from service can contribute to
4 suicidal thoughts and behaviors.

5 (4) Washington is home to 544,290 veterans, 60,699 active duty
6 service members, 17,941 guard and reserve service members, and
7 2,000,000 military and veteran family members. Although veterans
8 themselves make up only seven percent of the Washington population,
9 they account for 19 percent of total suicides in the state. Nearly
10 1,000 veterans have died by suicide in Washington state over the last
11 five years. More than two-thirds of veterans who died by suicide in
12 Washington used a firearm.

13 (5) Family members of veterans who die by suicide are at higher
14 risk for future suicide due to the exposure of experiencing suicide
15 loss. Research shows for every suicide that occurs, 135 people suffer
16 from the effects either directly or indirectly, meaning veteran
17 suicides impact a community of 2,600,000 people.

18 (6) There is no one path to suicide, but life experiences, moral
19 injury, trauma, culture, and health can play a major role in suicidal
20 behavior. Military and veteran culture in particular includes stigma
21 around mental wellness and help-seeking behavior, emphasizes
22 reliability on group cohesion, and facilitates access,
23 comfortability, and familiarity with lethal means such as firearms.
24 Additionally, a significant number of veterans do not seek care
25 within the veterans administration system.

26 (7) The legislature intends to address the tragedy of suicide
27 amongst veterans, military members, and their families through
28 support of professionals and community and peer organizations serving
29 veterans, cultural changes that support help-seeking behaviors, and
30 investments in education, training, prevention, and care.

31 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 43.60A
32 RCW to read as follows:

33 (1) There is created in the department a suicide prevention
34 community-based services grant program. The purpose of the grant
35 program is to provide suicide prevention, peer support, and other
36 assistance to at-risk and transitioning veterans and military members
37 and their families in their communities.

38 (2) Subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for the
39 specific purposes provided in this section and amounts disbursed from

1 the veterans and military members suicide prevention account created
2 in section 3 of this act, the department, in consultation with the
3 University of Washington, must establish a process to receive,
4 review, process, and award grants to organizations, including
5 nonprofit and peer support community programs, that address veterans,
6 military members, and their families who may be at risk of suicide
7 and other mental health crises. Priority should be given to
8 organizations using evidence-based, research-based, or promising
9 practices, or peer support models.

10 (3) The department shall report to the legislature annually
11 beginning July 1, 2022, on grant recipients, number of veterans and
12 military members served, and the types of services offered by grant
13 recipients.

14 (4) The University of Washington shall evaluate the effectiveness
15 of each grant program recipient providing suicide prevention and peer
16 support services to veterans, military members, and their families
17 who may be at risk of suicide and other mental health crises.

18 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** A new section is added to chapter 43.60A
19 RCW to read as follows:

20 (1) The veterans and military members suicide prevention account
21 is created in the custody of the state treasurer. The account shall
22 consist of funds appropriated by the legislature, revenues received
23 from the prevent veteran suicide emblem under section 8 of this act,
24 and all receipts from gifts, grants, bequests, devises, or other
25 donations from public and private sources to support veterans and
26 military members suicide prevention measures. Expenditures from the
27 account may be used only for the purposes provided in subsection (3)
28 of this section. Only the director or the director's designee may
29 authorize expenditures from the account. The account is subject to
30 allotment procedures under chapter 43.88 RCW, but an appropriation is
31 not required for expenditures.

32 (2) (a) The department may request and accept nondedicated
33 contributions, grants, or gifts in cash or otherwise, and voluntary
34 donations for deposit into the account, including funds generated by
35 voluntary donations under (b) of this subsection.

36 (b) The department may accept, for deposit into the account,
37 voluntary donations from persons who are: (i) Applying for a
38 concealed pistol license or renewal of a concealed pistol license; or
39 (ii) undergoing a background check under chapter 9.41 RCW in

1 connection with the purchase of a firearm from a firearms dealer. The
2 department shall coordinate with local law enforcement agencies, the
3 department of licensing, and firearms dealers licensed under chapter
4 9.41 RCW to develop a form and process for publicizing and collecting
5 voluntary donations under this subsection. The department and the
6 department of licensing shall post educational information regarding
7 the voluntary donation provisions of this section on their websites.

8 (3) All moneys deposited into the account must be used for
9 activities that are dedicated to the benefit of veteran and military
10 member suicide education and prevention including, but not limited
11 to: (a) Expanding the department's peer corps program; and (b)
12 providing programs, peer support, and services that assist veterans
13 and military members in addressing mental health and wellness impacts
14 of military service, trauma, moral injury, and transition to civilian
15 life. Funds may also be used for the suicide prevention community-
16 based services grant program established in section 3 of this act.
17 Funds from the account may not be used to supplant existing funds
18 received by the department nor shall grant recipients use the funds
19 to supplant existing funding.

20 (4) For the purposes of this section the following definitions
21 apply:

22 (a) "Veteran" has the same meaning as provided in RCW 41.04.005
23 and 41.04.007.

24 (b) "Military members" means actively serving members of the
25 national guard or reserves, or active duty military personnel.

26 (c) "Account" means the veterans and military members suicide
27 prevention account.

28 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 4.** A new section is added to chapter 43.60A
29 RCW to read as follows:

30 Beginning December 2021, subject to the availability of amounts
31 appropriated for this specific purpose, the governor's challenge team
32 and service members, veterans, and their families suicide prevention
33 advisory committee shall report to the legislature on a biannual
34 basis regarding implementation of the plan developed by the
35 committee.

36 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 5.** A new section is added to chapter 43.60A
37 RCW to read as follows:

1 Subject to appropriations provided for this specific purpose, the
2 department shall:

3 (1) Create and maintain a database of information on nonprofit,
4 for-profit, city, county, state, and federal organizations,
5 providers, and resources that address the mental health, well-being,
6 and suicide prevention of veterans, military members, and their
7 families. The department shall establish criteria for inclusion in
8 the database by December 1, 2021. The department must make the
9 database accessible on its website to veterans, military members, and
10 their families; and

11 (2) Provide suicide prevention education training and information
12 for veterans, military members, and their families that is accessible
13 through the internet.

14 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 6.** A new section is added to chapter 43.70
15 RCW to read as follows:

16 In order to encourage providers to consider additional available
17 training and resources to better serve veterans, military members,
18 and their families, every primary care provider required to complete
19 training under RCW 43.70.442 shall, when assessing, screening,
20 referring, treating, or managing a patient, inquire into whether the
21 patient is a veteran, member of the military services, or a family
22 member or spouse of a veteran or member of the military services.

23 **Sec. 7.** RCW 43.70.445 and 2019 c 415 s 967 are each amended to
24 read as follows:

25 (1)(a) Subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for
26 this specific purpose, a suicide-safer homes task force is
27 established to raise public awareness and increase suicide prevention
28 education among new partners who are in key positions to help reduce
29 suicide. The task force shall be administered and staffed by the
30 University of Washington (~~school of social work~~). To the extent
31 possible, the task force membership should include representatives
32 from geographically diverse and priority populations, including
33 tribal populations.

34 (b) The suicide-safer homes task force comprises a suicide
35 prevention and firearms subcommittee and a suicide prevention and
36 health care subcommittee, as follows:

37 (i) The suicide prevention and firearms subcommittee shall
38 (~~consist of the following members and~~) be cochaired by the

1 University of Washington (~~school of social work and a member~~
2 ~~identified in (b) (i) (A) of this subsection (1):~~

3 ~~(A) A representative of the national rifle association and a~~
4 ~~representative of the second amendment foundation;~~

5 ~~(B))~~, a representative of the department of veterans affairs,
6 and either a representative of the national rifle association or a
7 representative of the Second Amendment foundation. The subcommittee
8 shall also consist of the following members:

9 (A) Two representatives of suicide prevention organizations,
10 selected by the cochairs of the subcommittee;

11 ~~((C))~~ (B) Two representatives of the firearms industry,
12 selected by the cochairs of the subcommittee;

13 ~~((D))~~ (C) Two individuals who are suicide attempt survivors or
14 who have experienced suicide loss, selected by the cochairs of the
15 subcommittee;

16 ~~((E))~~ (D) Two representatives of law enforcement agencies,
17 selected by the cochairs of the subcommittee;

18 ~~((F))~~ (E) One representative from the department of health;

19 ~~((G))~~ (F) One (~~representative from the department of veterans~~
20 ~~affairs, and one other~~) individual representing veterans (~~to be~~
21 ~~selected by the cochairs of the subcommittee~~); ~~((and~~

22 ~~(H))~~ (G) One member of a Washington or federally recognized
23 Indian tribe; and

24 (H) No more than (~~two~~) five other interested parties, selected
25 by the cochairs of the subcommittee.

26 (ii) The suicide prevention and health care subcommittee shall
27 consist of the following members and be cochaired by the University
28 of Washington (~~school of social work~~) and a member identified in
29 (b) (ii) (A) of this subsection (1):

30 (A) Two representatives of the Washington state pharmacy
31 association;

32 (B) Two representatives of retailers who operate pharmacies,
33 selected by the cochairs of the subcommittee;

34 (C) One faculty member from the University of Washington school
35 of pharmacy and one faculty member from the Washington State
36 University school of pharmacy;

37 (D) One representative of the department of health;

38 (E) One representative of the pharmacy quality assurance
39 commission;

1 (F) Two representatives of the Washington state poison control
2 center;

3 (G) One representative of the department of veterans affairs, and
4 one other individual representing veterans to be selected by the
5 cochairs of the subcommittee;

6 (H) Three members representing health care professionals
7 providing suicide prevention training in the state, selected by the
8 cochairs of the subcommittee; (~~and~~)

9 (I) One member of a Washington or federally recognized Indian
10 tribe; and

11 (J) No more than two other interested parties, selected by the
12 cochairs of the subcommittee.

13 (c) The University of Washington (~~school of social work~~) shall
14 convene the initial meeting of the task force.

15 (2) The task force shall:

16 (a) Develop and prepare to disseminate online trainings on
17 suicide awareness and prevention for firearms dealers and their
18 employees and firearm range owners and their employees;

19 (b) In consultation with the department of fish and wildlife,
20 review the firearm safety pamphlet produced by the department of fish
21 and wildlife under RCW 9.41.310 and, by January 1, 2017, recommend
22 changes to the pamphlet to incorporate information on suicide
23 awareness and prevention;

24 (c) Develop and approve suicide awareness and prevention messages
25 for posters and brochures that are tailored to be effective for
26 firearms owners for distribution to firearms dealers and firearms
27 ranges;

28 (d) Develop suicide awareness and prevention messages for posters
29 and brochures for distribution to pharmacies;

30 (e) In consultation with the department of fish and wildlife,
31 develop strategies for creating and disseminating suicide awareness
32 and prevention information for hunting safety classes, including
33 messages to parents that can be shared during online registration, in
34 either follow-up email communications, or in writing, or both;

35 (f) Develop suicide awareness and prevention messages for
36 training for the schools of pharmacy and provide input on trainings
37 being developed for community pharmacists;

38 (g) Create a website that will be a clearinghouse for the newly
39 created suicide awareness and prevention materials developed by the
40 task force;

1 (h) Conduct a survey of firearms dealers and firearms ranges in
2 the state to determine the types and amounts of incentives that would
3 be effective in encouraging those entities to participate in suicide-
4 safer homes projects;

5 (i) Gather input on collateral educational materials that will
6 help health care professionals in suicide prevention work; ~~((and))~~

7 (j) Create, implement, and evaluate a suicide awareness and
8 prevention pilot program in two counties, one rural and one urban,
9 that have high suicide rates. The pilot program shall include:

10 (i) Developing and directing advocacy efforts with firearms
11 dealers to pair suicide awareness and prevention training with
12 distribution of safe storage devices;

13 (ii) Developing and directing advocacy efforts with pharmacies to
14 pair suicide awareness and prevention training with distribution of
15 medication disposal kits and safe storage devices;

16 (iii) Training health care providers on suicide awareness and
17 prevention, paired with distribution of medication disposal kits and
18 safe storage devices; and

19 (iv) Training local law enforcement officers on suicide awareness
20 and prevention, paired with distribution of medication disposal kits
21 and safe storage devices; and

22 (k) Make recommendations regarding the creation and content of a
23 web-based application to be shared by state agencies and primary care
24 providers with veterans, military members, and their families to
25 provide applicable information and resources including but not
26 limited to benefits, mental health resources, and lethal means safety
27 information.

28 (3) The task force shall, in consultation with the department of
29 health, develop and prioritize a list of projects to carry out the
30 task force's purposes and submit the prioritized list to the
31 department of health for funding from the suicide-safer homes project
32 account created in RCW 43.70.446.

33 (4) Beginning December 1, 2016, the task force shall annually
34 report to the legislature on the status of its work. The task force
35 shall submit a final report by December 1, 2020, that includes the
36 findings of the suicide awareness and prevention pilot program
37 evaluation under subsection (2) of this section and recommendations
38 on possible continuation of the program. The task force shall submit
39 its reports in accordance with RCW 43.01.036.

40 (5) This section expires July 1, ~~((2021))~~ 2024.

1 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 8.** A new section is added to chapter 46.18
2 RCW to read as follows:

3 (1) A prevent veteran suicide emblem shall be created and made
4 available for purchase by the general public. The emblem is to be
5 displayed on license plates in the manner described by the department
6 of licensing, existing vehicular registration procedures, and current
7 laws.

8 (2) The department of veterans affairs shall create the emblem,
9 which must incorporate the 988 suicide prevention hotline within the
10 emblem design, and submit the emblem to the department of licensing.

11 (3) Any person requesting a prevent veteran suicide emblem must
12 pay a prescribed fee set by the department of licensing.

13 (4) Revenues from the prevent veteran suicide emblem must be
14 deposited into the veterans and military members suicide prevention
15 account created in section 3 of this act.

16 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 9.** A new section is added to chapter 43.216
17 RCW to read as follows:

18 (1) The department shall, upon intake at point of service or
19 application for service, inquire whether the applicant has ever
20 served in the United States armed forces or is a family or household
21 member of someone who has ever served in the United States armed
22 forces. If the applicant answers in the affirmative, the department
23 shall provide the applicant with information on how to contact the
24 Washington department of veterans affairs to inquire as to whether
25 the applicant may be eligible for any benefits, services, or programs
26 offered to veterans, military members, or their families.

27 (2) The department shall report nonidentifying comprehensive data
28 collected in response to the inquiry made under subsection (1) of
29 this section to the department of veterans affairs on an annual
30 basis.

31 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 10.** A new section is added to chapter 74.04
32 RCW to read as follows:

33 (1) During the application process for public assistance
34 benefits, the department shall inquire of each applicant whether he
35 or she has ever served in the United States military services or is a
36 family or household member of someone who has ever served in the
37 United States military services. If the applicant answers in the
38 affirmative, the department shall provide the applicant with

1 information on how to contact the Washington department of veterans
2 affairs to inquire as to whether the applicant may be eligible for
3 any benefits, services, or programs offered to veterans, military
4 members, or their families.

5 (2) The department shall report nonidentifying comprehensive data
6 collected in response to the inquiry made under subsection (1) of
7 this section to the department of veterans affairs on an annual
8 basis.

9 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 11.** A new section is added to chapter 9.41
10 RCW to read as follows:

11 (1) In order to better prevent suicide by veterans, military
12 members, and their families, an expansion of safe storage of firearms
13 and reduced access to lethal means in the community is encouraged.

14 (2) A dealer who provides a service of allowing a person to
15 temporarily store a firearm on the dealer's premises in a storage
16 locker, box, or container that is locked and not accessible to the
17 dealer does not thereby create a special relationship, for civil
18 liability purposes, between the dealer and the person who temporarily
19 stores the firearm on the dealer's premises.

20 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 12.** Section 7 of this act is necessary for
21 the immediate preservation of the public peace, health, or safety, or
22 support of the state government and its existing public institutions,
23 and takes effect immediately.

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