

HOUSE BILL REPORT

2SSB 5970

As Reported by House Committee On:
Public Safety

Title: An act relating to the mental health field response teams program.

Brief Description: Establishing the mental health field response teams program.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators Frockt, Saldaña, O'Ban and Palumbo).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Public Safety: 2/19/18, 2/20/18, 2/22/18 [DPA].

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

- Creates the mental health field response team grant program, administered by the Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY

Majority Report: Do pass as amended. Signed by 11 members: Representatives Goodman, Chair; Pellicciotti, Vice Chair; Klippert, Ranking Minority Member; Hayes, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Appleton, Chapman, Griffey, Holy, Orwall, Pettigrew and Van Werven.

Staff: Kelly Leonard (786-7147).

Background:

Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs. The Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs (WASPC) is an independent organization consisting of sheriffs, police chiefs, the Washington State Patrol, and the Washington Department of Corrections. The 1975 Legislature made the WASPC a statutory entity by designating the association as a "combination of units of local government," and it currently receives state funding to manage certain programs. This includes, for example, the Jail Booking and Reporting System.

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.

Behavioral Health Organizations. A behavioral health organization refers to a county, group of counties, or nonprofit organization under contract with the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) to provide a comprehensive network of behavioral health services in a regional service area. Behavioral health organizations contract with local providers to provide an array of mental health services, monitor the activities of local providers, and oversee the distribution of funds under the state managed care plan.

Summary of Amended Bill:

Subject to an appropriation, the WASPC must develop and implement a mental health field response grant program (program). The purpose of the program is to assist local law enforcement agencies to develop and operate mental health field response capabilities, by utilizing mental health professionals to professionally, humanely, and safely respond to encounters involving persons with mental health issues.

Grants are awarded to local law enforcement agencies based on locally developed proposals to incorporate mental health professionals into the agencies' mental health field response. Grant proposals must include a plan for diversion from incarceration. Two or more agencies may submit a joint grant proposal. Grant recipients must include at least one mental health professional who will perform services. Mental health professionals may assist patrol officers in the field or in an on-call capacity, provide training on best practices, or provide other services. Grant recipients are encouraged to coordinate with local public safety answering points to maximize the goals of the program.

Grant applications are reviewed by peer review panels appointed by the WASPC in consultation with behavioral health organizations and fully integrated managed care organizations. The WASPC may prioritize grants for agencies with matching local funds. To the extent possible, at least one grant recipient agency should be from Eastern Washington and one from Western Washington. Grant recipients must be selected and receiving funds by October 1, 2018.

Within existing resources, the WASPC must consult with the DSHS Behavioral Health Administration and the managed care system to develop requirements for participating mental health professionals. Grant recipients must provide training necessary for mental health professionals to operate successfully and competently in partnership with law enforcement agencies. The WASPC must also coordinate with public safety answering points, behavioral health organizations, and the DSHS to develop and incorporate telephone triage criteria and dispatch protocols to assist with mental health, law enforcement, and emergency medical responses involving mental health situations.

Within existing resources, the WASPC must consult with the DSHS Data and Analysis Unit to establish data collection and reporting guidelines for grant recipients. Data must be used to evaluate whether the use of mental health field response improves outcomes of interactions with persons experiencing behavioral health crises.

The WASPC must submit an annual report to the Governor and appropriate committees of the Legislature on the program, including information on grant recipients, use of funds, participation of mental health professionals, and feedback from the grant recipients.

Amended Bill Compared to Second Substitute Bill:

The stated purpose of the grant program is modified by specifying that the program is for assisting local law enforcement agencies with establishing and expanding mental health field response capabilities (rather than developing and operating those capabilities). References to mental health field response teams are removed, and instead the amended bill refers to mental health field response capabilities or programs. The primary goals of mental health field response are treatment, diversion, and reduced incarceration time. Grant proposals are required to include a plan for diversion from incarceration.

Language is added requiring the WASPC to prioritize grants for law enforcement agencies with local matching funds.

Grant recipients are required to include at least one mental health professional (rather than a designated crisis responder).

Grant recipients are encouraged to coordinate with local public safety answering points to maximize the goals of the program. In addition, language is added requiring the WASPC to coordinate with public safety answering points, behavioral health organizations, and the DSHS to develop and incorporate telephone triage criteria and dispatch protocols to assist with mental health, law enforcement, and emergency medical responses involving mental health situations.

The amended bill specifies that the WASPC is not prohibited from soliciting or accepting private funds to support the grant program.

Appropriation: None.

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) This bill is mission critical for local governments and law enforcement agencies. This bill focuses on sending help where help is needed. Mental health professionals will be working in the field alongside law enforcement. Many law enforcement agencies are developing innovative solutions to the larger demand for mental health services. This bill will assist agencies with this effort, and further expand partnerships between law enforcement and mental health professionals. These partnerships are the new face of policing in Washington.

The bill should be amended to require mental health professionals to be used instead of designated crisis responders. The bill should be amended to also allow law enforcement agencies to leverage matching local funds and private donations.

The bill should be amended to include partnerships with 9-1-1 call centers; 9-1-1 call centers and dispatchers are critical players in assessing whether mental health professionals are necessary when coordinating a response.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: James McMahan, Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs; Doug Levy, Cities of Renton, Everett, Kent, Redmond, and Issaquah; Keith Flewelling, Association of Public Safety Communications-National Emergency Number Association; and Zachary Kinneman, What's Next Washington.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.