

# FINAL BILL REPORT

## SSB 6514

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Synopsis as Enacted

**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).

**Senate Committee on Higher Education & Workforce Development**  
**House Committee on Higher Education**  
**House Committee on Appropriations**

**Background:** In 2015, the Legislature created the Mental Health and Suicide Prevention in Higher Education Task Force (Task Force). The Task Force was created to determine what policies, resources, and technical assistance were needed to support the post-secondary institutions in improving access to mental health services and improving suicide prevention responses. The Task Force reported its findings to the Legislature and the Governor on November 1, 2016.

The Task Force identified four recommendations to increase awareness and prevention of behavioral health and suicide at Washington's postsecondary institutions:

- prioritize ongoing state funding to support behavioral health counselors;
- develop a public behavioral health and suicide prevention resource;
- establish a grant program to support resource-challenged postsecondary institutions; and
- require all Washington postsecondary institutions to submit an annual report focused on behavioral health awareness and suicide prevention to the Department of Health (DOH).

Postsecondary institutions include public baccalaureates, two-year institutions, private vocational schools, and other degree-granting institutions that provide academic or professional degrees beyond the secondary level.

**Summary:** Statewide Resource for Behavioral Health and Suicide Prevention. An entity within the University of Washington's Department of Social Work (Entity), in collaboration with the Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC), must develop and host a statewide resource for behavioral health and suicide prevention for the state's postsecondary institutions (institutions). The Entity must convene a workgroup to establish the statewide

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resource. The workgroup must consider including representatives from entities involved in the Task Force.

At a minimum, persons in the workgroup must include representation from:

- a tribal college;
- a veterans' training support center;
- students and families;
- the Educational Opportunity Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee;
- a community behavioral health provider;
- a suicide prevention expert;
- a representative from DOH; and
- three institutional counseling center directors—one representing a four-year college, one representing a private nonprofit institution, and one representing a community and technical college.

The statewide resource, at a minimum, must be a publicly available web portal or support line. The statewide resource would provide and/or develop:

- curriculum to train staff and students in suicide recognition, including the specific needs of student veterans;
- a resource for institutions to deliver trainings;
- guidance on model crisis protocols;
- communication materials that promote student behavioral health on college campuses;
- capacity for an annual conference for postsecondary institutions to address student behavioral health and suicide prevention; and
- resources to serve diverse communities and underrepresented populations.

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

Suicide Prevention in Higher Education Grant Program. Subject to appropriation, the Suicide Prevention in Higher Education Grant Program is established and administered by WSAC, in collaboration with the workgroup and the Entity within the University of Washington's School of Social Work. The grant program will assist post-secondary institutions in partnering with health care entities to provide mental health support and suicide prevention. WSAC must establish minimum criteria for grant recipients.

By November 1, 2019, the grant program must be implemented. The first six grants must go to public institutions of higher education. WSAC must consult with the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges on the first six grant awards. Institutions of higher education must demonstrate to WSAC financial need, have demonstrated a strong willingness from leadership to utilize the statewide resource, and can develop partnerships to enhance capacity. From those identified institutions, priority must be given to enhancing services for student veterans. Other post-secondary institutions may be considered for grant awards after the first six grants have been awarded.

Report on Suicide Prevention and Behavioral Health in Postsecondary Education. The post-secondary institutions in Washington must provide certain information on students'

behavioral health, student suicides, institutional training, and the campus crisis plan to the Entity beginning on June 1, 2019, until June 1, 2022.

The Entity must identify information and data on suicide prevention and behavioral health in higher education for postsecondary institutions to report on by December 31, 2018. The Entity is then required to take that information in aggregate and, by December 1 each year, report to the relevant committees of the Legislature.

**Votes on Final Passage:**

Senate	48	0	
House	98	0	(House amended)
Senate	49	0	(Senate concurred)

**Effective:** June 7, 2018