
HOUSE BILL 1379

State of Washington

65th Legislature

2017 Regular Session

By Representatives Orwall, Stambaugh, Blake, Holy, Pollet, Tarleton, Haler, Sells, Goodman, Lovick, Frame, Kilduff, Doglio, and Stanford

Read first time 01/18/17. Referred to Committee on Higher Education.

1 AN ACT Relating to implementing a comprehensive approach to
2 suicide prevention and behavioral health in higher education; adding
3 new sections to chapter 43.70 RCW; adding new sections to chapter
4 28B.77 RCW; creating a new section; repealing 2015 c 67 s 3
5 (uncodified); providing an expiration date; and declaring an
6 emergency.

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

8 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** (1) Washington has been a leader in
9 addressing suicide as a public health issue. The legislature intends
10 for Washington to continue its leadership by supporting the creation
11 of comprehensive suicide prevention and behavioral health initiatives
12 for postsecondary students. In 2015, the legislature created the
13 mental health and suicide prevention in higher education task force.
14 The task force was charged with determining the policies, resources,
15 and technical assistance needed to support postsecondary institutions
16 in improving access to behavioral health services and improving
17 suicide prevention responses. In November 2016, the task force issued
18 its report on mental health and suicide prevention in higher
19 education.

20 (2) According to the task force report:

1 (a) The 2005 American college health assessment survey found that
2 nine and one-half percent of students seriously considered suicide,
3 one and one-half percent of students nationwide have attempted
4 suicide, and less than twenty percent were in treatment. According to
5 the 2015 American college health association national college health
6 assessment, seventy-five percent of postsecondary students reported
7 feeling overwhelmed and thirty percent reported feeling so depressed
8 it was difficult to function. More than one-third of students
9 reported anxiety as negatively impacting academics and almost one-
10 quarter said depression negatively impacted academics;

11 (b) There is incomplete data on suicide deaths among Washington's
12 postsecondary students and the availability of behavioral health
13 resources on Washington's campuses. There is currently no statewide
14 system in place to track this data;

15 (c) Lack of funding for behavioral health resources across all
16 sectors is the largest barrier to providing services for
17 postsecondary students statewide;

18 (d) Due to funding constraints, the level of professional mental
19 and behavioral health counseling is often limited for postsecondary
20 institutions in all sectors. For example, six institutions in the
21 public two-year sector servicing nearly fifty thousand students have
22 either no professional mental health providers to counsel students or
23 have such limited resources that the counselor to student ratio was
24 as low as one to nearly eight thousand five hundred in 2014-2015.

25 (3) The legislature intends to implement task force
26 recommendations by:

27 (a) Creating a publicly available statewide resource for
28 postsecondary institutions;

29 (b) Developing and centralizing data collection; and

30 (c) Creating a grant program for resource-challenged institutions
31 to help develop suicide prevention programs in those institutions,
32 which may include for example, creating campus-wide crisis services;
33 expanding existing crisis plans to integrate suicide intervention;
34 reentry, including medical leave that supports reentry; postvention;
35 and creating links and referral systems between campus behavioral
36 health resources and community-based mental health resources.

37 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 43.70
38 RCW to read as follows:

1 (1) Subject to availability of amounts appropriated for this
2 specific purpose, the department, in collaboration with the student
3 achievement council, shall develop a statewide resource for
4 behavioral health and suicide prevention for the state's
5 postsecondary institutions.

6 (2) To establish the components of the statewide resource, the
7 department shall work with the mental health and suicide prevention
8 in higher education task force, created by chapter 67, Laws of 2015,
9 and other entities or persons that the department and the task force
10 deem appropriate. At a minimum, the additional entities or persons
11 must include:

- 12 (a) Representation from a tribal college;
- 13 (b) Representation from a veterans training support center;
- 14 (c) Representation from students and families;
- 15 (d) Representatives selected by the educational opportunity gap
16 oversight and accountability committee;
- 17 (e) Representation from a community behavioral health provider;
- 18 (f) A suicide prevention expert; and
- 19 (g) Three institutional counseling center directors or executive
20 directors to include one from each of the following: A public four-
21 year college or university, a private, nonprofit institution, and a
22 community and technical college.

23 (3) To develop the statewide resource, the department shall
24 contract with an entity that has suicide prevention expertise. The
25 department must consider recommendations made by the task force
26 regarding choice of the contracting entity. The contracting entity
27 must be responsible for constructing and hosting the statewide
28 resource and linking the resource to the student achievement
29 council's and the department's web sites.

30 (4) At a minimum, the statewide resource must:

- 31 (a) Be made publicly available through a web-based portal or a
32 support line;
- 33 (b) Provide a free curriculum to train faculty, staff, and
34 students in suicide recognition and referral skills;
- 35 (c) Provide a free curriculum to build capacity within the
36 institutions to train individuals to deliver training in person;
- 37 (d) Contain model crisis protocols, per sector, that include
38 behavioral health and suicide identification, intervention, reentry,
39 and postvention;

1 (e) Contain model marketing materials and messages that promote
2 student behavioral health on college campuses;

3 (f) Develop capacity for an annual conference for postsecondary
4 institutions seeking to address students' behavioral health and
5 suicide prevention needs. The contracting entity must be responsible
6 for hosting the first conference for postsecondary institutions; and

7 (g) Include resources that will serve diverse communities and
8 underrepresented populations, including resources that are culturally
9 relevant.

10 (5) The statewide resource must be made available to
11 postsecondary institutions by June 30, 2019.

12 (6) For the purposes of this section, the task force will expire
13 on July 31, 2019.

14 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** A new section is added to chapter 28B.77
15 RCW to read as follows:

16 (1) Subject to availability of amounts appropriated for this
17 specific purpose, the suicide prevention in higher education grant
18 program is established. The purpose of the grant program is to
19 provide funding for postsecondary institutions to develop basic
20 infrastructure and strategic plans to support behavioral health
21 promotion and suicide prevention, including the development of
22 innovative partnerships with state agencies, postsecondary
23 institutions, and community organizations such as community crisis
24 clinics.

25 (2) The council shall administer the grant program in
26 collaboration with the mental health and suicide prevention in higher
27 education task force. The grant program must be implemented by August
28 1, 2018.

29 (3) For the purposes of this section, "postsecondary
30 institutions" means institutions of higher education as defined in
31 RCW 28B.10.016, degree-granting institutions as defined in RCW
32 28B.85.010, private vocational schools as defined under RCW
33 28C.10.020, and school as defined in RCW 18.16.020.

34 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 4.** A new section is added to chapter 28B.77
35 RCW to read as follows:

36 (1) Beginning June 1, 2018, and every June 1st thereafter until
37 2021, postsecondary institutions shall submit a report to the state
38 department of health for the purposes of establishing a baseline for

1 behavioral health concerns and responses at the institutions of
2 higher education.

3 (2) The annual report must include the following information as
4 reported to the postsecondary institution, in compliance with the
5 department of health's established data collection requirements. If
6 an institution does not collect or have access to the information it
7 must indicate this in the report:

8 (a) The awareness of students, faculty, and staff regarding
9 behavioral health and suicide prevention resources;

10 (b) The institution's counselor-to-student ratio;

11 (c) The number of students referred to off-campus behavioral
12 health providers;

13 (d) The number of students identifying emotional distress as
14 reasons for withdrawal;

15 (e) The number of student suicide deaths;

16 (f) The number of student suicide attempts that result in
17 hospitalization;

18 (g) Information about dissemination of material to students about
19 behavioral health resources that are available on and off campus;

20 (h) Confirmation of campus plans for suicide recognition and
21 referral training that identifies groups receiving the required
22 training and which groups are recommended to receive training in the
23 future;

24 (i) The entity or entities on campus responsible for the
25 development and maintenance of the campus crisis plan that integrate
26 policies for suicide identification, intervention, reentry, and
27 postvention; and

28 (j) The campus point person or persons responsible for the crisis
29 plan.

30 (3) For purposes of this section, "postsecondary institutions"
31 has the same meaning as that term is defined in section 3 of this
32 act.

33 (4) This section expires December 31, 2021.

34 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 5.** A new section is added to chapter 43.70
35 RCW to read as follows:

36 (1) By December 31, 2017, for the purposes of collecting data on
37 suicide prevention and behavioral health in higher education, the
38 department shall identify data, methods for data collection, and data
39 definitions to be used by postsecondary institutions required to

1 submit annual reports under section 4 of this act. The department
2 shall collaborate with the postsecondary institutions, as defined in
3 section 3 of this act, in establishing data collection requirements
4 and criteria.

5 (2) The department shall aggregate the information it receives by
6 sector. The department shall serve as the depository for annual
7 reports submitted by institutions under section 4 of this act.

8 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 6.** 2015 c 67 s 3 (uncodified) is repealed.

9 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 7.** This act is necessary for the immediate
10 preservation of the public peace, health, or safety, or support of
11 the state government and its existing public institutions, and takes
12 effect immediately.

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