

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1661

As Reported by House Committee On:

Innovation, Community & Economic Development, & Veterans

Title: An act relating to establishing a pilot project for mobile mental health crisis intervention.

Brief Description: Establishing a pilot project for mobile mental health crisis intervention.

Sponsors: Representatives Maycumber, Springer, Robertson, Chapman, Mosbrucker, Rule, Eslick, Taylor and Paul.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Innovation, Community & Economic Development, & Veterans: 2/7/23, 2/10/23 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires the Military Department to establish a competitive grant program to award funding to emergency crisis assistance teams that provide mobile mental health crisis intervention for crises involving mental illness, homelessness, and addiction.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON INNOVATION, COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, & VETERANS

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 15 members: Representatives Ryu, Chair; Donaghy, Vice Chair; Rule, Vice Chair; Volz, Ranking Minority Member; Barnard, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Chambers, Christian, Corry, Cortes, Paul, Senn, Shavers, Street, Waters and Ybarra.

Staff: Cassie Jones (786-7303).

Background:

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.

A mobile crisis team typically includes a group of trained health professionals who can provide a range of services, such as nurses, social workers, and psychiatrists. While mobile crisis teams vary depending on the jurisdiction, they generally are not operated by law enforcement agencies. They may be operated by community mental health organizations, hospitals, or government agencies. Mobile crisis teams may be included as part of a comprehensive crisis services system or act as a sole model. Mobile crisis teams may have the ability to administer medication, refer people to addiction treatment, connect people to crisis care, and provide follow-up support. They may provide on-scene assistance, or they may conduct follow-up with individuals after being called by first responders or a mental health agency.

The Military Department, under the direction of the Adjutant General, administers the state's comprehensive program of emergency management. The Adjutant General is responsible for developing a comprehensive, all-hazard emergency plan for the state, known as the Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan, that includes an analysis of natural, technological, or human-caused hazards and procedures to coordinate state and local resources in responding to such hazards.

Summary of Bill:

The Military Department's Emergency Management Division must establish the emergency crisis assistance team pilot project. The purpose of the project is to create two emergency crisis assistance teams that support community-based public safety and provide mobile mental health crisis intervention for crises involving mental illness, homelessness, and addiction.

The Military Department must establish a competitive grant program to award funding for two emergency crisis assistance teams by September 1, 2023. The Military Department must award two grants, one to an eligible applicant in a city west of the crest of the Cascade Mountains and one to an eligible applicant in a city east of the crest of the Cascade Mountains.

Mental health care service providers are eligible to compete for grant funding. Grant recipients must use grant funds to establish an emergency crisis assistance team that provides the following mobile mental health crisis intervention programs and services:

- crisis counseling;
- suicide prevention, assessment, and intervention;
- conflict resolution and mediation;
- grief and loss counseling;
- substance abuse prevention, assessment, and intervention;
- housing crisis aid;
- first aid and nonemergency medical care;
- resource connection and referrals; and

- transportation to services.

Grant recipients must provide a report to the Military Department on the results of their emergency crisis assistance teams by October 1, 2024. The Military Department must provide a report on the emergency crisis assistance team pilot project to the Governor and appropriate committees of the Legislature by December 1, 2024. The grant program expires January 1, 2025.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) The Legislature has worked very hard to provide services to individuals once they are in the system and working through the process and have been through a crisis situation. The initial contact usually happens because there has been some kind of behavioral issue occurring and 911 or 988 has been called and there is a crisis. Law enforcement responds to stabilize the situation. There are currently pilot projects with mental health providers riding with law enforcement. After extensive stakeholder work, it was learned that the best response to such a crisis involves mental health care coming separately from law enforcement. A mental health care provider can arrive and help the person in crisis receive continuing care. An initial response by a mental health care provider can be lifesaving for persons in crisis. Rural areas have the highest suicide rates and high rates of individuals in crisis. Mental health care providers are often not available at the times when they are most needed. The last two years have been very hard in our communities and the effects are seen among the youth. They should get help when they need it and not have to wait for an appointment.

Both law enforcement and mental health clinicians bring a specific skillset to a situation, and when riding together they can make sure an individual gets access to the services that they need. They can stay with the person and not be called away to another emergency call. There is a clear benefit to everyone when services can be provided and a person can be stabilized. This pilot program will promote community safety and trust. This bill brings forward an important piece of the puzzle. Organized retail crime syndicates prey on those with mental illness and substance addiction. Protecting retail customers and employees is paramount. This bill will address one piece of the puzzle to help those with mental illness. This is especially needed in rural communities.

This bill provides a great step toward addressing issues related to mental health and

substance abuse comprehensively. First responders are dealing with an increase in these types of emergency calls. An idea for this grant program is to award a grant to a small rural city or group of rural communities as these issues are not specific to large urban areas. Small rural communities are at a disadvantage in dealing with mental health crises. Many are without adequate funding or resources.

(Opposed) None.

(Other) A majority of 911 calls receive the appropriate dispatch or fire department of law enforcement resources. But there are some calls for service that would be better served by an alternate response, or a response in addition to other first responders. This is often the case with situations involving mental health, homelessness, and addiction. Local jurisdictions are trying to figure out how best to address this issue. This bill helps cities by creating a grant program. The pilot project should award programs in cities that struggle with lack of access to appropriate resources. The programs should complement and not supplant other efforts. This is an excellent opportunity to expand additional resources into communities and help provide the right responses to the right individuals.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Representative Jacquelin Maycumber, prime sponsor; Mark Schuller, City of Cheney; Stacey Roark, Washington Council of Police and Sheriffs; and Mark Johnson, Washington Retail Association.

(Other) Adam Wasserman, Emergency Management Division.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.