
Health Care & Wellness Committee

HB 2245

Brief Description: Establishing co-response services and training as an essential component of the crisis care continuum.

Sponsors: Representatives Bronoske, Eslick, Ramel, Senn, Reed, Macri, Leavitt and Davis.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires the University of Washington (UW) School of Social Work to establish a co-response training academy pilot program and a peer support program for co-responders.
- Requires the UW School of Social Work to explore the development of credentialing opportunities for co-responders.
- Requires the UW School of Social Work to provide an annual assessment to the Governor and the Legislature regarding the co-response workforce.

Hearing Date: 1/17/24

Staff: Emily Poole (786-7106).

Background:

Co-Response Programs.

Co-response generally describes when first responders are paired with non-law enforcement behavioral health professionals when responding to emergency situations involving behavioral or mental health crises.

In 2022, the Legislature passed SSB 5644, which required the University of Washington (UW), in collaboration with the Co-Responder Outreach Alliance, to facilitate or establish training and

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other professional development opportunities and resources for individuals working in co-response. Among other requirements, the UW is required to host an annual conference that draws state and national co-responders. The UW was also required to provide an assessment regarding the co-response workforce to the Governor and the Legislature by June 30, 2023.

Summary of Bill:

Pilot Program.

The UW School of Social Work is required to conduct a pilot program to establish a co-response education training academy offering certification in co-response best practices. The pilot program must begin in three behavioral health administrative service organizations (BHASOs) with a significant co-response footprint and expand to all 10 BHASOs by 2026.

The UW School of Social Work may provide grants to small and rural co-response programs to offset the costs associated with sending staff to receive training.

Licensure and Certification for Co-Responders.

The UW School of Social Work is required to explore, in collaboration with the Department of Health, the development of a credential for licensure for behavioral health co-responders.

The UW School of Social Work is also required to explore the feasibility of collaborations across the state's institutions of higher education to develop a crisis training certificate for associate, bachelor, and master's degree candidates who want to become crisis responders.

Peer Support Program.

The UW School of Social Work is required to collaborate with a statewide organization focused on co-response outreach to develop a statewide peer support program designed to assist co-response professionals who have faced traumatic incidents in the course of their co-response activities.

Other Requirements.

The requirement that UW provides an assessment to the Governor and the Legislature regarding the co-response workforce by June 30, 2023, is established as an annual requirement, beginning June 30, 2025. The UW School of Social Work must also collaborate with stakeholders in the field of co-response to increase the capacity of the annual co-response conference to include crisis responders across a variety of programs.

Definition of Co-Response.

"Co-response" is generally defined to mean a multidisciplinary partnership between first responders and human services professionals that responds to emergency situations involving behavioral or mental health crises and people experiencing complex medical needs. Co-responders may provide call-for-service crisis response and follow-up care including case management, resource navigation, and transportation.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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