
**Human Services, Youth, & Early
Learning Committee**

2SSB 5943

Brief Description: Conducting a feasibility study regarding a resource data tool to connect Washington residents to services and resources.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators Gildon, Boehnke, Hasegawa and Wilson, C.).

Brief Summary of Second Substitute Bill

- Directs the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) to conduct a feasibility study regarding a resource data tool for the purpose of digitally connecting members of the public to state services with a report due by December 1, 2024.
- Directs DSHS to convene an advisory group to provide feedback and advice regarding the feasibility study.

Hearing Date: 2/20/24

Staff: Carter Gale (786-7290) and Luke Wickham (786-7146).

Background:

Washington 211.

211 is the official state dialing code for public access to information and referrals for health and human services and for information about access to services after disasters. The Washington Information Network 211 (WIN 211) is a 501(c)(3) corporation that administers the 211 program. WIN 211 awards grants to approved organization to act as providers of 211 services. Currently, there are eight regional providers.

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.

When a resident dials 211 they reach an information and referral specialist who assesses the caller's needs and provides a list of referrals to available resources. Teletypewriter services are available for the deaf and hard or hearing, and interpreter services are also available. The WIN 211 also maintains an online, searchable database of resources for categories such as: disabilities, employment, food, transportation, mental health, domestic violence, health care, shelter, and financial assistance. This data can be filtered by categories such as: location, age group, days the resource is open, payment requirements, language accessibility, and focus populations. Information about both public and private resources is collected by the WIN 211 staff, and providers can submit new or updated information through an online portal.

State 911 Coordination Office.

The 911 emergency communication system (911) is the public network, database, and on-premises equipment that is accessed by dialing 911 and that enables reporting police, fire, medical, or other emergency situations to a public safety answering point. Counties must provide or participate in multi-county wide 911 so that the service is available throughout the state, and counties may request a Washington State Patrol (WSP) public safety answering point to receive 911 calls from a specific geographical area. The State 911 Coordination Office, established in the Emergency Management Division of the Military Department, is tasked with:

- administering the 911 account funded with all receipts from the state E-911 excise taxes;
- providing and supporting 911 emergency communications systems which may include procurement, funding, ownership, and management;
- assisting the counties and WSP's public safety answering points by distributing funding; and
- establishing rules concerning the standards, funding, and eligible components of the 911 emergency communications system.

988.

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is a national network of behavioral health crisis centers that are linked by a single toll-free dialing code: 988. When a person calls 988, the call is routed to a crisis call center or designated 988 contact hub (988 hub) based on the caller's area code. There are three crisis call centers or 988 hubs in Washington, each serving a different geographical region. Counselors at these crisis call centers or 988 hubs assess callers for behavioral health risks, provide counseling services, engage emergency services when necessary, and offer referrals to behavioral health services. The Department of Health has the primary responsibility for establishing and designating 988 hubs, and the Health Care Authority is responsible for developing and implementing the crisis response system and services to support the work of the 988 hubs.

Summary of Bill:

Feasibility Study.

Subject to appropriations, the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) is required to conduct a feasibility study regarding a resource data tool for the purpose of digitally connecting

members of the public to state services. This feasibility study must include recommendations for a mobile application for the purpose of assisting users in accessing state and private resources and services. Among other relevant topics, the feasibility study must examine what other digital public resources exist to prevent potential redundancy of programs and to promote administrative efficiency. The feasibility study must also consider language access, alternative communications options, and equitable access for individuals living with disabilities or limited access to internet services. The feasibility study must be submitted to the Governor and appropriate committees of the Legislature by December 1, 2024.

Advisory Group.

Subject to appropriations, DSHS shall convene an advisory group to inform the feasibility study.

The advisory group shall be composed of:

- representatives from state agencies;
- community members in the area of system referral and resource navigation; and
- individuals with lived experience receiving public benefits.

The DSHS is required to invite as advisory group participants representatives from:

- Washington Information Network 211;
- the 911 Coordination Office;
- the Department of Health and the Health Care Authority involved with the 988 lifeline; WithinReach;
- Community Living Connections;
- First 5 Fundamentals;
- Washington Communities for Children;
- Washington Resource Data Collaborative;
- Help Me Grow; and
- Accountable Communities of Health.

The advisory group must approve the feasibility study and include a plan and framework for launching the resource data tool. The group will be dissolved on December 1, 2024.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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