

The Florida Senate
BILL ANALYSIS AND FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT

(This document is based on the provisions contained in the legislation as of the latest date listed below.)

Prepared By: The Professional Staff of the Committee on Military and Veterans Affairs, Space, and Domestic Security

BILL: SB 326

INTRODUCER: Senator Young

SUBJECT: Services for Veterans and their Families

DATE: November 15, 2017 REVISED: _____

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	Ryon	Ryon	MS	Pre-meeting
2.			CF	
3.			AP	

I. Summary:

SB 326 establishes the Florida Veterans’ Care Coordination Program (program) within the Department of Children and Families (DCF) to provide statewide dedicated behavioral healthcare referral services to veterans and their families through Florida’s 211 Network. The new program will model the pilot program begun in 2014 by the Crisis Center of Tampa Bay and the Florida Department of Veterans’ Affairs. The bill requires DCF to contract with the managing entities to enter into agreements with Florida 211 Network participants to provide program services.

The bill appropriates \$2,000,155 in recurring General Revenue to the DCF for the program.

II. Present Situation:

Florida Veterans

There are more than 21 million living veterans in the United States, of which, over 1.5 million reside in Florida. This makes Florida the state with the third largest veteran population, behind California and Texas.¹

Section 1.01(14), F.S., defines a “veteran” as a person who served in the active military, naval, or air service and who was discharged or released under honorable conditions only or who later received an upgraded discharge under honorable conditions. To receive benefits as a “wartime veteran,” a veteran must have served in a campaign or expedition for which a campaign badge has been authorized or during a specified period of wartime service.² The qualifying periods of

¹ Florida Department of Veterans’ Affairs, *About Us*, <http://floridavets.org/about-us/> (last visited Nov. 14, 2017)

² Section 1.01(14), F.S.

wartime service include the World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, the Persian Gulf War, Operation Enduring Freedom, and Operation Iraqi Freedom.³

Veterans and Mental Health

Mental Health Among Veterans

According to the National Center for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, between 11 to 20 percent of veterans who served in Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom have Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) in a given year.⁴ Additionally, 12 percent of Gulf War Veterans and 15 percent of Vietnam Veterans have PTSD, and up to 30 percent of Vietnam Veterans will have PTSD in their lifetime.⁵

A 2016 U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA) analysis on veteran suicide found that in 2014:

- An average of 20 veterans died by suicide each day. Six of the 20 were recent users of USDVA Veteran Health Administration services in 2013 or 2014; and
- Veterans accounted for 18 percent of all deaths by suicide among U.S. adults and constituted 8.5 percent of the U.S. adult population (ages 18 and older).⁶

Federal Mental Health Care Services for Veterans

An individual who served in the active military, naval, or air service, and who was not dishonorably discharged, may qualify for USDVA health care benefits.⁷ USDVA health benefits include necessary inpatient hospital care and outpatient services to promote, preserve, or restore a veteran's health. USDVA medical facilities provide a wide range of services, including mental health services.⁸ The USDVA provides specialty inpatient and outpatient mental health services at its medical centers and community-based outpatient clinics; additionally, readjustment counseling services may be available at veteran centers across the nation.⁹ For veterans with serious mental illness, USDVA offers care tailored to help with their specific diagnosis and to promote recovery. Serious mental illnesses include a variety of diagnoses (for example, schizophrenia, depression or bipolar disorder, PTSD, and substance use disorders) that result in significant problems functioning in the community.¹⁰

³ Id.

⁴ National Center for PTSD, *How Common is PTSD? PTSD and the Military* (Oct. 2016), available at <http://www.ptsd.va.gov/public/PTSD-overview/basics/how-common-is-ptsd.asp> (last visited Nov. 14, 2017).

⁵ Id.

⁶ U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Office of Suicide Prevention, *Suicide Among Veterans and Other Americans 2001-2014* (Aug. 2016), available at: <https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/docs/2016suicidedatareport.pdf> (last visited Nov. 13, 2017).

⁷ U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, *Federal Benefits for Veterans, Dependents and Survivors*, available at: http://www.va.gov/opa/publications/benefits_book/benefits_chap01.asp (last visited Nov. 14, 2017).

⁸ U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, *Health Benefits*, available at: http://www.va.gov/HEALTHBENEFITS/access/medical_benefits_package.asp (last visited Nov. 14, 2017).

⁹ Id.

¹⁰ U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, *Guide to VA Mental Health Services*, at 10, available at http://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/docs/MHG_English.pdf (last visited Nov. 14, 2017).

The USDVA operates seven medical centers in Florida located in Miami, Tampa (2), West Palm Beach, Gainesville, Lake City, and Orlando.¹¹ The USDVA also operates outpatient clinics for health care and veteran centers for counseling throughout Florida.

Federal Veterans Crisis Line

The Veterans Crisis Line (VCL) is a resource for veterans developed by the USDVA to connect veterans and current service members in crisis and their families and friends with information from qualified responders through a confidential, toll-free hotline, online chat, and text messaging service.¹² The VCL was launched in 2007 and over the course of the program has answered more than 2.8 million calls, engaged in more than 332,000 online chats, responded to more than 67,000 texts, and initiated the dispatch of emergency services to callers in crisis nearly 74,000 times.¹³

Department of Children and Families

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Program

The Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF) administers a statewide system of safety-net services for substance abuse and mental health (SAMH) prevention, treatment, and recovery.¹⁴ It serves children and adults who are otherwise unable to obtain these services (such as individuals who are not covered under Medicaid or private insurance and do not have the financial ability to pay for the services themselves). SAMH programs include a range of prevention, acute interventions (such as crisis stabilization or detoxification), residential, transitional housing, outpatient treatment, and recovery support services.

Behavioral Health Managing Entities

In 2001, the Legislature authorized DCF to implement behavioral health managing entities as the management structure for the delivery of local mental health and substance abuse services.¹⁵ Managing entities are nonprofit organizations under contract to the DCF to manage the day-to-day operational delivery of behavioral health services through an organized system of care.¹⁶ DCF currently contracts with seven managing entities that in turn contract with local service providers for the delivery of mental health and substance abuse providers. The managing entities are responsible for the development, planning, administration, implementation, and management of behavioral health care in their areas.

¹¹ U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, *VISN 8: VA Sunshine Healthcare Network*, available at: <https://www.va.gov/directory/guide/region.asp?map=1&ID=8> (last visited Nov. 14, 2017).

¹² Veterans Crisis Line, *FAQs*, available at <http://www.veteranscrisisline.net/About/FAQs.aspx> (last visited Nov. 14, 2017).

¹³ Veterans Crisis Line, *About the Veterans Crisis Line*, available at <http://www.veteranscrisisline.net/About/AboutVeteransCrisisLine.aspx> (last visited Nov. 14, 2017).

¹⁴ DCF's Substance Abuse and Mental Health Program is governed by chs. 394 and 397, F.S.

¹⁵ Ch. 2001-191, Laws of Fla.

¹⁶ The seven managing entities are Big Bend Community-Based Care (Northwest Region), Lutheran Services of Florida (Northeast Region), Central Florida Cares Health System (Central Region), Central Florida Behavioral Health Network (SunCoast Region), Southeast Florida Behavioral Health Network (Southeast Region), Broward Behavioral Health Coalition (Southeast Region), and South Florida Behavioral Health Network (Southern Region).

Florida 211 Network

Section 408.918, F.S., establishes the Florida 211 Network, authorizing the planning, development, and implementation of a statewide network to serve as the single point of coordination for information and referral for health and human services.

A 211 network is a telephone-based service offered by nonprofit and public agencies throughout Florida and the United States that provides free, confidential information and referral services 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The network helps callers identify and connect with health and human service programs that can meet a variety of needs, including food, housing, employment, health care, crisis counseling, and more. In Florida, services are available statewide through any cell phone provider as well as through landlines in all 67 counties by dialing 2-1-1.¹⁷ In order to participate in the Florida 211 Network, a 211 provider must be fully accredited by the National Alliance of Information and Referral Services or have received approval to operate, pending accreditation, from its affiliate, the Florida Alliance of Information and Referral Services.¹⁸ There are a total of 14 Florida 211 Network certified providers.¹⁹

The Crisis Center of Tampa Bay Pilot Project

In 2014, the Legislature appropriated \$150,000 to the Crisis Center of Tampa Bay (CCTB) to create a pilot project expanding existing Florida 211 services to veterans in Hillsborough, Pasco, Pinellas, Polk, and Manatee counties.²⁰ In November 2014, the CCTB, through the pilot project, expanded services to veterans and launched the Florida Veterans Support Line (1-844-MYFLVET).²¹ By calling the Florida Veterans Support Line, veterans in the Tampa Bay region are able to speak with a fellow veteran and offered:

- Comprehensive information and referral to USDVA-funded services and other community-based services;
- Assistance and support provided by a peer who has experienced the transition from military back to civilian life; and
- Care coordination services, including system navigation, advocacy, and ongoing support.²²

During fiscal year 2016-17 and the first part of fiscal year 2017-18, the CCTB fielded a total of 7,373 calls on the Florida Veterans Support Line. Of the 7,373 calls received:

- 68 percent of callers were veterans or servicemembers;
- 27 percent of callers were the spouse, child/dependent, or a relative of a veteran or servicemember;
- 59 percent of callers were seeking behavioral health services;
- 40 percent of callers were seeking financial assistance; and

¹⁷ Florida Alliance of Information and Referral Services, available at <http://www.flairs.org/> (last visited Nov. 14, 2017).

¹⁸ Section 408.918(2), F.S.

¹⁹ Florida Alliance of Information & Referral Services, Florida 2-1-1 Network Map (Feb. 2, 2017), on file with Senate Committee on Military and Veterans Affairs, Space, and Domestic Security.

²⁰ Line item 595, proviso, ch. 2014-51, Laws of Fla.

²¹ Crisis Center of Tampa Bay Blog, *Florida Veterans Support Line*, (Nov. 10, 2014). Available at: <https://www.crisiscenter.com/florida-veterans-support-line/> (last visited Nov. 14, 2017).

²² Crisis Center of Tampa Bay, *Florida Veterans Support Line*, available at: <https://www.crisiscenter.com/what-we-do/2-1-1-contact-center/florida-veterans-support-line/> (last visited Nov. 14, 2017).

- 1 percent of callers were seeking employment assistance.²³

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

The bill creates s. 394.9087, F.S., to require the Department of Children and Families (DCF) in consultation with the Florida Alliance of Information and Referral Services to establish the Florida Veterans' Care Coordination Program (program). DCF will contract with managing entities to provide program services through Florida 211 Network participants.

The program will provide wartime veterans, as defined in s. 1.01(14), F.S., and their families dedicated behavioral healthcare referral services, especially mental health and substance abuse services, through the existing 211 infrastructure. DCF is to model the program after the pilot project conducted in 2014 by the Crisis Center of Tampa Bay and the Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs.

The bill specifies that the goals of the program are to:

- Prevent suicides by veterans;
- Increase the use of U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA) programs and services by veterans; and
- Increase the number of veterans who use of other available community-based programs and services.

The bill requires that program services be made available statewide by program teams operated by the Florida 211 Network participants, as authorized by s. 408.918, F.S. The program teams are required to provide referral services to veterans and their families and expand the existing Florida 211 Network to include the optimal range of veterans' service organization and programs.

The bill requires the program to provide a number of services. The program must provide:

- Telephonic peer support;
- Crisis intervention;
- Communication of information and referral resources;
- Treatment coordination, including coordination of follow-up care;
- Suicide assessment;
- Promotion of safety and wellness of veterans and their families, including continuous support;
- Resource coordination to facilitate acceptance, enrollment, and attendance of veterans and their families in USDVA programs and services and community-based programs and services;
- Immediate needs assessments, including safety planning; and
- Data analysis to improve efficiency of program services to veterans and their families.

²³ Crisis Center of Tampa Bay Presentation to the Senate Committee on Military and Veterans Affairs, Space, and Domestic Security on October 12, 2017.

In addition to the requirement for services, the bill also requires the program teams to take certain actions. The program teams must:

- Track the number of requests from callers who are veterans or family members of veterans;
- Follow-up with callers to determine whether they have acted on referrals or received the needed assistance, or if additional referrals or advocacy are needed;
- Develop and implement communication strategies (media promotions, public service announcements, print and internet stories, community presentations) to inform veterans and their families about available services; and
- Document all calls and capture all necessary data to improve outreach to veterans and their families.

The bill requires DCF to report on the program's implementation to the Governor, President of the Senate, and Speaker of the House of Representatives by December 15, 2019, using data provided to DCF by the Florida 211 Network participants. The contents of the report must include, but are not limited to:

- The number of calls received;
- Demographic information of callers;
- The nature of the call;
- The outcome of the call;
- Services received as a result of the call;
- Followup by the program team;
- The impact of the program on veterans' quality of life; and
- Caller satisfaction with the program.

The bill appropriates \$2,000,155 million in recurring General Revenue funds to the DCF to implement the program in Fiscal Year 2018-2019.

The bill provides an effective date of July 1, 2018.

IV. Constitutional Issues:

A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

None.

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

V. Fiscal Impact Statement:**A. Tax/Fee Issues:**

None.

B. Private Sector Impact:

None.

C. Government Sector Impact:

The bill appropriates \$2,000,155 million in recurring General Revenue funds to the Department of Children and Families. The early treatment of veterans for behavioral health care may reduce costs to the local, state and federal government programs serving veterans.

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

None.

VII. Related Issues:

None.

VIII. Statutes Affected:

This bill creates section 394.9087 of the Florida Statutes.

IX. Additional Information:**A. Committee Substitute – Statement of Changes:**

(Summarizing differences between the Committee Substitute and the prior version of the bill.)

None.

B. Amendments:

None.