

**SB135 ENROLLED**



1 SB135  
2 GQHQCCC-3  
3 By Senators Jones, Chesteen, Butler, Kelley, Stewart,  
4 Coleman-Madison, Coleman, Barfoot  
5 RFD: Veterans and Military Affairs  
6 First Read: 20-Feb-24



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1 Enrolled, An Act,

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3 Relating to the Alabama Department of Mental Health; to  
4 add Chapter 58 of Title 22, Code of Alabama 1975; to require  
5 the Alabama Department of Mental Health to work  
6 collaboratively with the Alabama Department of Veterans  
7 Affairs to develop a comprehensive plan to address Alabama  
8 veterans' behavioral health needs and to provide funding of  
9 certain programs addressing specific behavioral health needs.

10 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF ALABAMA:

11 Section 1. Chapter 58 is added to Title 22, Code of  
12 Alabama 1975, to read as follows:

13 Chapter 58

14 §22-58-1

15 As used in this chapter, the following terms have the  
16 following meanings:

17 (1) ADMH. The Alabama Department of Mental Health.

18 (2) ADMH COMMISSIONER. The Commissioner of the Alabama  
19 Department of Mental Health.

20 (3) ADVA. The Alabama Department of Veterans Affairs.

21 (4) ADVA COMMISSIONER. The Commissioner of the Alabama  
22 Department of Veterans Affairs.

23 (5) BEHAVIORAL HEALTH CARE. The prevention, diagnosis,  
24 and treatment of mental health conditions, substance use  
25 disorders, and behavioral health crisis.

26 (6) COMPREHENSIVE PLAN. The comprehensive plan  
27 established pursuant to this chapter, as may be amended from  
28 time to time, to address the behavioral health needs of



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29 veterans as a supplement to services already offered in  
30 Alabama.

31 (7) PTSD. Post traumatic stress disorder.

32 (8) RECOVERY. A process of change through which  
33 individuals improve their health and wellness, live a  
34 self-directed life, and strive to reach their full potential.

35 (9) TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY or TBI. An injury to the  
36 brain caused by a forceful bump, blast, or jolt to the head or  
37 body, or from an object that pierces the skull and enters the  
38 brain, which can be the result of external forces, including,  
39 but not limited to, assault or motor vehicle collisions.

40 (10) VETERAN. Any current resident of the state who:

41 a. Served in the active military, naval, air, or space  
42 forces of the United States who was discharged or released  
43 under conditions other than dishonorable;

44 b. Is or was a member of the Army National Guard or Air  
45 National Guard who was discharged or released from service  
46 under conditions other than dishonorable; or

47 c. Is or was a member of the reserve component of the  
48 Armed Forces who was discharged or released from service under  
49 conditions other than dishonorable.

50 §22-58-2

51 The Legislature finds the following:

52 (1) ADMH is the state's lead agency for this act, as  
53 well as the expert in the following areas:

54 a. Knowledge and expertise in behavioral health care  
55 services.

56 b. Certifications and implementation of the Certified



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57 Community Behavioral Health Clinic (CCBHC) model.

58 c. State and national standards of behavioral health  
59 care, treatment, and services.

60 d. Infrastructure and best practices needed to  
61 implement behavioral health care treatment, recovery, and  
62 prevention services.

63 (2) ADVA is the state's expert in the following areas:

64 a. Military experience and culture.

65 b. Relationships and trust with Alabama veterans.

66 c. Knowledge of veterans' state and federal benefits  
67 and resources.

68 d. Types of support needed for veterans to reintegrate  
69 into civilian life.

70 §22-58-3

71 (a) The Veterans Mental Health Steering Committee is  
72 established. The purpose of the committee is to develop a  
73 comprehensive plan to address the behavioral health needs of  
74 Alabama veterans.

75 (b) The committee shall include the following  
76 individuals:

77 (1) The ADMH Commissioner, or his or her designee. The  
78 ADMH Commissioner shall chair of the committee.

79 (2) The ADVA Commissioner, or his or her designee. The  
80 ADVA Commissioner shall vice-chair the committee.

81 (3) The Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services  
82 Commissioner, or his or her designee.

83 (4) The Adjutant General of the Alabama National Guard,  
84 or his or her designee.



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85           (5) During their tenure as legislators, the lead  
86 sponsor for House Bill 197 and the lead sponsor for Senate  
87 Bill 135 from the 2024 Regular Legislative Session, who, upon  
88 leaving the Legislature, shall be replaced by the respective  
89 chairs of the Senate and House Veterans and Military Affairs  
90 Committees, or their designees.

91           (6) Representatives of two veterans service  
92 organizations with expertise in mental health, substance use,  
93 peer support, and other culturally competent care, appointed  
94 by the ADVA Commissioner, who shall serve for initial terms of  
95 one year and three years, respectively.

96           (7) Representatives of one other veterans support  
97 organization, appointed by the ADVA Commissioner, who shall  
98 serve for an initial term of four years, respectively.

99           (8) Three mental health and substance use providers  
100 certified by ADMH who also serve veterans, appointed by the  
101 ADMH Commissioner, who shall serve for initial terms of one,  
102 two, and three years, respectively.

103           (9) The Associate Commissioner of the ADMH Division of  
104 Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services shall serve as an  
105 ex-officio, non-voting member of the committee.

106           (10) The Veterans Well-Being Program Manager of the  
107 ADVA shall serve as an ex-officio, non-voting member of the  
108 committee.

109           (11) The Governor or his or her designee.

110           (12) The Lieutenant Governor or his or her designee.

111           (13) The Speaker of the Alabama House of  
112 Representatives or his or her designee.



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113 (14) The President Pro Tempore of the Senate, or his or  
114 her designee.

115 (15) The minority leaders of the House of  
116 Representatives and the Senate, or their designees.

117 (c) All appointing authorities shall coordinate their  
118 appointments so that diversity of gender, race, and  
119 geographical areas are reflective of the makeup of this state.  
120 To the extent practicable, appointing authorities are  
121 encouraged to prioritize appointments of service members,  
122 veterans, and family members of veterans. The designee of a  
123 committee member shall not be a health care provider or mental  
124 health care provider.

125 (d) Meetings of the committee shall be held no less  
126 than on a quarterly basis, or upon the call of the chair or a  
127 majority of committee members. Appointments to the committee  
128 shall be made by July 1, 2024, and the first meeting of the  
129 committee shall be held by September 1, 2024. All meetings  
130 shall comply with the Open Meetings Act.

131 §22-58-4

132 (a) ADMH shall work collaboratively with ADVA,  
133 leveraging each other's roles, relationships, and expertise.  
134 The committee shall develop a comprehensive plan in response  
135 to a review of the following:

136 (1) The current state of Alabama veterans' mental  
137 health and rates of substance use.

138 (2) Mental health, substance use, recovery, and other  
139 veteran support services in Alabama.

140 (3) Needs assessments previously conducted for the



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141 purpose of identifying gaps in services and support. The  
142 review of needs assessments shall include qualitative and  
143 quantitative feedback of post-9/11 veterans in Alabama, as  
144 well as the need for additional services and coordination of  
145 existing services.

146 (b) The review shall be completed by January 1, 2025.

147 (c) The committee shall consult with others, to include  
148 the United States Department of Veterans Affairs and the  
149 Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, as  
150 appropriate, during the development of the comprehensive plan.

151 (d) ADMH shall align the comprehensive plan with state  
152 and national behavioral health standards.

153 §22-58-5

154 (a) ADMH may establish pilot projects utilizing  
155 existing evidence-based services certified by ADMH or  
156 organizations which agree to become certified by ADMH. Pilot  
157 projects shall be awarded funding by ADMH through a fair and  
158 transparent request for proposal process. Pilot projects may  
159 begin upon the appropriation of funds and certification of  
160 projects.

161 (b) The pilot projects may include any of the  
162 following:

163 (1) Eye movement desensitization and reprocessing  
164 therapy as an evidence-based treatment for PTSD.

165 (2) TBI screenings integrated into behavioral health  
166 services.

167 (3) Integrated behavioral health and primary care  
168 models.



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169 (4) Agencies that have successfully met the SAMHSA  
170 criteria for the CCBHC model of care as certified by ADMH.

171 (c) Pilot projects shall be based on the findings of  
172 the comprehensive plan.

173 §22-58-6

174 ADMH and ADVA shall present the proposed comprehensive  
175 plan to the respective Veterans and Military Affairs  
176 Committees of the Alabama House of Representatives and the  
177 Alabama Senate for their review and input no later than April  
178 1, 2025. ADMH shall then submit the proposed comprehensive  
179 plan to the Governor by June 30, 2025, for review and  
180 approval. The Governor shall act on the comprehensive plan no  
181 later than August 31, 2025.

182 §22-58-7

183 (a) Upon approval of the Governor and subject to  
184 sufficient appropriations, ADMH shall implement the  
185 comprehensive plan with continued input from ADVA.

186 (b) ADMH shall contract with multiple entities to  
187 implement pilot projects as described in Section 22-58-4 and  
188 provide services under this chapter. Contracts for the  
189 procurement of services shall be awarded on a competitive  
190 basis through a request for proposal process. Both ADMH and  
191 ADVA shall work collaboratively in the review and selection of  
192 the proposals in a fair and transparent manner.

193 (c) ADMH and ADVA shall comply with federal ethics laws  
194 in regard to its role in this chapter.

195 (d) Implementation of this chapter shall be contingent  
196 upon new funds appropriated by the Legislature. Nothing in this





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197 act shall require existing resources to be diverted for this  
198 purpose.

199 (e) All pilot projects and services implemented under  
200 this act shall comply with all requirements, including data  
201 reporting and certification standards, set out by ADMH. If a  
202 recipient of funds fails to meet those requirements, ADMH may  
203 demand recovery of the full amount of funds awarded. Upon  
204 notification of any demand, ADMH shall also notify the  
205 committee outlining the rationale for taking that action.

206 (f) During the committee's regular meetings, ADMH shall  
207 update the committee on the progress of the comprehensive  
208 plan's implementation.

209 (g) The committee shall conduct an annual review and may  
210 make formal recommendations regarding the comprehensive plan.  
211 ADMH shall align these recommendations to state and national  
212 behavioral health standards and submit them to the Governor for  
213 approval.

214 (h) To inform this annual review, ADMH shall report  
215 annually to the committee the approximate number of veterans  
216 served through the pilot projects, the services provided by  
217 pilot projects, and the amount of funding expended for this  
218 purpose, as well as other available datapoints as determined by  
219 the committee.

220 (i) Nothing in this act shall supersede or diminish the  
221 existing powers enumerated to ADMH.

222 Section 2. This act shall become effective June 1,  
223 2024.



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President and Presiding Officer of the Senate

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Speaker of the House of Representatives

SB135

Senate 30-Apr-24

I hereby certify that the within Act originated in and passed the Senate, as amended.

Patrick Harris,  
Secretary.

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House of Representatives

Passed: 08-May-24

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By: Senator Jones