
SUBSTITUTE HOUSE BILL 1181

State of Washington

67th Legislature

2021 Regular Session

By House Housing, Human Services & Veterans (originally sponsored by Representatives Orwall, Boehnke, Callan, Leavitt, Davis, Dolan, Valdez, Young, Riccelli, Lekanoff, Barkis, Peterson, Shewmake, Bronoske, Macri, and Morgan)

1 AN ACT Relating to establishing programs and measures to prevent
2 suicide among veterans and military members; amending RCW 43.70.445;
3 adding new sections to chapter 43.60A RCW; adding a new section to
4 chapter 18.130 RCW; adding a new section to chapter 46.18 RCW; adding
5 a new section to chapter 43.216 RCW; adding a new section to chapter
6 74.04 RCW; adding a new section to chapter 9.41 RCW; creating a new
7 section; providing an expiration date; and declaring an emergency.

8 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

9 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** (1) Suicide is a public health issue that
10 affects many Washington families and communities daily. Over the last
11 10 years, Washington state has been at the forefront of suicide
12 prevention, investing more in upstream suicide prevention strategies
13 and supports with the goal of reducing suicide by 20 percent by 2025.

14 (2) At the request of the governor, in 2020 Washington
15 stakeholders engaged in a national and statewide initiative to end
16 veteran and military member suicide. This initiative culminated in a
17 new state plan to educate providers and help them address the unique
18 needs of veterans and military members, particularly those in
19 transition to civilian life; and to provide resources and supports
20 including improved lethal means safety training. The purpose of this
21 act is to support the implementation of that plan.

1 (3) Service members, veterans, and their families are at a higher
2 risk of being affected by suicide as experiences prior to enlistment,
3 during service, and transition from service can contribute to
4 suicidal thoughts and behaviors.

5 (4) Washington is home to 544,290 veterans, 60,699 active duty
6 service members, 17,941 guard and reserve service members, and
7 2,000,000 military and veteran family members. Although veterans
8 themselves make up only seven percent of the Washington population,
9 they account for 19 percent of total suicides in the state. Nearly
10 1,000 veterans have died by suicide in Washington state over the last
11 five years. More than two-thirds of veterans who died by suicide in
12 Washington used a firearm.

13 (5) Family members of veterans who die by suicide are at higher
14 risk for future suicide due to the exposure of experiencing suicide
15 loss. Research shows for every suicide that occurs, 135 people suffer
16 from the effects either directly or indirectly, meaning veteran
17 suicides impact a community of 2,600,000 people.

18 (6) There is no one path to suicide, but life experiences, moral
19 injury, trauma, culture, and health can play a major role in suicidal
20 behavior. Military and veteran culture in particular includes stigma
21 around mental wellness and help-seeking behavior, emphasizes
22 reliability on group cohesion, and facilitates access,
23 comfortability, and familiarity with lethal means such as firearms.
24 Additionally, a significant number of veterans do not seek care
25 within the veterans administration system.

26 (7) The legislature intends to address the tragedy of suicide
27 amongst veterans, military members, and their families through
28 support of professionals and community and peer organizations serving
29 veterans, cultural changes that support help-seeking behaviors, and
30 investments in education, training, prevention, and care.

31 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 43.60A
32 RCW to read as follows:

33 (1) There is created in the department a suicide prevention
34 community-based services grant program. The purpose of the grant
35 program is to provide suicide prevention, peer support, and other
36 assistance to at-risk and transitioning veterans and military members
37 and their families in their communities.

38 (2) Subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for the
39 specific purposes provided in this section and amounts disbursed from

1 the veterans and military members suicide prevention account created
2 in section 3 of this act, the department, in consultation with the
3 University of Washington, must establish a process to receive,
4 review, process, and award grants to organizations, including
5 nonprofit and peer support community programs, that address veterans,
6 military members, and their families who may be at risk of suicide
7 and other mental health crises. Priority should be given to
8 organizations using peer support models that use evidence-based,
9 research-based, or promising practices.

10 (3) The department shall report to the legislature annually
11 beginning July 1, 2022, on grant recipients, number of veterans and
12 military members served, and the types of services offered by grant
13 recipients.

14 (4) The University of Washington shall evaluate the effectiveness
15 of each grant program recipient providing suicide prevention and peer
16 support services to veterans, military members, and their families
17 who may be at risk of suicide and other mental health crises.

18 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** A new section is added to chapter 43.60A
19 RCW to read as follows:

20 (1) The veterans and military members suicide prevention account
21 is created in the custody of the state treasurer. The account shall
22 consist of funds appropriated by the legislature, revenues received
23 from the prevent veteran suicide emblem under section 8 of this act,
24 and all receipts from gifts, grants, bequests, devises, or other
25 donations from public and private sources to support veterans and
26 military members suicide prevention measures. Expenditures from the
27 account may be used only for the purposes provided in subsection (3)
28 of this section. Only the director or the director's designee may
29 authorize expenditures from the account. The account is subject to
30 allotment procedures under chapter 43.88 RCW, but an appropriation is
31 not required for expenditures.

32 (2) (a) The department may request and accept nondedicated
33 contributions, grants, or gifts in cash or otherwise, and voluntary
34 donations for deposit into the account, including funds generated by
35 voluntary donations under (b) of this subsection.

36 (b) The department may accept, for deposit into the account,
37 voluntary donations from persons who are: (i) Applying for a
38 concealed pistol license or renewal of a concealed pistol license; or
39 (ii) undergoing a background check under chapter 9.41 RCW in

1 connection with the purchase of a firearm from a firearms dealer. The
2 department shall coordinate with local law enforcement agencies, the
3 department of licensing, and firearms dealers licensed under chapter
4 9.41 RCW to develop a form and process for publicizing and collecting
5 voluntary donations under this subsection. The department and the
6 department of licensing shall post educational information regarding
7 the voluntary donation provisions of this section on their websites.

8 (3) All moneys deposited into the account must be used for
9 activities that are dedicated to the benefit of veteran and military
10 member suicide education and prevention including, but not limited
11 to: (a) Expanding the department's peer corps program; and (b)
12 providing programs, peer support, and services that assist veterans
13 and military members in addressing mental health and wellness impacts
14 of military service, trauma, moral injury, and transition to civilian
15 life. Funds may also be used for the suicide prevention community-
16 based services grant program established in section 3 of this act.
17 Funds from the account may not be used to supplant existing funds
18 received by the department nor shall grant recipients use the funds
19 to supplant existing funding.

20 (4) For the purposes of this section the following definitions
21 apply:

22 (a) "Veteran" has the same meaning as provided in RCW 41.04.005
23 and 41.04.007.

24 (b) "Military members" means actively serving members of the
25 national guard or reserves, or active duty military personnel.

26 (c) "Account" means the veterans and military members suicide
27 prevention account.

28 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 4.** A new section is added to chapter 43.60A
29 RCW to read as follows:

30 Beginning December 2021, subject to the availability of amounts
31 appropriated for this specific purpose, the governor's challenge team
32 and service members, veterans, and their families suicide prevention
33 advisory committee shall report to the legislature on a biannual
34 basis regarding implementation of the plan developed by the
35 committee.

36 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 5.** A new section is added to chapter 43.60A
37 RCW to read as follows:

1 Subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for this
2 specific purpose, the department shall:

3 (1) Create and maintain a database of information on nonprofit,
4 for-profit, city, county, state, and federal organizations,
5 providers, and resources that address the mental health, well-being,
6 and suicide prevention of veterans, military members, and their
7 families. The department shall establish criteria for inclusion in
8 the database by July 1, 2021. The department must make the database
9 accessible on its website to veterans, military members, and their
10 families by July 1, 2022;

11 (2) Provide suicide prevention education training and information
12 for veterans, military members, and their families that is accessible
13 through the internet; and

14 (3) By December 1, 2022, create, in consultation with the
15 suicide-safer homes task force, a web-based application to be shared
16 by state agencies and primary care providers with veterans, military
17 members, and their families to provide applicable information and
18 resources including but not limited to benefits, mental health
19 resources, and lethal means safety information.

20 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 6.** A new section is added to chapter 18.130
21 RCW to read as follows:

22 (1) Subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for this
23 specific purpose, the department shall consult with the department of
24 veterans affairs to create educational materials informing health
25 care providers regulated under this chapter about the availability of
26 the nationwide 988 phone number for individuals in crisis to connect
27 with suicide prevention and mental health crisis counselors. The
28 educational materials must include information about the veterans
29 crisis line for veterans and service members, and, beginning July 1,
30 2022, information about the resources developed under section 5 of
31 this act.

32 (2) The department shall:

33 (a) Determine the health professions to which this section shall
34 apply; and

35 (b) Collaborate with the corresponding disciplining authority
36 under RCW 18.130.020 to ensure that the educational materials are
37 distributed electronically to appropriate licensed health care
38 providers when a provider renews his or her license.

1 (3) Beginning July 1, 2022, all health care providers are
2 strongly encouraged to inquire with new patients entering care
3 whether the patient is a veteran, member of the military, or a family
4 member of a veteran or member of the military. If the patient
5 responds in the affirmative, the provider is encouraged to share the
6 educational materials created under this section with the patient.

7 **Sec. 7.** RCW 43.70.445 and 2019 c 415 s 967 are each amended to
8 read as follows:

9 (1)(a) Subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for
10 this specific purpose, a suicide-safer homes task force is
11 established to raise public awareness and increase suicide prevention
12 education among new partners who are in key positions to help reduce
13 suicide. The task force shall be administered and staffed by the
14 University of Washington (~~school of social work~~). To the extent
15 possible, the task force membership should include representatives
16 from geographically diverse and priority populations, including
17 tribal populations.

18 (b) The suicide-safer homes task force comprises a suicide
19 prevention and firearms subcommittee and a suicide prevention and
20 health care subcommittee, as follows:

21 (i) The suicide prevention and firearms subcommittee shall
22 (~~consist of the following members and~~) be cochaired by the
23 University of Washington (~~school of social work and a member~~
24 ~~identified in (b) (i) (A) of this subsection (1):~~

25 ~~(A) A representative of the national rifle association and a~~
26 ~~representative of the second amendment foundation;~~

27 ~~(B)) and a representative of the department of veterans affairs,~~
28 a representative of the national rifle association, or a
29 representative of the Second Amendment foundation. The subcommittee
30 shall also consist of the following members:

31 (A) Two representatives of suicide prevention organizations,
32 selected by the cochaairs of the subcommittee;

33 ~~((C))~~ (B) Two representatives of the firearms industry,
34 selected by the cochaairs of the subcommittee;

35 ~~((D))~~ (C) Two individuals who are suicide attempt survivors or
36 who have experienced suicide loss, selected by the cochaairs of the
37 subcommittee;

38 ~~((E))~~ (D) Two representatives of law enforcement agencies,
39 selected by the cochaairs of the subcommittee;

1 ~~((F))~~ (E) One representative from the department of health;

2 ~~((G))~~ (F) One ~~((representative from the department of veterans~~
3 ~~affairs, and one other))~~ individual representing veterans ~~((to be~~
4 ~~selected by the cochairs of the subcommittee))~~; ~~((and~~
5 ~~(H))~~ (G) One member of a Washington or federally recognized
6 Indian tribe;

7 (H) Two veterans; and

8 (I) No more than ~~((two))~~ five other interested parties, selected
9 by the cochairs of the subcommittee.

10 (ii) The suicide prevention and health care subcommittee shall
11 consist of the following members and be cochaired by the University
12 of Washington ~~((school of social work))~~ and a member identified in
13 (b)(ii)(A) of this subsection (1):

14 (A) Two representatives of the Washington state pharmacy
15 association;

16 (B) Two representatives of retailers who operate pharmacies,
17 selected by the cochairs of the subcommittee;

18 (C) One faculty member from the University of Washington school
19 of pharmacy and one faculty member from the Washington State
20 University school of pharmacy;

21 (D) One representative of the department of health;

22 (E) One representative of the pharmacy quality assurance
23 commission;

24 (F) Two representatives of the Washington state poison control
25 center;

26 (G) One representative of the department of veterans affairs, and
27 one other individual representing veterans to be selected by the
28 cochairs of the subcommittee;

29 (H) Three members representing health care professionals
30 providing suicide prevention training in the state, selected by the
31 cochairs of the subcommittee; ~~((and))~~

32 (I) One member of a Washington or federally recognized Indian
33 tribe; and

34 (J) No more than two other interested parties, selected by the
35 cochairs of the subcommittee.

36 (c) The University of Washington ~~((school of social work))~~ shall
37 convene the initial meeting of the task force.

38 (2) The task force shall:

1 (a) Develop and prepare to disseminate online trainings on
2 suicide awareness and prevention for firearms dealers and their
3 employees and firearm range owners and their employees;

4 (b) In consultation with the department of fish and wildlife,
5 review the firearm safety pamphlet produced by the department of fish
6 and wildlife under RCW 9.41.310 and, by January 1, 2017, recommend
7 changes to the pamphlet to incorporate information on suicide
8 awareness and prevention;

9 (c) Develop and approve suicide awareness and prevention messages
10 for posters and brochures that are tailored to be effective for
11 firearms owners for distribution to firearms dealers and firearms
12 ranges;

13 (d) Develop suicide awareness and prevention messages for posters
14 and brochures for distribution to pharmacies;

15 (e) In consultation with the department of fish and wildlife,
16 develop strategies for creating and disseminating suicide awareness
17 and prevention information for hunting safety classes, including
18 messages to parents that can be shared during online registration, in
19 either follow-up email communications, or in writing, or both;

20 (f) Develop suicide awareness and prevention messages for
21 training for the schools of pharmacy and provide input on trainings
22 being developed for community pharmacists;

23 (g) Create a website that will be a clearinghouse for the newly
24 created suicide awareness and prevention materials developed by the
25 task force;

26 (h) Conduct a survey of firearms dealers and firearms ranges in
27 the state to determine the types and amounts of incentives that would
28 be effective in encouraging those entities to participate in suicide-
29 safer homes projects;

30 (i) Gather input on collateral educational materials that will
31 help health care professionals in suicide prevention work; and

32 (j) Create, implement, and evaluate a suicide awareness and
33 prevention pilot program in two counties, one rural and one urban,
34 that have high suicide rates. The pilot program shall include:

35 (i) Developing and directing advocacy efforts with firearms
36 dealers to pair suicide awareness and prevention training with
37 distribution of safe storage devices;

38 (ii) Developing and directing advocacy efforts with pharmacies to
39 pair suicide awareness and prevention training with distribution of
40 medication disposal kits and safe storage devices;

1 (iii) Training health care providers on suicide awareness and
2 prevention, paired with distribution of medication disposal kits and
3 safe storage devices; and

4 (iv) Training local law enforcement officers on suicide awareness
5 and prevention, paired with distribution of medication disposal kits
6 and safe storage devices.

7 (3) The task force shall, in consultation with the department of
8 health, develop and prioritize a list of projects to carry out the
9 task force's purposes and submit the prioritized list to the
10 department of health for funding from the suicide-safer homes project
11 account created in RCW 43.70.446.

12 (4) Beginning December 1, 2016, the task force shall annually
13 report to the legislature on the status of its work. The task force
14 shall submit a final report by December 1, 2020, that includes the
15 findings of the suicide awareness and prevention pilot program
16 evaluation under subsection (2) of this section and recommendations
17 on possible continuation of the program. The task force shall submit
18 its reports in accordance with RCW 43.01.036.

19 (5) This section expires July 1, (~~2021~~) 2024.

20 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 8.** A new section is added to chapter 46.18
21 RCW to read as follows:

22 (1) A prevent veteran suicide emblem shall be created and made
23 available for purchase by the general public. The emblem is to be
24 displayed on license plates in the manner described by the department
25 of licensing, existing vehicular registration procedures, and current
26 laws.

27 (2) The department of veterans affairs shall create the emblem,
28 which must incorporate the 988 suicide prevention hotline within the
29 emblem design, and submit the emblem to the department of licensing.

30 (3) Any person requesting a prevent veteran suicide emblem must
31 pay a prescribed fee set by the department of licensing.

32 (4) Revenues from the prevent veteran suicide emblem must be
33 deposited into the veterans and military members suicide prevention
34 account created in section 3 of this act.

35 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 9.** A new section is added to chapter 43.216
36 RCW to read as follows:

37 (1) The department shall, upon intake at point of service or
38 application for service, inquire whether the applicant has ever

1 served in the United States armed forces or is a family or household
2 member of someone who has ever served in the United States armed
3 forces. If the applicant answers in the affirmative, the department
4 shall provide the applicant with information on how to contact the
5 Washington department of veterans affairs to inquire as to whether
6 the applicant may be eligible for any benefits, services, or programs
7 offered to veterans, military members, or their families.

8 (2) The department shall report nonidentifying comprehensive data
9 collected in response to the inquiry made under subsection (1) of
10 this section to the department of veterans affairs on an annual
11 basis.

12 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 10.** A new section is added to chapter 74.04
13 RCW to read as follows:

14 (1) During the application process for public assistance
15 benefits, the department shall inquire of each applicant whether he
16 or she has ever served in the United States military services or is a
17 family or household member of someone who has ever served in the
18 United States military services. If the applicant answers in the
19 affirmative, the department shall provide the applicant with
20 information on how to contact the Washington department of veterans
21 affairs to inquire as to whether the applicant may be eligible for
22 any benefits, services, or programs offered to veterans, military
23 members, or their families.

24 (2) The department shall report nonidentifying comprehensive data
25 collected in response to the inquiry made under subsection (1) of
26 this section to the department of veterans affairs on an annual
27 basis.

28 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 11.** A new section is added to chapter 9.41
29 RCW to read as follows:

30 (1) In order to better prevent suicide by veterans, military
31 members, and their families, an expansion of safe storage of firearms
32 and reduced access to lethal means in the community is encouraged.

33 (2) A dealer who provides a service of allowing a person to
34 temporarily store a firearm on the dealer's premises in a storage
35 locker, box, or container that is locked and not accessible to the
36 dealer does not thereby create a special relationship, for civil
37 liability purposes, between the dealer and the person who temporarily
38 stores the firearm on the dealer's premises.

1 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 12.** Section 7 of this act is necessary for
2 the immediate preservation of the public peace, health, or safety, or
3 support of the state government and its existing public institutions,
4 and takes effect immediately.

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