
HOUSE BILL 1434

State of Washington

67th Legislature

2021 Regular Session

By Representatives Dent and Orwall

1 AN ACT Relating to agricultural community mental health hotline
2 services; adding a new section to chapter 71.24 RCW; and creating a
3 new section.

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

5 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** (1) The legislature finds that:

6 (a) The agricultural industry is an integral part of Washington's
7 economy and sense of common identity, and that the behavioral health
8 of workers in the industry and their family members is a statewide
9 concern;

10 (b) Several factors related to the agricultural industry may
11 affect the behavioral health of workers in the agricultural industry,
12 including job-related isolation and demands, stressful work
13 environments, the heightened potential for financial losses, lack of
14 access to behavioral health services, and barriers or unwillingness
15 to seek mental health services; and

16 (c) There has been an increased strain on agricultural workers'
17 mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic. Ever-changing
18 restrictions, market forces, and loss of life from the pandemic all
19 increase the burden on these Washingtonians contributing to a
20 possible increase in suicide rate.

1 (2) The legislature finds that there is an urgent need to provide
2 resources specifically targeted to help workers in the agricultural
3 industry and their family members manage their behavioral health
4 needs.

5 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 71.24
6 RCW to read as follows:

7 (1) Beginning January 1, 2022, each behavioral health
8 administrative services organization shall contract with each
9 cooperative extension established by a county under RCW 36.50.010
10 within the boundaries of the behavioral health administrative
11 services organization for the provision of agricultural community
12 mental health hotline services. The contracts must be sufficient to
13 fund the hotline's operational costs, including the costs of staffing
14 each hotline, training hotline staff, and developing resources for
15 assisting callers.

16 (2) Each agricultural community mental health hotline shall
17 provide a phone number for persons in the agricultural community to
18 call when experiencing mental health stresses, including suicidal
19 thoughts. Calls to the hotline must be anonymous and there may not be
20 any tracing of callers by phone number or location. The hotline shall
21 have staff available 24 hours per day, seven days per week to respond
22 to calls. Hotline staff must have experience in the agricultural
23 industry and be able to provide counseling interventions for persons
24 in the agricultural industry experiencing mental health stresses.

25 (3) Washington State University shall develop training for
26 hotline staff specific to counseling persons in agricultural
27 communities who are experiencing mental health stresses, mental
28 health resources for persons calling the hotline, and promotional
29 materials as strategies for each cooperative extension to promote the
30 hotline.

31 (4) The authority shall establish uniform data reporting
32 requirements that behavioral health administrative services
33 organizations must follow to collect data from each agricultural
34 community mental health hotline. The data must relate to information
35 necessary to evaluate the effectiveness of each agricultural
36 community mental health hotline and ways to improve access to mental
37 health services for persons in the agricultural community. By
38 November 1, 2023, the authority, in consultation with Washington
39 State University, shall provide a report to the governor and the

1 relevant committees of the legislature with the status of the
2 implementation of the agricultural community mental health hotlines
3 and the types and number of calls received, as well as administrative
4 and legislative options for improving their effectiveness.

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