

BILL ANALYSIS

S.B. 968
By: West
Public Education
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Although many types of prescription drugs are abused, there have been numerous reports of a growing, deadly epidemic of prescription painkiller abuse. Studies indicate that nearly three out of four prescription drug overdoses are caused by prescription painkillers, also called opioid pain relievers, and that in a recent year, these drugs were involved in more overdose deaths than cocaine and heroin combined. Prescription drug abuse by teens has also reportedly become a serious problem, with indications that after marihuana, prescription and over-the-counter medications account for most of the top drugs abused by 12th graders.

Interested parties note that Texas public schools do not usually cover any curriculum regarding prescription drug abuse, despite it being a significant problem among some student age groups. The parties contend that including prescription drug abuse in the health curriculum would go a long way toward curbing abuse. S.B. 968 seeks to address this issue.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE IMPACT

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly create a criminal offense, increase the punishment for an existing criminal offense or category of offenses, or change the eligibility of a person for community supervision, parole, or mandatory supervision.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, department, agency, or institution.

ANALYSIS

S.B. 968 amends the Education Code to require the State Board of Education, in adopting the essential knowledge and skills for the health enrichment curriculum, to adopt essential knowledge and skills that address the dangers, causes, consequences, signs, symptoms, and treatment of nonmedical use of prescription drugs. The bill requires the Texas Education Agency to compile a list of evidence-based prescription drug misuse awareness programs from which a school district is required to choose a program to use in the district's middle school, junior high school, and high school health curriculums. The bill defines "evidence-based prescription drug misuse awareness program" as a program, practice, or strategy that has been proven to effectively prevent nonmedical use of prescription drugs among students, as determined by evaluations that use valid and reliable measures and that are published in peer-reviewed journals. The bill applies beginning with the 2015–2016 school year.

EFFECTIVE DATE

On passage, or, if the bill does not receive the necessary vote, September 1, 2015.