

BILL ANALYSIS

C.S.H.B. 1623
By: Coleman
Public Education
Committee Report (Substituted)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Reports indicate that loss and trauma may lead to poor academic performance. It has been suggested that the traumatic effects of events such as Hurricane Harvey and recent school shootings emphasize the need for a robust emotional and mental support system in schools. C.S.H.B. 1623 seeks to address this issue by including trauma-informed practices as key components of required staff development provided by public school districts and open-enrollment charter schools.

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

C.S.H.B. 1623 amends the Education Code to make trauma-informed practices training a required component of the staff development provided by a public school district to an educator other than a principal, with the same frequency and educator participation requirements as for suicide prevention training. The bill specifies that the schedule adopted by the Texas Education Agency (TEA) for the provision of suicide prevention training and trauma-informed practices training to existing district and open-enrollment charter school educators must require an educator to be trained at least once every five years.

C.S.H.B. 1623 amends the Health and Safety Code to set out requirements for the trauma-informed practices included on the list of recommended best practice-based programs and research-based practices in specified areas that is provided by the Department of State Health Services (DSHS) for implementation in public schools within the general education setting. The bill requires the trauma-informed practices to include components that provide for training counselors, teachers, nurses, administrators, and other staff, as well as law enforcement officers and social workers who regularly interact with students and requires the inclusion of certain content in that training.

C.S.H.B. 1623 makes provisions that require the suicide prevention training described by the DSHS list of recommended programs and practices for teachers, counselors, principals, and all other appropriate personnel at certain district campuses explicitly applicable to an open-enrollment charter school, extends those requirements to include the trauma-informed practices from that list, and changes the frequency of required participation for an applicable employee from at least one time to at least once every five years.

C.S.H.B. 1623 requires each district and charter school annually to report to TEA information for the district or charter school as a whole and for each campus the number of teachers, principals, and counselors employed by the district or charter school who have completed training required under mental health promotion and intervention, substance abuse prevention and intervention, and suicide prevention provisions, including training on trauma-informed practices and suicide prevention under the bill's Health and Safety Code provisions, and the total number of teachers, principals, and counselors employed by the district or charter school. The bill requires TEA to compile the reported information for Texas as a whole, each district and charter school, and each campus and to make the information available to a member of the public who submits a public information request under state public information law. The bill prohibits a district or charter school from receiving any grant of money for mental health services from TEA unless the district or charter school is in compliance with the bill's reporting requirements.

EFFECTIVE DATE

September 1, 2019.

COMPARISON OF ORIGINAL AND SUBSTITUTE

While C.S.H.B. 1623 may differ from the original in minor or nonsubstantive ways, the following summarizes the substantial differences between the introduced and committee substitute versions of the bill.

The substitute specifies that the request from the public for the TEA-compiled information is a public information request made under state public information law.