

- SUBJECT:** Requiring specific training for school district peace and resource officers
- COMMITTEE:** Juvenile Justice and Family Issues — favorable, without amendment
- VOTE:** 6 ayes — Dutton, Hughes, Peña, Rose, Sanford, J. White
- 1 nay — Riddle
- WITNESSES:** For — Scott Peters, Dallas County Schools Police Department; Greg Hansch, National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Texas; Josette Saxton, Texans Care for Children; Morgan Craven, Texas Appleseed; Jennifer Carreon, Texas Criminal Justice Coalition; (*Registered, but did not testify:* Victor Cornell, American Civil Liberties Union of Texas; Chris Masey, Coalition of Texans with Disabilities; Traci Berry, Goodwill Central Texas; Gyl Switzer, Mental Health America of Texas; Will Francis, National Association of Social Workers - Texas Chapter; Katherine Barillas, One Voice Texas; Lauren Rose, Texans Care for Children; Lori Henning, Texas Association of Goodwills; Patricia Cummings, Texas Criminal Defense Lawyers Association; Yannis Banks, Texas NAACP; Kyle Ward, Texas PTA; Rona Statman, The Arc of Texas; Alicia Vogel)
- Against — None
- On — Steven Aleman, Disability Rights Texas; Kim Vickers, Texas Commission on Law Enforcement
- BACKGROUND:** Peace officers, defined under Education Code, sec. 37.081, and school resource officers, defined under Occupations Code, sec. 1701.601, serve in individual schools in some school districts. Among other duties, they enforce state laws and maintain a police presence at the schools at which they are posted.
- DIGEST:** HB 2684 would require all school districts that engage school resource officers and peace officers to adopt an education and training program policy for the officers at their schools.

The bill would require the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement to consult with institutes specializing in the training of law enforcement to create, adopt, and distribute a training curriculum model for school resource and peace officers across the state. This curriculum would address learning objectives regarding child and adolescent development, mental health crisis intervention, and cultural competency, among others.

The commission would provide this curriculum, along with any supplemental educational materials, to entities such as school district police departments and other entities that place or train officers in schools. The commission would be required to review and, if necessary, update the curriculum once every four years.

All school resource and peace officers would be required to receive training under this curriculum either before commencing their placement at a school, or within 120 days of starting at the school. The commission-approved training program would consist of at least 16 hours of training, and comply with the bill's curriculum requirements.

The commission would be required to begin providing the training mandated by the bill by February 1, 2016, and school districts would be required to adopt their individual training policies by that date. Any school resource or peace officer who commenced employment or placement at a school before February 1, 2016, including those currently employed or placed at a school, would be required to complete the new training by June 1, 2016.

This bill would take immediate effect if finally passed by a two-thirds record vote of the membership of each house. Otherwise, it would take effect September 1, 2015.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

HB 2684 would ensure that school officers were trained in the specific needs of serving in an educational setting with young children. While school officers receive certain training as police officers, this training is relevant to street policing, not to the unique needs of children and working

in a school setting. Without the appropriate training, officers accustomed to police work in a different setting may respond disproportionately to school incidents.

HB 2684 would not impose additional costs on school districts because peace officers already are required to regularly complete training hours to maintain their law enforcement licenses. The program in this bill could count toward that training. School districts that have officer training policies in place have been able to take advantage of existing resources such as free or subsidized trainings by different groups and initiatives. In addition, by enhancing the quality of services provided by school officers, the bill could help schools save money by cutting down on the number of officers a school would need.

**OPPONENTS
SAY:**

HB 2684's requirements would be an unfunded mandate for school districts, which would be required to provide this training to their school officers without any additional resources.