

BILL ANALYSIS

Senate Research Center
84R13196 JSL-D

S.B. 1624
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Higher Education
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As Filed

AUTHOR'S / SPONSOR'S STATEMENT OF INTENT

S.B. 1624 would provide Texas college students with valuable information regarding suicide prevention information at the earliest possible opportunity, shortly after they enroll for their first courses at a college or university.

According to the Texas Suicide Prevention Council, suicide is the second leading cause of death in Texas among older teens, college-age youth, and young adults aged 15 to 34. Nationwide, nearly a third of college students report experiencing depression that impacts their ability to function, according to the National Institutes of Health.

S.B. 1624 would require an institution of higher education to require that each entering undergraduate student, including each undergraduate student who transfers to the institution, attend an orientation that includes information about available mental health and suicide prevention services offered by the institution or by any associated organizations or programs. This orientation must also include information about early warning signs and appropriate intervention for a person who may be considering suicide.

S.B. 1624 complements some of the strategic goals of the Texas Suicide Prevention Council.

Specifically, a goal to work with educational groups, including universities, colleges, and community colleges, to ensure that students at risk of suicide have access to mental health and counseling services and are encouraged to use those services. Another goal is to annually train 3,000 school staff, higher education faculty, and students to recognize students at potential risk of suicide through tools developed in partnerships with DSHS and to know how to refer to appropriate services.

As proposed, S.B. 1624 amends current law relating to a requirement that entering undergraduate students at a public institution of higher education attend an orientation regarding mental health and suicide prevention services.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

This bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, institution, or agency.

SECTION BY SECTION ANALYSIS

SECTION 1. Amends Subchapter Z, Chapter 51, Education Code, by adding Section 51.9194, as follows:

Sec. 51.9194. REQUIRED ORIENTATION FOR UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS REGARDING MENTAL HEALTH AND SUICIDE PREVENTION SERVICES. (a) Requires an institution of higher education to require each entering undergraduate student, including each undergraduate student who transfers to the institution, to attend an orientation that includes information about:

- (1) available mental health and suicide prevention services offered by the institution or by any associated organizations or programs; and

(2) early warning signs that are often present in and appropriate intervention for a person who may be considering suicide.

(b) Requires the orientation under this section to be in the form of a live presentation.

SECTION 2. Provides that Section 51.9194, Education Code, as added by this Act, applies beginning with entering undergraduate students admitted to an institution of higher education beginning with the 2016 fall semester.

SECTION 3. Effective date: upon passage or September 1, 2015.