STATE OF NEW YORK

7285--A

2025-2026 Regular Sessions

IN ASSEMBLY

March 25, 2025

Introduced by M. of A. BURDICK, EACHUS, SHIMSKY, BEEPHAN, BENDETT, SEAWRIGHT, SANTABARBARA, LEVENBERG, OTIS, SIMPSON, ANGELINO, BLUMENCRANZ, DE LOS SANTOS, KAY, O'PHARROW, STERN -- read once and referred to the Committee on Mental Health -- committee discharged, bill amended, ordered reprinted as amended and recommitted to said committee

AN ACT to amend the mental hygiene law, in relation to the "First Responder Peer Support Program Act"

The People of the State of New York, represented in Senate and Assembly, do enact as follows:

Section 1. This act shall be known and may be cited as the "First Responder Peer Support Program Act".

§ 2. The mental hygiene law is amended by adding a new section 7.51 to read as follows:

§ 7.51 First responder peer support program.

(a) For the purposes of this section, the following terms shall have the following meanings:

1. "The program" shall mean the "first responder peer support program" established by this section.

2. "Eligible entities" shall mean an entity or county first responder peer program which submits to the commissioner an application, in a form prescribed by the commissioner, containing such information and assurances as the commissioner may require to provide initial and continued training in mental illness, including but not limited to, helping individuals gain a better understanding about the effects of trauma, repetitive exposure, signs and symptoms of trauma, triggers of a traumatic event, coping mechanisms, suicide or self-harm prevention, as well as available tools, resources, and local mental health services for first responder peer volunteers, volunteer and paid individuals who are trained to respond to emergency situations and provide immediate assistance and care to those in need. This would include individuals who work

EXPLANATION--Matter in *italics* (underscored) is new; matter in brackets [-] is old law to be omitted.

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as firefighters, police officers, probation officers, parole officers, warrant officers in the department of corrections and community supervision, constables or police constables of a town or village, uniform court officers of the unified court system, parks and recreation forest rangers employed by the office of parks, recreation and historic preservation, 9-1-1 operators, 9-8-8 operators, emergency dispatchers, emergency medical services personnel, coroners, medical examiners, and peace officers designated pursuant to subdivision twenty-six of section 2.10 of the criminal procedure law.

(b) The commissioner, in consultation with the commissioner of the department of health, the office of fire prevention and control, the municipal police training council, and the superintendent of state police, shall, subject to appropriation, establish a statewide grant program to be known as the "first responder peer support program". The program shall provide grants, with appropriations therefor, to eligible entities for the purpose of establishing peer-to-peer mental health programs for first responders. Local governmental units shall be eligible to apply for and receive such grants.

(c) The commissioner shall establish uniform standards applicable to the program, in consultation with the New York state sheriffs' institute, the New York state sheriffs' association, and firefighters association of New York state. Such standards shall include, but not be limited to, initial and continued evidence-based, trauma-informed training for first responder peer volunteers, including suicide prevention, general mental health literacy, science of addiction and recovery, and training that focuses on resilience of the first responder. Such standards shall also address administrative staffing needs and best practices for addressing the needs of each first responder served, including, but not limited to, a warm handoff to mental health services for individuals identified as being in duress.

(d) The commissioner shall not require the recipient of any grant under this section to maintain records on first responders seeking support or report any personal identifying information directly or indirectly to the commissioner, a first responder's employer, or a first responder's organization.

(e) Except as may be required under applicable state or federal law, all communications and statements of first responders under this section shall be confidential and shall not be redisclosed to others, except in situations involving imminent danger to the first responder or others, including threats of suicide, self-harm or violence to others, suspected child abuse or neglect, or to protect vulnerable adults.

(f) 1. Each grant recipient shall be required to provide an annual report to the commissioner, consistent with standards established by the commissioner, describing the training and services funded by the grants, how such funds were allocated, a list of entities that received grant funds, the number of persons served by each grant recipient, and recommendations for future grant allocations. Such reports shall contain no personally identifiable information.

2. The commissioner shall aggregate the data and recommendations received from grant recipient annual reports and develop an aggregate annual summary of such data and recommendations in an annual report, including any appropriate recommendations of the commissioner for future funding needs or program changes to ensure the most effective means of providing peer support for first responders. The annual report shall be submitted to the governor, the speaker of the assembly and the temporary

president of the senate no later than November first, two thousand twenty-six, and annually thereafter.

§ 3. This act shall take effect on the one hundred twentieth day after it shall have become a law.