STATE OF NEW YORK

8434

2025-2026 Regular Sessions

IN ASSEMBLY

May 16, 2025

Introduced by M. of A. KELLES -- read once and referred to the Committee on Mental Health

AN ACT to amend the mental hygiene law, in relation to establishing the rural suicide prevention council; and providing for the repeal of such provisions upon expiration thereof

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

Section 1. The mental hygiene law is amended by adding a new section 7.49 to read as follows:

§ 7.49 Rural suicide prevention council.

(a) There shall be established by the office, a council on rural suicide prevention. Members of the council shall include the commissioner or the commissioner's designee, the commissioner of health or the commissioner's designee, and the commissioner of agriculture and markets or the commissioner's designee. There shall be twelve additional members of the council including four members appointed by the governor; three members shall be appointed by the speaker of the assembly; three members shall be appointed by the temporary president of the senate; one member shall be appointed by the minority leader of the assembly; and one member shall be appointed by the minority leader of the senate.

(b) The commissioner shall designate the chair from appointed council members. Vacancies in the membership of such council shall be filled by the appropriate appointing authority.

(c) The membership of the council may include, but not be limited to, representatives of the state conference of local mental hygiene directors; mental health professionals and practitioners with experience in the delivery of mental health treatment or suicide prevention services in rural areas; persons with expertise in research of public health issues in rural areas; any group, association, or university with expertise in financial or economic analysis, business planning, and providing supports for farmers and other individuals residing in a rural area;

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

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certified peers; rural community members with lived experience who have been or are currently receiving mental health services or supports; and others whose professional expertise includes rural affairs related to the duties of the council. For the purposes of this section the term rural areas shall have the same meaning as it is defined in section four hundred eighty-one of the executive law.

(d) Duties of the council shall include, but not be limited to:

(1) identifying barriers to mental health and substance use treatment and prevention services, as well as the causes and conditions related to death by suicide or suicide attempts in rural parts of the state;

(2) determine if there is sufficient capacity for peer supports and mental health crisis services;

(3) assess the use of the 988 suicide and crisis lifeline in rural areas of the state and identify strategies to increase utilization;

(4) identifying vulnerable populations in rural areas and the prevalence of suicide among such populations including, but not limited to, farmers and agricultural workers;

(5) identifying policies, practices, resources, services, and potential legislation that aim to reduce death by suicide and suicide attempts and acknowledge the demographic and cultural differences in rural communities;

(6) offering recommendations on policies and procedures to improve the coordination of services and resources among agencies involved in the delivery of mental health, substance use, or suicide prevention services; and

(7) making recommendations on funding initiatives to increase access to mental health, substance use, and suicide prevention services in rural areas and facilitate the use of innovative intervention strategies specific to individuals residing in rural areas.

(e) The rural suicide prevention council shall meet not less than three times annually, or as deemed necessary by the chair of the council or the commissioner.

(f) The members of the rural suicide prevention council shall receive no compensation for their services but shall be allowed their actual and necessary expenses incurred in the performance of their duties.

The council shall provide a preliminary report to the governor and the legislature of its findings, conclusions, recommendations and activities already undertaken by the council, not later than nine months after the effective date of this section, and a final report of its findings, conclusions, recommendations and activities already undertaken by the council, not later than eighteen months after the effective date of this section and shall submit with its reports legislative proposals as it deems necessary to implement its recommendations.

§ 2. This act shall take effect on the sixtieth day after it shall have become a law and shall expire 2 years after such effective date when upon such date the provisions of this act shall be deemed repealed.