

STATE OF NEW YORK

7285--B

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, STERN, STECK, MAHER, CONRAD, KELLES, BRABENEK, CASHMAN, O'PHARROW, McMAHON, WRIGHT, GRAY, SLATER, SHRESTHA, TAPIA, GALLAHAN, JENSEN, CUNNINGHAM, SOLAGES, PALMESANO, DURSO -- read once and referred to the Committee on Mental Health -- committee discharged, bill amended, ordered reprinted as amended and recommitted to said committee -- recommitted to the Committee on Mental Health in accordance with Assembly Rule 3, sec. 2 -- reported and referred to the Committee on Ways and Means -- 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 19.47 to read as follows:

§ 19.47 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

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

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1 event, coping mechanisms, suicide or self-harm prevention, as well as
2 available tools, resources, and local mental health services for first
3 responder peer volunteers, volunteer and paid individuals who are
4 trained to respond to emergency situations and provide immediate assist-
5 ance and care to those in need. This would include, but not be limited
6 to, individuals who work as firefighters, police officers, probation
7 officers, parole officers, warrant officers in the department of
8 corrections and community supervision, constables or police constables
9 of a town or village, uniform court officers of the unified court
10 system, parks and recreation forest rangers employed by the office of
11 parks, recreation and historic preservation, 9-1-1 operators, 9-8-8
12 operators, emergency dispatchers, emergency medical services personnel,
13 coroners, medical examiners, and peace officers designated pursuant to
14 subdivision twenty-six of section 2.10 of the criminal procedure law.

15 3. "Peer support communication" includes: (a) an oral or written
16 communication made in the course of a peer support session; (b) a note
17 or report arising out of a peer support session; and (c) a record of a
18 peer support session.

19 (b) The commissioner, in consultation with the commissioner of the
20 department of health, the commissioner of the office of mental health,
21 the director of the division of criminal justice services, the office of
22 fire prevention and control, the municipal police training council, and
23 the superintendent of state police, shall establish a statewide grant
24 program to be known as the "first responder peer support program". The
25 program shall provide grants, within appropriations made therefor, to
26 eligible entities for the purpose of establishing peer-to-peer mental
27 health support and wellness programs for first responders. Local govern-
28 mental units shall be eligible to apply for and receive such grants.

29 (c) The commissioner shall establish uniform standards applicable to
30 the program, in consultation with representatives across first responder
31 disciplines, including both paid and volunteer personnel, relevant state
32 and local agencies, and organizations with expertise in mental health,
33 substance use and addiction, peer support, and first responder wellness.
34 Such standards shall include, but not be limited to, initial and contin-
35 ued evidence-based, trauma-informed training for first responder peer
36 volunteers, including suicide prevention, general mental health litera-
37 cy, science of addiction and recovery, and training that focuses on
38 resilience of the first responder. Such standards shall also address
39 administrative staffing needs and best practices for addressing the
40 needs of each first responder served, including, but not limited to, a
41 warm handoff to mental health services for individuals identified as
42 being in duress.

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

48 (e) Except as may be required under applicable state or federal law,
49 all peer support communications under this section shall be confidential
50 and shall not be redisclosed to others, unless:

51 1. it contains or reveals a specific threat of suicide, an expression
52 of suicidal ideation, or engagement in self-harm or a threat of bodily
53 harm or death, provided disclosure of such communication shall only be
54 permitted for the purpose of preventing or mitigating such harm and is
55 made to a person or persons reasonably in a position to provide assist-
56 ance in preventing or mitigating such harm;

1 2. it contains an admission of criminal conduct; or
2 3. the peer support participant has provided consent for such disclo-
3 sure, which may be provided at any time, and the disclosure is consist-
4 ent with such consent.

5 (f) Nothing in this section shall be construed to prevent or limit
6 disclosure of the contents of a peer support communication where such
7 disclosure is otherwise required by law, including, but not limited to:

8 1. mandatory reporting of suspected child abuse or maltreatment, in
9 accordance with section four hundred thirteen of the social services
10 law;

11 2. mandatory filing under article sixty-three-A of the civil practice
12 law and rules relating to extreme risk protection orders; and

13 3. as ordered by a court of competent jurisdiction.

14 (g) Before the initial peer support session of a peer support partic-
15 ipant, a peer support specialist shall inform the peer support partic-
16 ipant in writing of the confidentiality requirements under this section.

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

24 2. The commissioner shall aggregate the data and recommendations
25 received from grant recipient annual reports and develop an aggregate
26 annual summary of such data and recommendations in an annual report,
27 including any appropriate recommendations of the commissioner for future
28 funding needs or program changes to ensure the most effective means of
29 providing peer support for first responders. The annual report shall be
30 submitted to the governor, the speaker of the assembly and the temporary
31 president of the senate no later than November first, two thousand twen-
32 ty-eight, and annually thereafter.

33 § 3. This act shall take effect on the one hundred twentieth day after
34 it shall have become a law. Effective immediately, the addition, amend-
35 ment and/or repeal of any rule or regulation necessary for the implemen-
36 tation of this act on its effective date are authorized to be made and
37 completed on or before such effective date.