

LEGISLATIVE BILL 247

Approved by the Governor May 24, 2021

Introduced by Pansing Brooks, 28; Friesen, 34; Hunt, 8; Lathrop, 12; Williams, 36; Arch, 14; McCollister, 20; Aguilar, 35; Hansen, M., 26.

A BILL FOR AN ACT relating to mental health; to create the Mental Health Crisis Hotline Task Force; to provide powers and duties; and to declare an emergency.

Be it enacted by the people of the State of Nebraska,

Section 1. (1) The Mental Health Crisis Hotline Task Force is created. The task force shall develop an implementation plan for Nebraska to integrate and utilize the 988 mental health crisis hotline established pursuant to the federal National Suicide Hotline Designation Act of 2020, Public Law 116-172.

(2) The task force shall identify a method to integrate local mental health crisis hotlines to ensure each individual who accesses a local mental health crisis hotline is connected to a qualified mental or behavioral health professional regardless of the time, date, or number of individuals trying to simultaneously access a local mental health crisis hotline. The task force shall develop a plan for staffing a statewide mental health crisis hotline, shall coordinate with local mental health authorities to carry out this section, and may conduct any other business related to such duties.

(3) The federal National Suicide Hotline Designation Act of 2020 authorizes states to impose fees on telecommunications services, wireless device services, and Internet protocol-enabled voice services to provide funding in a manner similar to the funding of 911 services. The task force shall conduct a cost analysis to determine how such a fee structure could be designed to cover the costs of the 988 mental health crisis hotline.

(4) The task force shall consist of the following members:

(a) The chairperson of the Health and Human Services Committee of the Legislature or the chairperson's designee;

(b) The chairperson of the Judiciary Committee of the Legislature or the chairperson's designee;

(c) The chairperson of the Transportation and Telecommunications Committee of the Legislature or the chairperson's designee;

(d) Two at-large members of the Legislature appointed by the Executive Board of the Legislative Council;

(e) The Director of Behavioral Health of the Division of Behavioral Health of the Department of Health and Human Services or the director's designee, as a nonvoting, ex officio member;

(f) The chairperson of the Public Service Commission or the chairperson's designee, as a nonvoting, ex officio member; and

(g) The following members who shall be nonvoting members appointed by the voting members of the task force listed in subdivisions (a) through (d) of this subsection through an application and selection process and selected from among (i) mental or behavioral health clinicians licensed to practice in the state, (ii) behavioral and mental health service providers, (iii) advocacy groups that focus on behavioral and mental health, (iv) educational institutions, (v) county and municipal law enforcement from each congressional district, (vi) other representatives of county and municipal governments from each congressional district, and (vii) telecommunications industry representatives.

(5) The task force shall choose a chairperson and a vice-chairperson from its voting membership. The task force shall meet at the call of the chairperson but shall hold its first meeting no later than July 1, 2021. The members of the task force shall serve without compensation but shall be entitled to receive reimbursement for expenses incurred incident to such service as provided in sections 81-1174 to 81-1177. The Executive Board of the Legislative Council may provide the task force with a legal counsel, committee clerk, and other staff as required by the task force from existing legislative staff.

(6) The task force shall file a report electronically with the Clerk of the Legislature, and with the Governor, regarding its implementation plan and any recommendations, together with drafts of any legislation necessary to carry out any recommendations, no later than December 17, 2021.

(7) The task force shall terminate on December 31, 2022.

Sec. 2. Since an emergency exists, this act takes effect when passed and approved according to law.