



Department of Social Services
Veterans Services Office

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NEVADA COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

Board Agenda Memo

MEETING DATE: April 25, 2023

TO: Board of Supervisors

FROM: David O West II, Veterans Service Officer

SUBJECT: Approve and authorize the Chair to sign and submit the attached Letter of Support for SB 783 (Archuleta) to create a veteran suicide prevention training pilot program in Nevada County

RECOMMENDATION: Approve and authorize the Chair to sign and submit the attached letter of support.

FUNDING: N/A

BACKGROUND:

Suicide is a problem that touches all demographics including military veterans. In California in 2020, 3,355 non-veterans committed suicide. At the same time, 583 veterans committed suicide. Suicide deaths among veterans made up 15% of all suicides in 2020, although veterans make up less than 2% of California's population. Unfortunately, when suicide rates are adjusted for age and sex, the number of veterans who commit suicide per 100,000 is much higher than non-veterans. For that reason, more needs to be done to address veteran suicide nationally and in California.

Senate Bill 783 (Archuleta) addresses the complexity of suicide prevention efforts in military-connected populations through a multifaceted approach. Increased awareness of observable suicide risk factors is one critical part of a successful suicide prevention program because veterans are less likely to disclose suicidal thoughts and intent due to stigma. Safety planning and interventions are clinical skills, the basics of which can be learned by paraprofessionals and peers who have long been integrated into gatekeeping pieces of training (e.g., ASIST teaches suicide first aid to caregivers; Chaplains-CARE teaches suicide intervention knowledge and skills to Navy chaplains). Equipping non-clinicians working with veterans with these two skill sets is critical since they are more likely to encounter at-risk individuals before the person sees a behavioral health professional.

Many service members and Veterans who have combat or other military-related behavioral health problems do not receive appropriate treatment. Of an estimated 20% of service members with any diagnosed behavioral health problem, nearly half are not receiving any treatment. Failing to appropriately treat existing behavioral health problems can exacerbate other functional problems, can cause additional life and family issues, and at the extreme may lead to suicidal ideation.

As such, SB 783 (Archuleta) authorizes the counties of Los Angeles and Nevada to create a veteran suicide prevention training pilot program. The program will offer individuals in each county specialized training and certification in suicide prevention with military-connected populations. As outlined in the attached Senate Committee on Military and Veterans Affairs analysis, the bill as amended would do the following among other things:

1. Appropriate \$100,000 of state General Fund for the development of the pilot programs.
2. Require each county to hire a suicide prevention subject matter expert with expertise in implementation and dissemination of evidence-based practices and evidence-informed interventions with military-connected populations.
3. Conduct a needs assessment of unique training curriculum of the county.
4. Establish a pilot program including adopting rules, policies and procedures as necessary.
5. Submit a report to the Legislature on or before September 15, 2026 providing recommendations on any changes to the program to increase effectiveness and whether the program should be expanded to other counties.

Therefore, staff recommends approving and authorizing the Chair to sign and submit the attached Letter of Support for SB 783 (Archuleta) to create a veteran suicide prevention training pilot program in Nevada County. California County Veteran Services Officers and staff will be able to use the curriculum developed for veteran suicide prevention to reduce immediate risk and connect veterans with appropriate care. Corrective action to help our veterans is needed, and SB 783 will provide necessary resources to help Nevada County veterans.

Item Initiated by David O West II, Veterans Services Officer, Nevada County

Approved by Rachel Peña, Director of Social Services