
A BILL FOR AN ACT

RELATING TO VETERANS.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF HAWAII:

1 SECTION 1. Chapter 321, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is
2 amended by adding a new part to be appropriately designated and
3 to read as follows:

4 **"PART . VETERAN HEALTH CARE**

5 **§321- Suicide prevention program; veterans.** (a) The
6 department of health, in consultation with the director of the
7 office of veterans' services, shall develop and carry out a
8 comprehensive program designed to reduce the incidence of
9 suicide among veterans in Hawaii by incorporating the components
10 described in this section.

11 (b) Mandatory training for appropriate staff and
12 contractors, including all medical personnel of the department
13 of health who interact with veterans shall be provided. This
14 training shall cover information appropriate to the duties being
15 performed by such staff and contractors. The training shall
16 include information on:

17 (1) Recognizing risk factors for suicide;



1 (2) Proper protocols for responding to crisis situations
2 involving veterans who may be at high risk for
3 suicide; and

4 (3) Best practices for suicide prevention.

5 (c) The director of health shall direct that State medical
6 staff offer mental health in their overall health assessment
7 when veterans seek medical care at a medical facility, and make
8 referrals, at the request of the veteran concerned, to
9 appropriate counseling and treatment programs for veterans who
10 show signs or symptoms of mental health problems.

11 (d) The department of health shall designate a suicide
12 prevention counselor at each state medical facility. Each
13 counselor shall work with local emergency rooms, police
14 departments, mental health organizations, and veterans service
15 organizations to engage in outreach to veterans and improve the
16 coordination of mental health care to veterans.

17 (e) The department of health shall provide for research on
18 best practices for suicide prevention among veterans. Research
19 shall be conducted under this subsection in consultation with
20 the following entities:

21 (1) The United States Department of Health and Human
22 Services;



1 (2) The National Institute of Mental Health;

2 (3) The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services
3 Administration; and

4 (4) The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

5 (f) Research on mental health care for veterans who have
6 experienced sexual trauma while in military service shall be
7 included in the program. The research design shall include
8 consideration of veterans of a reserve component.

9 (g) Twenty-four-hour mental health care shall be made
10 available to veterans.

11 (h) A toll-free hotline for veterans may be established,
12 staffed by appropriately trained mental health personnel, and
13 available at all times.

14 (i) Outreach to and education for veterans and the
15 families of veterans, with special emphasis on providing
16 information to veterans of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation
17 Enduring Freedom and the families of such veterans. Education
18 to promote mental health shall include information designed to:

19 (1) Remove the stigma associated with mental illness;

20 (2) Encourage veterans to seek treatment and assistance
21 for mental illness;

22 (3) Promote skills for coping with mental illness; and



- 1 (4) Help families of veterans with:
- 2 (A) Understanding issues arising from the
- 3 readjustment of veterans to civilian life;
- 4 (B) Identifying signs and symptoms of mental illness;
- 5 and
- 6 (C) Encouraging veterans to seek assistance for
- 7 mental illness.

8 (j) A peer support counseling program shall be established

9 under the program through which veterans shall be permitted to

10 volunteer as peer counselors:

- 11 (1) To assist other veterans with issues related to mental
- 12 health and readjustment; and
- 13 (2) To conduct outreach to veterans and the families of
- 14 veterans.

15 In carrying out the peer support counseling program under

16 this subsection, the department of health shall provide adequate

17 training for peer counselors.

18 (k) The department of health may provide for other actions

19 to reduce the incidence of suicide among veterans that the

20 director of health considers appropriate."

21 SECTION 2. There is appropriated out of the general

22 revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$1,000,000 or so much



1 thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2008-2009 for a
2 comprehensive program designed to reduce the incidence of
3 suicide among veterans.

4 The sum appropriated shall be expended by the department of
5 health for the purposes of this Act.

6 SECTION 3. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2008.

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INTRODUCED BY:

John M. Higgins
Thomas E. [unclear]
Della A. Belatti
Colin Murphy
Claire [unclear]
[unclear]

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Report Title:

Veterans; Suicide Prevention

Description:

Directs the Department of Health to establish a comprehensive suicide prevention program for veterans in Hawaii.

