

ACT 106

S.B. NO. 3279

A Bill for an Act Relating to Mental Health.

Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Hawaii:

SECTION 1. The legislature finds that research on health and safety reveals that mental illness is one of the most pressing challenges humanity is facing today. The prevalence of both acute and chronic mental illnesses has been on the rise in the State and globally over the past two decades. Untreated mental illness is one of the top predictors of suicide, substance abuse, incarceration, and adult disability. This is especially concerning for historically marginalized and under-resourced communities, which are at significantly higher risk of mental illness and also have more limited access to mental health education, resources, and support. Mental illness at the individual level compounds across communities and leads to negative statewide outcomes, including increased joblessness, homelessness, domestic violence, violent crime, and school dropout rates.

The legislature further finds that research conducted over the past fifty years in the fields of psychology, public health, neuroscience, and organizational development demonstrate the critical importance of a tiered approach to comprehensively address statewide mental health concerns and provide every individual with the skills and resources they need to take care of themselves, their families, and their broader ecosystems. Tier 1 mental health support services provide skills training, curricula, and programming to all stakeholders of an organization such as schools, community centers, police and fire departments, medical institutions, and other first responder facilities. Tier 1 mental health support services provide a common vocabulary and set of wellness practices that members of the organization collectively share to promote a safe and healthy organizational culture for everyone. Tier 2 mental health support services recognize that certain populations within an organization may be at higher risk for certain mental illnesses than others, and so these groups require specialized training, support, and skill-building that is culturally contextualized to best support the specific needs of the high-risk group. Tier 2 mental health support services therefore exist to provide additional specialized group support interventions. Taken together, these tiers of mental health support services cover the core mental health needs of individuals, groups, organizations, and communities.

The legislature further finds that a comprehensive system of mental health support services on a statewide level requires the seamless integration of tier 1 and tier 2 mental health support services. Tier 1 mental health support services benefit public institutions through whole-organization tier 1 mental health support training for students, school staff, firefighters, police officers, medical staff, and other first responder groups. Higher risk groups within each of these organizations benefit from tier 2 mental health support services that use culturally responsive approaches. Overall, mentally well individuals create safe and healthy communities, which further promote a safe and healthy state for all citizens.

Accordingly, the purpose of this Act is to:

- (1) Establish the state of well-being project and a timeline for the project to:
 - (A) Assess current tiers of mental health support services; and
 - (B) Enhance existing well-being programming and, when non-existent, build out culturally grounded and community-informed well-being programming to establish mental health support services for key stakeholder communities across the State; and
- (2) Appropriate funds for mental health specialist positions within the office of wellness and resilience.

SECTION 2. Chapter 27, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is amended by adding a new section to part IX to be appropriately designated and to read as follows:

“§27- State of well-being project; established. (a) There is established within the office the state of well-being project to assess and enhance tier 1 and tier 2 mental health support services for key stakeholder communities across the State. The project shall:

- (1) Assess and enhance existing tier 1 and tier 2 mental health training and ongoing support services to public schools, public community centers, first responder groups, police departments, fire departments, hospitals, and medical staff and, when non-existent, build out culturally grounded and community-informed well-being programming;
- (2) Track and measure aggregate mental health trends across all populations served by the project; and

- (3) Hire and train mental health specialists and work with approved partner organizations identified by the office to lead project execution across tier 1 and tier 2 mental health support services in each key stakeholder community.
- (b) The office shall administer the state of well-being project in accordance with the following timeline:
 - (1) Beginning in 2024, initiate a landscape assessment of existing tier 1 and tier 2 mental health support services by December 31, 2025; and
 - (2) Beginning in 2025, initiate the enhancement of existing tier 1 and tier 2 mental health support services and, when non-existent, build out culturally grounded and community-informed well-being programming, with statewide implementation to be achieved by December 31, 2027.
- (c) For the purposes of this section:
 - “Tier 1 mental health support” means well-being service provisions that are aimed at the entire system and population within an organization.
 - “Tier 2 mental health support” means well-being service provisions that are aimed at populations within an organization that are at higher risk of mental health challenges.”

SECTION 3. Chapter 346, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is amended by adding a new section to part XXI to be appropriately designated and to read as follows:

“§346- State of well-being project; established. (a) There is established within the office the state of well-being project to assess and enhance tier 1 and tier 2 mental health support services for key stakeholder communities across the State. The project shall:

- (1) Assess and enhance existing tier 1 and tier 2 mental health support training and ongoing support services to public schools, public community centers, first responder groups, police departments, fire departments, hospitals, and medical staff and, when non-existent, build out culturally grounded and community-informed well-being programming;
- (2) Track and measure aggregate mental health trends across all populations served by the project; and
- (3) Hire and train mental health specialists and work with approved partner organizations identified by the office to lead project execution across tier 1 and tier 2 mental health support services in each key stakeholder community.
- (b) The office shall administer the state of well-being project in accordance with the following timeline:
 - (1) Beginning in 2024, initiate a landscape assessment of existing tier 1 and tier 2 mental health support services by December 31, 2025; and
 - (2) Beginning in 2025, initiate the enhancement of existing tier 1 and tier 2 mental health support services and, when non-existent, build out culturally grounded and community-informed well-being programming, with statewide implementation to be achieved by December 31, 2027.
- (c) For the purposes of this section:
 - “Tier 1 mental health support” means well-being service provisions that are aimed at the entire system and population within an organization.
 - “Tier 2 mental health support” means well-being service provisions that are aimed at populations within an organization that are at higher risk of mental health challenges.”

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SECTION 4. There is appropriated out of the general revenues of the State of Hawaii the sum of \$876,000 or so much thereof as may be necessary for fiscal year 2024-2025 for the establishment and implementation of the state of well-being project, to be expended as follows:

- (1) \$475,000 to establish six full-time equivalent (6.0 FTE) mental health specialist positions within the office of wellness and resilience; and
- (2) \$401,000 for the office of wellness and resilience to implement this Act.

The sum appropriated shall be expended by the office of wellness and resilience for the purposes of this Act.

SECTION 5. New statutory material is underscored.¹

SECTION 6. This Act shall take effect on July 1, 2024; provided that:

- (1) Section 2 of this Act shall be repealed on June 30, 2025; and
- (2) Section 3 of this Act shall take effect on July 1, 2025.

(Approved June 27, 2024.)

Note

1. Edited pursuant to HRS §23G-16.5.