

Committee on Children, Families, and Elder Affairs

CS/SB 914 — Suicide Prevention

by Rules Committee and Senators Garcia and Book

The bill modifies statutory provisions governing confidentiality for peer support communications between a first responder and a first responder peer. The bill allows certain first responder organizations to designate first responder peers and clarifies that first responder peers include active, volunteer, and retired first responders. This will ensure that all first responder peers can serve their communities with the same protections as peers designated by an employing agency performing the same services, regardless of the entity that designates him or her as a peer. The bill also permits diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder in first responders via telehealth for the purposes of obtaining worker's compensation benefits.

The bill renames the Commission on Mental Health and Substance Abuse (the Commission), adjunct to the Department of Children and Families, as the Commission on Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder, and adds a representative of the statewide Florida 211 network appointed by the Governor to the Commission membership. The bill also directs the Commission to conduct a study examining the following services and programs relating to suicide prevention:

- The 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline system (the 988 system);
- Crisis response services;
- Strategies to improve linkages between the 988 system infrastructure and crisis response services;
- Available mental health block grant funds;
- Funding sources available through Medicaid; and
- Strategies to ensure that managing entities work with community stakeholders in furtherance of supporting the 988 system and other crisis response services.

The bill also requires the Commission to evaluate and make recommendations regarding skills-based training that teaches participants about mental health and substance use disorder issues, including, but not limited to, Mental Health First Aid models.

The bill extends the statutory repeal date of the Commission from September 1, 2023, to September 1, 2026. The bill requires the Commission to submit interim reports, beginning January 1, 2023, annually thereafter through January 1, 2025, and a final report due September 1, 2026, to the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives. The bill requires the Commission to include the findings of the suicide prevention study in the final report due September 1, 2026.

If approved by the Governor, or allowed to become law without the Governor's signature, these provisions take effect July 1, 2023.

Vote: Senate 40-0; House 115-0