

THE FLORIDA SENATE
2019 SUMMARY OF LEGISLATION PASSED
Committee on Health Policy

CS/CS/HB 501 — Alternative Treatment Options for Veterans

by Health and Human Services Committee; Health Market Reform Subcommittee; Rep. Ponder and others (CS/CS/SB 1518 by Appropriations Committee; Health Policy Committee; and Senators Wright, Book, and Cruz)

The bill authorizes the Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs (FDVA) to contract with one state university or Florida College System institution to furnish "alternative treatment options" for veterans who have been certified by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs or any branch of the U.S. Armed Forces as having posttraumatic stress disorder or a traumatic brain injury. To be eligible, a veteran:

- Must have been diagnosed with service-connected posttraumatic stress disorder or a traumatic brain injury by a health care practitioner;
- Must voluntarily agree to such alternative treatment; and
- Must demonstrate having previously sought services for traumatic brain injury or posttraumatic stress disorder through the federal Veterans Affairs service delivery system or through private health insurance, if such coverage is available to the veteran.

The bill provides the following definitions:

- "Posttraumatic stress disorder" means a mental health disorder that is developed after having experienced or witnessed a life-threatening event, including, but not limited to, military sexual trauma.
- "Traumatic brain injury" means an acquired injury to the brain. The term does not include brain dysfunction caused by congenital or degenerative disorders or birth trauma.

Alternative treatment options that may be provided under the bill include:

- Accelerated resolution therapy;
- Equine therapy;
- Hyperbaric oxygen therapy, which must be provided at a registered hyperbaric oxygen facility;
- Music therapy; and
- Service animal training therapy.

The provision of the alternative treatment services must be under the direction and supervision of an individual licensed under Florida law as an allopathic or osteopathic physician, a physician assistant, a chiropractor, a certified nurse midwife, a certified nurse practitioner, a certified registered nurse anesthetist, a clinical nurse specialist, a psychiatric nurse, a licensed practical nurse, a registered nurse, a certified nursing assistant, a general advanced practice registered nurse, a psychologist, a clinical social worker, a marriage and family therapist, or a mental health counselor.

Supervising practitioners must agree to cooperate with FDVA to provide data sufficient to assess the efficacy of alternative treatment modalities.

The bill requires the FDVA to compile specified data into a report by January 1 of each year, beginning in 2020, for submission to the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives. The bill authorizes the FDVA to adopt rules for purpose of implementing the bill.

If approved by the Governor, these provisions take effect July 1, 2019.

Vote: Senate 40-0; House 114-0