

1 AN ACT  
2 RELATING TO VETERANS; ENACTING THE SERVICE MEMBERS AND  
3 VETERANS SUICIDE PREVENTION ACT WITHIN THE VETERANS' SERVICES  
4 DEPARTMENT ACT; PROVIDING DEPARTMENT RESPONSIBILITIES TO  
5 RAISE AWARENESS REGARDING SUICIDE WITHIN THE POPULATIONS OF  
6 SERVICE MEMBERS, VETERANS AND MILITARY AND VETERAN FAMILY  
7 MEMBERS AND TO INCREASE ACCESS TO SUICIDE PREVENTION  
8 RESOURCES; PROVIDING DEFINITIONS.

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10 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO:

11 SECTION 1. A new section of the Veterans' Services  
12 Department Act is enacted to read:

13 "SHORT TITLE.--This act may be cited as the "Service  
14 Members and Veterans Suicide Prevention Act"."

15 SECTION 2. A new section of the Veterans' Services  
16 Department Act is enacted to read:

17 "DEFINITIONS.--As used in the Service Members and  
18 Veterans Suicide Prevention Act:

19 A. "family member" means a family member of either  
20 a service member or a veteran;

21 B. "program" means the service members and  
22 veterans suicide prevention program;

23 C. "service member" means an individual who is  
24 serving in the armed forces of the United States or in an  
25 active reserve component of the armed forces of the United

1 States, including the national guard; and

2 D. "veteran" means a person who has received an  
3 honorable discharge or separation from military service in  
4 the armed forces of the United States or in an active reserve  
5 component of the armed forces of the United States, including  
6 the national guard."

7 SECTION 3. A new section of the Veterans' Services  
8 Department Act is enacted to read:

9 "SUICIDE PREVENTION PROGRAM ESTABLISHED--DEVELOPMENT--  
10 COLLABORATION.--

11 A. The "service members and veterans suicide  
12 prevention program" is established within the department. If  
13 deemed appropriate, the department may develop and operate  
14 the program in collaboration with the department of health or  
15 other state agencies and when practicable with community  
16 services organizations, including nonprofit organizations,  
17 and with federal partners and individuals directly impacted  
18 by risk of or loss from suicide of a service member, veteran  
19 or family member.

20 B. The program established pursuant to Subsection  
21 A of this section shall be designed to:

22 (1) raise awareness of and reduce death by  
23 suicide within the population of service members, veterans  
24 and family members;

25 (2) work to reduce barriers at the community

1 and individual level that increase the risk of suicide by  
2 increasing access to crisis and suicide prevention services;

3 (3) connect service members, veterans and  
4 family members whose need for services are based upon a risk  
5 of death by suicide or other circumstances outlined by the  
6 program, with appropriate community and mental health  
7 providers and resources;

8 (4) raise awareness of and access to  
9 behavioral health services and resources and promote  
10 evidence-based best practices and safe messaging to increase  
11 awareness of suicide prevention hotlines and other crisis  
12 resources available to service members, veterans and family  
13 members;

14 (5) within the framework of the program,  
15 advocate for service members, veterans and family members at  
16 risk for suicide; and

17 (6) work to increase public awareness about  
18 the issue of suicide among service members, veterans and  
19 family members and its root causes.

20 C. In implementing the program as provided in  
21 Subsection A of this section, and on an ongoing basis, the  
22 department shall develop methods to provide support and  
23 guidance to communities aiding in the development of  
24 strategic planning designed to reduce suicide among service  
25 members, veterans and family members, including the

1 engagement and coordination of local leadership, faith-based  
2 entities, schools, chambers of commerce, public and private  
3 providers, grassroots coalitions and other stakeholders as  
4 identified and appropriate.

5 D. The department shall collaborate with the  
6 department of health and any other appropriate state agency  
7 to promote mental health awareness, including:

8 (1) the 988 suicide and crisis lifeline;

9 (2) the veterans crisis line and the  
10 veterans crisis line for those who are deaf or hard-of-  
11 hearing;

12 (3) the national suicide prevention  
13 lifeline; and

14 (4) local resources available to assist in  
15 crisis intervention and ongoing supports."

16 **SECTION 4.** A new section of the Veterans' Services  
17 Department Act is enacted to read:

18 "DEPARTMENT EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS--TRAINING.--The  
19 department shall provide appropriate training to department  
20 staff responsible for implementing the program established in  
21 Subsection A of Section 3 of the Service Members and Veterans  
22 Suicide Prevention Act and carrying out the provisions of  
23 that act and shall provide educational materials to  
24 department staff and partnering state agencies and community  
25 partners to increase the capacity to raise awareness and to

1 identify and engage service members, veterans and family  
2 members at risk of suicide."

3 SECTION 5. A new section of the Veterans' Services  
4 Department Act is enacted to read:

5 "REPORT.--Beginning in 2024, the department shall submit  
6 an annual written report regarding the program established  
7 pursuant to Section 3 of the Service Members and Veterans  
8 Suicide Prevention Act to the governor and the interim  
9 legislative military and veterans' affairs committee by  
10 October 30 of each year. The report shall include program  
11 efforts made and successes, pertinent data-driven information  
12 and barriers faced and shall be posted on the department's  
13 website."

14 SECTION 6. A new section of the Veterans' Services  
15 Department Act is enacted to read:

16 "DEPARTMENT RULES.--No later than December 1, 2024, the  
17 department shall promulgate rules for the carrying out of the  
18 provisions of the Service Members and Veterans Suicide  
19 Prevention Act."

20 SECTION 7. EFFECTIVE DATE.--The effective date of the  
21 provisions of this act is July 1, 2024. \_\_\_\_\_

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