

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2017 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

Senate Bill 594

(Senator Nathan-Pulliam, *et al.*)

Judicial Proceedings

Baltimore City and Baltimore County - Police Behavioral Health Units - Training Requirements

This bill establishes that the training program developed for police officers in the behavioral health units of the Baltimore City Police Department (BPD) and the Baltimore County Police Department (BCPD) must require at least 60 hours of instruction.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: The Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH) can help develop a longer training program than has already been established with existing resources. Revenues are not affected.

Local Effect: BCPD's costs are likely unaffected by the bill's requirement for its officers in the unit to undergo 60 hours of training. For BPD to provide 60 hours of training, expenditures increase to cover overtime necessitated by the requirement. Revenues are not affected.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: Chapter 126 of 2015 required BPD and BCPD to each establish, to the extent practicable, a behavioral health unit by October 1, 2016. Training was required to be developed in consultation with DHMH's Behavioral Health Administration. Chapter 126 did not specify the minimum number of hours of such training.

The purpose of the units is to respond to emergency calls involving an individual suspected of having a mental health, substance use, or co-occurring mental health and substance use disorder, with the goals of diverting such an individual into treatment instead of the criminal justice system and preventing and reducing unnecessary use of force and loss of life. Each unit must consist of at least six officers who are specially trained (1) to understand the needs of these individuals and (2) in cultural sensitivity and cultural competency.

By October 1, 2018, BPD and BCPD must report to the General Assembly on the number and disposition of emergency calls that the respective behavioral health units have responded to in 2016, 2017, and 2018.

The requirements of Chapter 126 terminate on June 30, 2019.

Background: BPD and BCPD both advise that they have established behavioral health units. BPD advises that unit officers currently receive 40 hours of behavioral health training. BCPD advises that unit officers currently receive approximately 48 hours of unique training, but that with the addition of department-wide training, unit officers likely receive over 60 hours per year in crisis intervention and related training.

In January 2017, the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) reached agreement on a consent decree with Baltimore City and BPD to address systemic issues identified during a DOJ investigation of BPD. Among other issues, the consent decree outlines requirements for BPD to improve its response to, and interaction with, people with behavioral health issues or who are experiencing a behavioral health crisis. In addition to continuing to utilize the Behavioral Emergency Services Team (BEST) training program (an existing behavioral health training program for BPD officers), BPD also agreed to provide specialized training for certain officers – these officers will be known as Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) officers and will be called upon to respond to behavioral health crisis incidents in addition to their regular patrol duties. The training for CIT officers must be at least 40 hours of in-person training in areas such as field evaluations, suicide intervention, community behavioral health resources, substance use, and crisis de-escalation. Further, all officers (not just CIT officers) must receive at least eight hours of annual in-service training in crisis response.

Local Expenditures: BCPD advises that the bill's requirement can be handled with existing budgeted resources, largely because officers already undergo additional training which may be able to count toward the 60-hour requirement.

BPD advises that the bill results in additional expenditures for the department and has an operational impact. Specifically, BPD must pay for (1) 20 additional hours of overtime for staff at the Training Academy and (2) for each officer in the unit, 20 hours of overtime for

other officers to fill shifts while the unit officers are in training. BPD did not otherwise quantify the costs. BPD additionally notes that it must conduct training in accordance with the DOJ consent decree, which creates further logistical issues.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Baltimore City; Baltimore County; Department of Health and Mental Hygiene; Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - February 19, 2017
md/ljm

Analysis by: Sasika Subramaniam

Direct Inquiries to:
(410) 946-5510
(301) 970-5510