

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2010 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Revised

House Bill 1273
Appropriations

(Delegate Aumann, *et al.*)

Finance

State Government - Employees - Suicide Awareness and Prevention

This bill specifies that the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) must declare one week each year to be Suicide Awareness and Prevention Week. During this week DBM must electronically transmit information to the head of each principal unit related to the following topics: (1) the warning signs of suicide; (2) methods to respond to threats of suicide; (3) available resources for those who suffer from depression and other mental health conditions; and (4) contact information for and a description of the Maryland Crisis Hotline. Each agency head must forward the information to State employees in the principal unit. The bill includes a related reporting requirement.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: None. The bill's requirements can be handled with existing budgeted resources.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Bill Summary: The bill also requires the Secretary of Budget and Management, in conjunction with the Secretary of Health and Mental Hygiene, to study the issue of developing a comprehensive and cost-effective suicide awareness and prevention program for State employees. The Secretary of Budget and Management must submit the findings of the study to the House Appropriations Committee by December 31, 2010.

Current Law/Background: Chapter 371 of 2002 established the Maryland Mental Health Crisis Response System within the Mental Hygiene Administration of the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH). The system operates a statewide network by coordinating interjurisdictional services to develop crisis response systems to serve the entire State. Local crisis response systems provide suicide prevention and crisis intervention hotlines, mental health information and referrals, coordination of disaster mental health teams, a community crisis bed and hospital bed registry, and linkages to social services telephone systems. The crisis response system includes crisis communication center in each jurisdiction.

The Maryland Crisis Hotline is operated by Grassroots Crisis Intervention, which is a nonprofit organization based in Columbia, Maryland. The organization was founded in 1969 and received grant funding from DHMH the following year to operate the hotline and an overnight shelter. Since its inception, Grassroots Crisis Intervention has provided many services, including support for homeless people and runaways, 24-hour telephone and walk-in counseling, and general mental health services.

According to the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Maryland had the fifth lowest rate of suicide in the nation in 2005. Suicide is the eleventh leading cause of death in the United States, accounting for roughly 1.5% of all deaths.

In fiscal 2009, there were over 51,500 Executive Branch employees. Eighty Executive Branch employees died in fiscal 2009, but the number of these deaths that resulted from suicide is not available.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Department of Budget and Management, Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, Department of State Police, Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - March 8, 2010
mlm/ljm Revised - House Third Reader - April 6, 2010

Analysis by: Michael T. Vorgetts

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