

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2025 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

House Bill 934
Judiciary

(Delegate Lopez)

Center for Firearm Violence Prevention and Intervention - Resources, Tools, and Educational Materials

This bill authorizes the Center for Firearm Violence Prevention and Intervention to create resources, tools, and educational materials (and conduct public awareness campaigns as authorized under current law) related to (1) the secure storage of firearms; (2) extreme risk protective orders (ERPOs); (3) suicide prevention, including the 9-8-8 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline; and (4) any other topics the center determines appropriate and necessary to promote firearm safety in the State. The center may consult with State and local agencies and third-party organizations in creating such campaigns, resources, tools, and materials.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: If the center chooses to use the bill’s authority, it can likely do so with existing budgeted resources, as discussed below. Revenues are not affected.

Local Effect: Any collaboration between counties or municipalities and the center can be absorbed within existing resources. Revenues are not affected.

Small Business Effect: Minimal or none.

Analysis

Current Law:

Center for Firearm Violence Prevention and Intervention

Chapters 706 and 707 of 2024 established the Center for Firearm Violence Prevention and Intervention in the Maryland Department of Health (MDH). The purpose of the center is to reduce firearm violence, harm from firearm violence, and misuse of firearms in the State

by partnering with federal, State, and local agencies and affected communities to implement a public health approach to firearm violence reduction. The center must (1) work in consultation with specified State agencies and stakeholders; (2) solicit and consider recommendations from specified communities and experts; and (3) submit to the Governor and the General Assembly a preliminary State Plan for a Public Health Approach to Reducing Firearm Violence by May 1, 2025, and a State Strategic Plan for Firearm Violence Reduction Using Public Health Strategies by May 1, 2029, and every four years thereafter.

In addition to outlining the center's required duties, Chapters 706 and 707 also authorize the center to engage in several specified activities. Among other things, the center may conduct public awareness campaigns and engage in any other activity consistent with the center's mission.

Extreme Risk Protective Orders

Chapter 250 of 2018 established ERPOs in the State. An ERPO is a court order temporarily preventing an individual from purchasing or possessing firearms or ammunition and requiring the individual to surrender any firearms or ammunition to law enforcement.

9-8-8 Hotline

Under Chapters 145 and 146 of 2022 and the federal National Suicide Hotline Designation Act of 2020, MDH designated 9-8-8 as the State's behavioral health crisis hotline on July 16, 2022.

State Expenditures: As noted above, the center already has the authority under current law to conduct public awareness campaigns and engage in any other activity consistent with its mission. Thus, even in the absence of the bill, the center can likely conduct the activities explicitly authorized by the bill.

Even so, MDH advises that if the center chooses to use the bill's authority, its general fund expenditures increase by an estimated \$86,073 in fiscal 2026, with ongoing costs in the out-years of at least \$62,200 annually, to (1) hire one part-time (50%) health policy analyst to develop and coordinate the public awareness campaign and the resources tools and educational materials specified in the bill and (2) contract with a communications and media vendor to develop the content for and market the public awareness campaign.

The Department of Legislative Services generally disagrees. Given that the fiscal 2026 budget as introduced includes approximately \$2.0 million in general funds for the center (\$1.0 million for grants and approximately \$1.0 million for administrative expenses) – and that the center's broad authority already encompasses the activities addressed in the bill –

it is assumed that any costs incurred by the center to conduct a public awareness campaign and/or to develop the resources, tools, and educational materials specified in the bill can likely be absorbed within existing budgeted resources. To the extent existing resources prove insufficient, MDH can request additional resources through the annual budget process.

Additional Information

Recent Prior Introductions: Similar legislation has not been introduced within the last three years.

Designated Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Maryland Association of County Health Officers; Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Cecil, Frederick, and Montgomery counties; City of Frederick; Maryland Municipal League; Governor's Office of Crime Prevention and Policy; Maryland Department of Health; Department of State Police; Department of Legislative Services

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