

HB 687 / SB 104: Services for Veterans and Their Families

A proactive, coordinated, dedicated approach to connect Veterans and their families to mental health services.

What is the purpose of HB 687 / SB 104?

- ▶ Services for Veterans and Their Families creates the Florida Veteran's Care Coordination Program to provide statewide, dedicated behavioral healthcare referral services to veterans and their families through Florida's 211 Network modeled after the pilot program.
- ▶ The bill requires the program to provide peer support, suicide assessment, treatment and resource coordination, and the program team to track and follow up with callers.

Why is HB 687 / SB 104 necessary?

- ▶ Florida has the nation's third largest veteran population with more than 1.5 million veterans. Veterans face unique challenges and have been known to struggle with mental health and substance abuse issues.
- ▶ Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) attributed to combat affects as much as 20% of all U.S. military veterans returning from combat since the Vietnam War. Suicide rates for veterans continue to be a national concern. More than 6,000 veterans committed suicide each year from 2008 to 2016. In 2016, the suicide rate was 1.5 times greater for veterans than for non-veteran adults, after adjusting for age and gender.
- ▶ The Veterans Crisis Line launched in 2007 has answered more than 4.4 million calls and initiated the dispatch of emergency services to callers in crisis more than 138,000 times.

How would HB 687/ SB 104 work?

- ▶ The bill requires the Department of Veteran's Affairs to contract with the managing entities to enter into agreements with Florida 211 Network to provide program services.
- ▶ The program will provide veterans and their families dedicated behavioral healthcare referral services, specifically mental health and substance abuse services, through the Florida 211 Network.
- ▶ Veteran's Affairs may model the program after the proof-of-concept pilot program established in 2014 by the Crisis Center of Tampa Bay and the Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs in Hillsborough, Pasco, Pinellas, Polk, and Manatee counties:
 - ◆ Prevent veteran suicides;
 - ◆ Increase the use of VA services by veterans in Florida; and
 - ◆ Increase the number of veterans who make use of other community-based services.

Vote YES on HB 687 / SB 104 for Florida's veterans and their families!