

1 HOUSE BILL 298

2 **56TH LEGISLATURE - STATE OF NEW MEXICO - SECOND SESSION, 2024**

3 INTRODUCED BY

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5 and Tara Jaramillo
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10 AN ACT

11 RELATING TO VETERANS; ENACTING THE SERVICE MEMBERS AND VETERANS
12 SUICIDE PREVENTION ACT WITHIN THE VETERANS' SERVICES DEPARTMENT
13 ACT; PROVIDING DEPARTMENT RESPONSIBILITIES TO RAISE AWARENESS
14 REGARDING SUICIDE WITHIN THE POPULATIONS OF SERVICE MEMBERS,
15 VETERANS AND MILITARY AND VETERAN FAMILY MEMBERS AND TO
16 INCREASE ACCESS TO SUICIDE PREVENTION RESOURCES; PROVIDING
17 DEFINITIONS; MAKING AN APPROPRIATION.
18

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

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

22 "[NEW MATERIAL] SHORT TITLE.--This act may be cited as the
23 "Service Members and Veterans Suicide Prevention Act".

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

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1 "[NEW MATERIAL] DEFINITIONS.--As used in the Service
2 Members and Veterans Suicide Prevention Act:

3 A. "family member" means a family member of either
4 a service member or a veteran;

5 B. "program" means the service members and veterans
6 suicide prevention program;

7 C. "service member" means an individual who is
8 serving in the armed forces of the United States or in an
9 active reserve component of the armed forces of the United
10 States, including the national guard; and

11 D. "veteran" means a person who has received an
12 honorable discharge or separation from military service in the
13 armed forces of the United States or in an active reserve
14 component of the armed forces of the United States, including
15 the national guard."

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

18 "[NEW MATERIAL] SUICIDE PREVENTION PROGRAM ESTABLISHED--
19 DEVELOPMENT--COLLABORATION.--

20 A. The "service members and veterans suicide
21 prevention program" is established within the department. If
22 deemed appropriate, the department may develop and operate the
23 program in collaboration with the department of health or other
24 state agencies and when practicable with community services
25 organizations, including nonprofit organizations, and with

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1 federal partners and individuals directly impacted by risk of
2 or loss from suicide of a service member, veteran or family
3 member.

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

6 (1) raise awareness of and reduce death by
7 suicide within the population of service members, veterans and
8 family members;

9 (2) work to reduce barriers at the community
10 and individual level that increase the risk of suicide by
11 increasing access to crisis and suicide prevention services;

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

17 (4) raise awareness of and access to
18 behavioral health services and resources and promote evidence-
19 based best practices and safe messaging to increase awareness
20 of suicide prevention hotlines and other crisis resources
21 available to service members, veterans and family members;

22 (5) within the framework of the program,
23 advocate for service members, veterans and family members at
24 risk for suicide; and

25 (6) work to increase public awareness about

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1 the issue of suicide among service members, veterans and family
2 members and its root causes.

3 C. In implementing the program as provided in
4 Subsection A of this section, and on an ongoing basis, the
5 department shall develop methods to provide support and
6 guidance to communities aiding in the development of strategic
7 planning designed to reduce suicide among service members,
8 veterans and family members, including the engagement and
9 coordination of local leadership, faith-based entities,
10 schools, chambers of commerce, public and private providers,
11 grassroots coalitions and other stakeholders as identified and
12 appropriate.

13 D. The department shall collaborate with the
14 department of health and any other appropriate state agency to
15 promote mental health awareness, including:

- 16 (1) the 988 suicide and crisis lifeline;
17 (2) the veterans crisis line and the veterans
18 crisis line for those who are deaf or hard-of-hearing;
19 (3) the national suicide prevention lifeline;
20 and
21 (4) local resources available to assist in
22 crisis intervention and ongoing supports."

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

25 "[NEW MATERIAL] DEPARTMENT EDUCATIONAL MATERIALS--

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1 TRAINING.--The department shall provide appropriate training to
2 department staff responsible for implementing the program
3 established in Subsection A of Section 3 of the Service Members
4 and Veterans Suicide Prevention Act and carrying out the
5 provisions of that act and shall provide educational materials
6 to department staff and partnering state agencies and community
7 partners to increase the capacity to raise awareness and to
8 identify and engage service members, veterans and family
9 members at risk of suicide."

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

12 "[NEW MATERIAL] REPORT.--Beginning in 2024, the department
13 shall submit an annual written report regarding the program
14 established pursuant to Section 3 of the Service Members and
15 Veterans Suicide Prevention Act to the governor and the interim
16 legislative military and veterans' affairs committee by October
17 30 of each year. The report shall include program efforts made
18 and successes, pertinent data-driven information and barriers
19 faced and shall be posted on the department's website."

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

22 "[NEW MATERIAL] DEPARTMENT RULES.--No later than December
23 1, 2024, the department shall promulgate rules for the carrying
24 out of the provisions of the Service Members and Veterans
25 Suicide Prevention Act."

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SECTION 7. APPROPRIATION.--One hundred thousand dollars (\$100,000) is appropriated from the general fund to the veterans' services department for expenditure in fiscal year 2025 to carry out the provisions of the Service Members and Veterans Suicide Prevention Act. Any unexpended or unencumbered balance remaining at the end of fiscal year 2025 shall revert to the general fund.

SECTION 8. EFFECTIVE DATE.--The effective date of the provisions of this act is July 1, 2024.