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## FISCAL IMPACT REPORT

SPONSOR	Vincent/Martinez, A./Terrazas/ Chatfield/Jones	LAST UPDATED	1/30/24
		ORIGINAL DATE	1/26/24
SHORT TITLE	Veteran PTSD Program	BILL NUMBER	House Bill 240
		ANALYST	Chilton

### APPROPRIATION\* (dollars in thousands)

FY24	FY25	Recurring or Nonrecurring	Fund Affected
	\$2,000.0	Recurring	General Fund

Parentheses ( ) indicate expenditure decreases.

\*Amounts reflect most recent analysis of this legislation.

### Sources of Information

LFC Files

Agency Analysis Received From  
Veterans' Services Department (VSD)  
Health Care Authority Department (HCA)

## SUMMARY

### Synopsis of House Bill 240

House Bill 240 appropriates \$2 million from the general fund to the Veterans' Services Department (VSD) for the purpose of enabling VSD to contract with a posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) therapy program for veterans, police, and first responders.

This bill does not contain an effective date and, as a result, would go into effect 90 days after the Legislature adjourns, or May 15, 2024, if enacted.

## FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

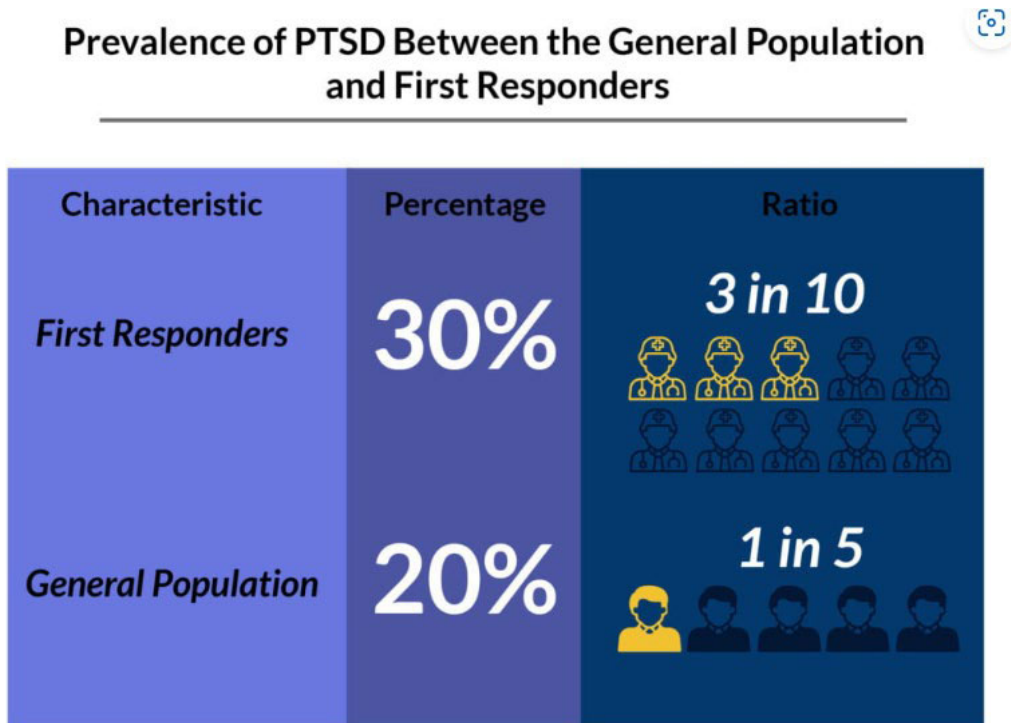
The appropriation of \$2 million contained in this bill is a recurring expense to the general fund. Any unexpended or unencumbered balance remaining at the end of FY25 shall revert to the general fund.

## SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

The New Mexico VSD notes the importance and prevalence of PTSD among veterans, quoting federal Veterans Administration figures indicating that, "Nearly 30 percent of Vietnam-era veterans have had PTSD in their lifetime; 12 percent of Gulf War veterans have had PTSD

within a given year; and up to 20 percent of Operation Iraqi Freedom/Enduring Freedom veterans have had PTSD within a given year.” These figures come from a federal Veterans Administration website quantifying the problem and its consequences ([How Common is PTSD in Veterans? - PTSD: National Center for PTSD \(va.gov\)](#)). It notes PTSD is “slightly more common” among veterans than among nonveteran populations in the United States, possibly related in part to the traumas of witnessing battlefield violence and worrying about personal health, as well as sexual violence or harassment, while in a military role.

The Health Care Authority concurs with VSD that PTSD is more common among veterans than nonveterans and notes it is also higher in first responders:



PTSD has a known connection with suicide. In a 2021 Swedish study published in the *Journal of Affective Disorders*, PTSD was found to account for 0.6 percent of suicides among males and 3.5 percent among females. In a 2014 U.S. study in the same journal that evaluated suicides among Veterans Administration Hospital-treated patients, it was noted that a past history of PTSD diagnosis resulted in a 34 percent increase in suicides.

VSD notes the agency does not provide direct medical (or behavioral health) services to anyone, including veterans, but helps to coordinate their care. It further notes:

The [federal] VA Medical Center (VAMC) provides behavioral health services for veterans suffering from PTSD. The Vet Centers throughout the state also provide therapy and counseling for veterans. All veterans can receive free behavioral health treatment from any hospital in New Mexico. First responders and the police have access to behavioral health resources such as crisis intervention, suicide prevention, and PTSD therapy, through their medical/health insurance benefits, their unions, or employee assistance programs.

The risk of PTSD among police and other first responders is less well studied than among veterans. However, in an article in *Frontiers in Psychology*, “Directions and Best Practices for Police Resilience Practice and Research,” the authors note:

Occupational groups that experience heightened levels of stress and trauma, such as law enforcement can be at increased risk for long-term health care issues, mental health concerns, psychological disorders, and behavioral issues. Law enforcement officers are often exposed to death, violence, and other forms of human misery. However, it is often not a single incident or event that can lead to catastrophic issues.

## **TECHNICAL ISSUES**

VSD points out that the bill requires VSD to contract with “a veteran, police and first responder posttraumatic stress disorder therapy program.” However, it does provide services to police or first responders unless they are also veterans.

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