

LFC Requestor: Emily Hilla

2026 LEGISLATIVE SESSION  
AGENCY BILL ANALYSIS

Section I: General

Chamber: House

Category: Bill

Number: 56

Type: Introduced

Date (of THIS analysis): 01-20-2026

Sponsor(s): Alan T. Martinez, Rebecca Dow

Short Title: VETERAN BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES

Reviewing Agency: Agency 665 - Department of Health

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Section II: Fiscal Impact

APPROPRIATION (dollars in thousands)

Appropriation Contained		Recurring or Nonrecurring	Fund Affected
FY 26	FY 27		
\$	\$1,000	Nonrecurring	General Fund

REVENUE (dollars in thousands)

Estimated Revenue			Recurring or Nonrecurring	Fund Affected
FY 26	FY 27	FY 28		
\$0	\$0	\$0	N/A	N/A

ESTIMATED ADDITIONAL OPERATING BUDGET IMPACT (dollars in thousands)

	FY 26	FY 27	FY 28	3 Year Total Cost	Recurring or Non-recurring	Fund Affected
Total	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	N/A	N/A

### Section III: Relationship to other legislation

Duplicates: None

Conflicts with: None

Companion to: None

Relates to: None

Duplicates/Relates to an Appropriation in the General Appropriation Act: None

### Section IV: Narrative

#### 1. BILL SUMMARY

##### a) Synopsis

House Bill 56 (HB56) would appropriate one-million-dollars (\$1,000,000) from the general fund to the veterans' service department for expenditure in FY 2027. This appropriation would assist veterans and their families in identifying and accessing behavioral health care services.

Is this an amendment or substitution?  Yes  No

Is there an emergency clause?  Yes  No

##### b) Significant Issues

According to the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO), veterans who are readjusting to civilian life are at higher risk for drug and alcohol addiction (<https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-20-35>). Results from the 2019-2020 National Health and Resilience in Veterans Study demonstrate that psychiatric and substance use disorders (SUD) are prevalent among veterans, and finds that despite an increased need, many veterans do not engage in behavioral health care. The study found that only one quarter of the veterans with a positive screen for SUD or a mental health disorder were engaged in treatment. Barriers to seeking care identified in the study include post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), sleep-related difficulties, and perceived stigma (<https://psychiatryonline.org/doi/epdf/10.1176/appi.ps.202100112>).

Suicide is also a health concern for U.S. veterans. The 2024 National Veteran Suicide Prevention Report, released by the VA, found that an average of 17.6 veteran suicides occurred per day in 2022. It also found that between 2021-2022, the age-adjusted suicide rate increased 1.6% among male veterans, but that the age-adjusted suicide rate among female veterans decreased by 24.1%. Suicide rates among younger veterans ages 18-34 also decreased ([https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/docs/data-sheets/2024/2024-Annual-Report-Part-2-of-2\\_508.pdf](https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/docs/data-sheets/2024/2024-Annual-Report-Part-2-of-2_508.pdf)). Enhancing mental health care access across the full continuum of care, expanding crisis intervention services, and integrating suicide prevention within medical settings are strategies for suicide prevention that could be bolstered by funding appropriated through HB56.

From 2020 to 2024, there were 4,521 overdose deaths among New Mexico (NM) residents (data source: New Mexico Department of Health, Bureau of Vital Records & Health Statistics death certificate data). Of these, 284 deaths (6.3%) were among New Mexicans who had ever served in the US armed forces. Alcohol-attributable deaths are also prevalent among NM veterans. Of the 9,622 alcohol-related deaths that occurred from 2020-2024, 1,172 deaths (12.2%) were among NM veterans.

## 2. PERFORMANCE IMPLICATIONS

- Does this bill impact the current delivery of NMDOH services or operations?  
 Yes  No  
If yes, describe how.
- Is this proposal related to the NMDOH Strategic Plan?  Yes  No

## 3. FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

- If there is an appropriation, is it included in the Executive Budget Request?  
 Yes  No  N/A
- If there is an appropriation, is it included in the LFC Budget Request?  
 Yes  No  N/A
- Does this bill have a fiscal impact on NMDOH?  Yes  No

## 4. ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS

Will this bill have an administrative impact on NMDOH?  Yes  No

## 5. DUPLICATION, CONFLICT, COMPANIONSHIP OR RELATIONSHIP

None

## 6. TECHNICAL ISSUES

Are there technical issues with the bill?  Yes  No

## 7. LEGAL/REGULATORY ISSUES (OTHER SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES)

- Will administrative rules need to be updated or new rules written?  Yes  No
- Have there been changes in federal/state/local laws and regulations that make this legislation necessary (or unnecessary)?  Yes  No
- Does this bill conflict with federal grant requirements or associated regulations?  
 Yes  No
- Are there any legal problems or conflicts with existing laws, regulations, policies, or programs?  Yes  No

## 8. DISPARITIES ISSUES

Overdose deaths among veterans (defined as NM residents who have ever served in the US armed forces) tend to be males (92.3%), White (47.9%) and older than the average overdose decedent. On average, veterans dying of drug overdoses tend to be older (mean=55.7 years) compared to the general NM population (mean=43.8 years). Racial disparities are also observed regarding overdose mortality among veterans considering that Black or African American veterans experienced a greater burden of overdose (5.6%) compared to the general Black or African American population (3.5%).

Similarly to overdose death, alcohol-related deaths among veterans tend to be males (95.0%), White (48.6%), and older (55+ years old).

Enacting HB56 could increase access to behavioral health services for veterans, which would positively impact health equity for older White male veterans in NM. Enacting this bill would also positively impact the health of Black veterans in the state.

## **9. HEALTH IMPACT(S)**

When examining surveillance data specific to unintentional and undetermined overdose deaths, the State Unintentional Drug Overdose Reporting System (SUDORS), veterans showed higher evidence of mental health diagnoses compared to non-veterans (30.7% vs 21.6%). Of these mental health diagnoses, depression (30.0%) and PTSD (27.5%) were the most common diagnoses among veterans. Among the other NM residents in SUDORS data, depression (38.6%) and anxiety (16.7%) were the most common mental health diagnoses identified. PTSD was identified among 7.6% of non-veteran overdose decedents in SUDORS data.

In the general NM population, males (69.8%) experienced a greater burden of overdose than females (30.2%). Male veterans (92.3%) experienced a greater burden of overdose death compared to females (7.8%).

From 2020-2024, most alcohol-related deaths among veterans occur among White people (48.6%) followed by Hispanic people (35.2%). The majority of alcohol-related deaths among veterans occurred among males (95.0%). The age group experiencing the greatest burden of alcohol-related deaths is ages 65-74 (26.0%) followed by 55-64 (19.8%), and 75-84 (18.5%).

According to the VA's National Veteran Suicide Prevention Report, which analyzed suicide data from 2022, the veteran suicide rate in NM was significantly higher than the national veteran suicide rate and was also significantly higher than the national general population suicide rate ([https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/docs/data-sheets/2022/2022\\_State\\_Data\\_Sheets\\_New\\_Mexico\\_508.pdf](https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/docs/data-sheets/2022/2022_State_Data_Sheets_New_Mexico_508.pdf)). In 2022, the NM veteran suicide rate was 46.2 per 100,000 population compared to the national rate of 34.7 per 100,000 population. 67 total suicide deaths occurred among NM veterans, making up more than 10% of total NM suicides in 2022. One third of veteran suicides occurred among NM veterans between the ages of 55-74. Suicides among male NM veterans make up the majority of veteran suicide deaths with fewer than ten suicides occurring among female veterans. 80.6% of NM veteran suicide deaths were completed using a firearm compared to 58.2% of total NM suicides.

## **10. ALTERNATIVES**

Funding could be identified within the framework of the 2025 Behavioral Health and Reinvestment Act for this purpose.

## **11. WHAT WILL BE THE CONSEQUENCES OF NOT ENACTING THIS BILL?**

If HB56 is not enacted, then a one-million-dollar appropriation from the general fund to the veterans' service department will not occur, potentially impacting veterans' and their families' ability to identify and access behavioral health services.

## **12. AMENDMENTS**

None

