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FISCAL IMPACT REPORT

SPONSOR Wirth ORIGINAL DATE 1/18/08
LAST UPDATED _____ HB 50
SHORT TITLE Law Enforcement Stress Management Training SB _____
ANALYST Peery-Galon

APPROPRIATION (dollars in thousands)

Appropriation		Recurring or Non-Rec	Fund Affected
FY08	FY09		
315.0		Recurring	General Fund

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

LFC Files

Responses Received From

Department of Health (DOH)
Department of Public Safety (DPS)
Indian Affairs Department (IAD)

No Responses Received From

Association of Counties
New Mexico Municipal League (NMML)

SUMMARY

Synopsis of Bill

House Bill 50 appropriates \$315.0, for expenditure in fiscal years 2008 and 2009, from the general fund to Department of Public Safety for the purpose of funding a pilot program for stress reduction and stress management training for law enforcement officers, firefighters, emergency medical personnel, tribal police and other first responders throughout the state, using Santa Fe-based clinical staff with expertise in treating acute and post-traumatic stress disorders to educate personnel in at least seven multiple staff departments and establishing a continuing education credit credential for such training.

The proposed legislation contains an emergency clause.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

The appropriation of \$315.0 contained in this bill is a recurring expense to the general fund. Any

unexpended or unencumbered balance remaining at the end of fiscal year 2009 shall revert to the general fund.

DOH states the proposed legislation would require ongoing funding to sustain its effectiveness over time and to accommodate turnover and new recruits into first responder professions.

SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

DOH states research indicates that post traumatic stress disorder is a serious health condition that is a consequence of critical incident exposure in the line of duty for all first responders in emergency response fields. Approximately, 50 percent of all disaster and emergency workers are likely to develop significant distress. The prevalence of post traumatic stress disorder is 10 to 15 percent for law enforcement personnel.

DOH manages the first responder stress reduction program. DOH reports the Critical Incident Stress Management Program provides debriefing for first responders exposed to job related traumatic events. The proposed legislation would assist first responders to develop self-management skills and would develop a curriculum to provide continuing credits for those professionals who complete the course.

DPS states the training is needed throughout the state. Some agencies have existing programs, but not all do because they do not have the in-house resources to provide such services to their personnel.

IAD reports that according to the National Institute of Justice, law enforcement officers and first responders “face a number of unusual, often highly disturbing, sources of stress” including: organizational stresses, stresses inherent in law enforcement work, frustration with other parts of the criminal justice system, and personal difficulties. Researchers consider law enforcement a highly stressful occupation that contributes to high rates of divorce, alcoholism, suicide and other emotional and health problems. IAD reports that many state and federal law enforcement agencies have developed stress management systems to meet the mental health needs of their officers. These agencies have found that these programs “improve efficiency, morale and image” as well as help “protect the significant financial investment the agencies have made in their officer and ensure that officers are in the best condition to protect and serve the public.”

ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS

IAD reports that the New Mexico State Police has a stress management and reduction program that has been utilized in its department for many years.

CONFLICT, DUPLICATION, COMPANIONSHIP, RELATIONSHIP

House Bill 50 has a relationship with Senate Bill 183.

TECHNICAL ISSUES

DOH notes the introduction of the proposed legislation states to fund a pilot “study”, which implies clinical research on the effects of stress on first responders. However, page 1, line 19 of

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the proposed legislation states a pilot “program”, which would provide training. Also, DOH notes that the meaning of “at least seven multiple staff departments” is unclear and calls into question the targeted recipients of stress management training.

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