

Fiscal Note

BILL # HB 2717

TITLE: ~~communicable disease information; 911 dispatchers~~ NOW: trauma counseling; 911 dispatchers

SPONSOR: Hernandez M

STATUS: House Engrossed

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Description

The bill broadens the requirement for trauma counseling benefits for public safety employees to include 911 dispatchers at Primary or Secondary Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs). The bill would require the state and political subdivisions to provide up to 36 counseling sessions and paid leave under certain circumstances for some 911 dispatchers who experience a traumatic event while in the course of duty.

Estimated Impact

We estimate that the bill would likely not have a material fiscal impact as the state already contracts for mental health counseling for its employees. The Arizona Department of Administration also reported that the bill would have no fiscal impact to the state.

In terms of political subdivisions, we have not yet received a fiscal impact estimate from the Arizona League of Cities and Towns or the Arizona Association of Counties.

Analysis

State agencies that operate dispatch centers which qualify as PSAPs include the Department of Public Safety, Arizona State University, Northern Arizona University, and the University of Arizona. The bill exempts the state from the requirements for additional trauma counseling and paid leave if the state provides 12 paid mental health counseling sessions to all state employees for any issue (in-person if requested by a public safety employee) and allows for additional visits if a licensed mental health professional deems them necessary.

The state administers an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) that meets these requirements. It pays a flat rate of \$0.80 cents per employee per month from the Health Insurance Trust Fund (HITF) to its EAP vendor regardless of usage. This translates into approximately \$650,000 annually. Because the state already provides 12 mental health counseling sessions to all its employees through its EAP and additional visits to public safety employees as necessary, the bill should not have a material fiscal impact.

Local Government Impact

ADOA administers the Emergency Telecommunications Services Revolving Fund (ETSF) which provides funding to county/city 911 administrators to support 911 emergency telecommunications systems. The ETSF supports 72 primary PSAPs and 8 secondary PSAPs with approximately 700 dispatch seats. Assuming all seats are fully staffed 24/7 (three 8-hour shifts), there would be a total of 2,100 911 dispatchers in the state.

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Local governments have different requirements for providing trauma counseling benefits than the state. Current law requires providing licensed counseling to peace officers and other public safety individuals who are exposed to one of the following traumatic events:

- 1) Visually witnessing the death or maiming or visually witnessing the immediate aftermath of such a death or maiming of one or more persons;
- 2) Witnessing the death of another peace officer or firefighter while engaged in the line of duty;
- 3) Responding directly or being directly involved in the drowning or near drowning of a child;
- 4) Responding to or being directly involved in a criminal investigation of an offense involving a dangerous crime against children;
- 5) Using deadly force or being subjected to deadly force in the line of duty, regardless of injury to the firefighter or peace officer; and
- 6) Requiring rescue in the line of duty where one's life was endangered.

The bill would allow 911 dispatchers to access the same trauma counseling services as other public safety employees. Employees would be allowed to choose their own mental health provider instead of using a provider contracted through their employer. These benefits would include 12 counseling sessions with up to an additional 24 if the mental health professional deems them necessary. The bill would prohibit the public employer from requiring a 911 dispatcher to use their accrued paid leave to attend treatment. The bill would also require the employer to provide paid leave for up to 30 days if a mental health professional determined that the 911 dispatcher was not fit to return to service and the employer is unable to provide an alternative duty assignment. To qualify for these up to 30 days of paid leave, the 911 dispatcher would need to use all available accrued paid leave first.

The impact to local governments will depend on the extent to which employees meet the criteria under the bill and utilize the program.

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