

House Bill 9

By: Representatives Scott of the 76th, Davis of the 87th, Carter of the 93rd, Jones of the 60th, Schofield of the 63rd, and others

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT

1 To amend Article 1 of Chapter 1 of Title 37 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated,
2 relating to general provisions related to governing and regulation of mental health, so as to
3 statutorily require the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities to
4 create, operate, and maintain the Georgia Crisis and Access Line; to provide for definitions;
5 to provide certain requirements and functionality of the access line; to provide for behavioral
6 health care provider data; to require that the access line support calls with sufficient access
7 to behavioral health services and supports; to require any state-operated registry of available
8 inpatient psychiatric beds, crisis residential beds, or substance use disorder beds to report
9 data for purposes of the access line; to provide for related matters; to repeal conflicting laws;
10 and for other purposes.

11 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GEORGIA:

12 **SECTION 1.**

13 Article 1 of Chapter 1 of Title 37 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to
14 general provisions related to governing and regulation of mental health, is amended by
15 adding a new Code section to read as follows:

16 "37-1-8.

17 (a) As used in this Code section, the term:

18 (1) 'Access line' means the Georgia Crisis and Access Line maintained and operated
19 pursuant to this Code section.

20 (2) 'Addictive disease' has the same meaning as in Code Section 37-1-1.

21 (3) 'Mental health or substance use disorder' means a mental illness or addictive disease.

22 (4) 'Mental illness' has the same meaning as in Code Section 37-1-1.

23 (b) Subject to appropriations, the department shall continue to maintain, operate, and make
24 available to the public a behavioral health telephone access line known as the Georgia
25 Crisis and Access Line. The department may contract for the design, operation, and
26 maintenance of the access line.

27 (c) The access line shall be available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The access line
28 shall do all of the following:

29 (1) Have the ability to access information related to the availability of services, including
30 near real-time access to any registry of available inpatient psychiatric beds, crisis
31 residential beds, and substance use disorder beds; provided, however, that individuals
32 seeking behavioral health care shall be informed that any such registry data provided to
33 an individual may not be accurate and that bed availability is not guaranteed;

34 (2) Refer and connect individuals requiring mental health or substance use disorder
35 services to mental health professionals, including, but not limited to, community mental
36 health services programs and Medicaid providers, using telecommunications and digital
37 communications methods commonly in use, such as a telephone call, text message,
38 electronic mail, and internet chat;

39 (3) Implement practices to comply with all applicable laws respecting individual and
40 patient privacy;

41 (4) Implement practices to ensure the security of the data collected, in line with industry
42 best practices and in compliance with all applicable laws;

43 (5) Notwithstanding paragraphs (3) and (4) of this subsection, collect data and utilize
44 data analytics to track the success of the access line's operations and identify trends in
45 service needs and outcomes; and

46 (6) Develop and utilize a customer relationship management infrastructure for the access
47 line to track, monitor, assign, follow up, and report on access line operations. The
48 department shall have operational oversight for, including access to and utilization of, the
49 customer relationship management infrastructure. Community mental health services
50 programs and Medicaid providers shall be authorized to access the customer relationship
51 management infrastructure.

52 (d) The Georgia Board of Health Care Workforce shall provide behavioral health care
53 provider data to the department. The department may use such data to leverage existing
54 databases and other sources of information identifying behavioral health care providers
55 providing mental health or substance use disorder treatment and rehabilitation services and
56 to utilize the most current provider information available.

57 (e) The access line shall be able to support calls with sufficient access to behavioral health
58 services and supports in accordance with this title.

59 (f) A state-operated registry of available inpatient psychiatric beds, crisis residential beds,
60 or substance use disorder beds shall report all data collected for such registry to the
61 department or the entity operating or maintaining the access line under contract with the
62 department."

63 **SECTION 2.**

64 All laws and parts of laws in conflict with this Act are repealed.