

CHAPTER 73

(HB 30)

AN ACT relating to veterans.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Kentucky:

➔SECTION 1. A NEW SECTION OF KRS CHAPTER 40 IS CREATED TO READ AS FOLLOWS:

- (1) *The Kentucky Service Members, Veterans, and their Families Suicide Prevention Program is hereby created within the Kentucky Department of Veterans' Affairs and shall be attached to the office of the commissioner for administrative purposes.*
- (2) *The Kentucky Service Members, Veterans, and their Families Suicide Prevention Program shall operate in collaboration with the Cabinet for Health and Family Services and in conjunction with additional community partnerships, as appropriate.*
- (3) *The mission of the program shall be to raise awareness of and reduce death by suicide within the population of service members, veterans, and their families. The program shall work to reduce barriers at the community and individual level that increase the risk of suicide by increasing access to services and collaborating with a statewide network of partners including state government agencies, community partners, nonprofit organizations, federal partners, and individuals directly impacted by risk of or loss from suicide.*
- (4) *The program shall connect service members, veterans, and their families, whose need for services is based upon their risk of death by suicide or other circumstances as outlined by the program, with appropriate community and mental health resources. The program shall:*
 - (a) *1. Raise awareness of and access to behavioral health services and resources, promote evidence-based best practices and safe messaging to increase awareness of veteran suicide prevention hotlines and other crisis resources, and connect service members, veterans, and their families to trained mental health providers and appropriate community resources; and*
 - 2. Advocate for service members, veterans, and their families at risk for suicide, and work to increase public awareness about the issue of suicide among veterans and its root causes;*
 - (b) *Provide support and guidance to communities aiding in the development of strategic planning designed to reduce suicide among service members, veterans, and their families, including the engagement and coordination of local leadership, faith-based entities, schools, chambers of commerce, public and private providers, grassroots coalitions, and additional stakeholders as identified and appropriate. These efforts shall include but not be limited to the promotion of mental health awareness, the 988 Suicide Crisis Lifeline created in accordance with Pub. L. No. 116-172, the Green Alert under KRS 39F.180, and local resources available to assist in crisis intervention and ongoing supports; and*
 - (c) *Promote training opportunities and provide educational materials to department and partnering agencies to increase the capacity to raise awareness, identify, and engage service members, veterans, and their families at risk of suicide.*
- (5) *The department shall submit an annual written report to the Governor and the Legislative Research Commission by October 30 of each year. The report shall include efforts made, data-driven information, and legislative and budgetary barriers. The report shall be available to the public on the department's website.*
- (6) *Notwithstanding any other statute to the contrary, nothing in this section shall permit any state agency to seize or advocate for the seizure of weapons.*
- (7) *The department shall promulgate administrative regulations in accordance with KRS Chapter 13A as necessary to effectuate this section.*

➔SECTION 2. A NEW SECTION OF KRS CHAPTER 337 IS CREATED TO READ AS FOLLOWS:

- (1) *The Kentucky Department of Veterans' Affairs shall create and prominently display on its website a veterans' benefits and services document. The document shall be made for the purpose of downloading to*

print and not exceed two (2) standard size eight and one-half (8-1/2) by eleven (11) inches pages. The document shall include contact information for and a description of the following resources for veterans:

- (a) The Kentucky Department of Veterans' Affairs;*
 - (b) Substance abuse and mental health treatment;*
 - (c) Education, workforce, and training;*
 - (d) Tax benefits;*
 - (e) Kentucky driver's licenses and identification cards;*
 - (f) Eligibility for unemployment insurance benefits under state and federal law;*
 - (g) Legal services; and*
 - (h) The United States Department of Veterans Affairs Veterans Crisis Line.*
- (2) Every employer subject to any provision of KRS 337.275 to 337.325, 337.345, or 337.385 to 337.405 or of any administrative regulations or orders issued under KRS 337.295 may download, print, and keep copies of the most recent version of the veterans' benefits and services document in a conspicuous and accessible place in or about the premises wherein any person subject thereto is employed.*

Signed by Governor April 4, 2024.