

ASSEMBLY, No. 149

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

219th LEGISLATURE

PRE-FILED FOR INTRODUCTION IN THE 2020 SESSION

Sponsored by:

Assemblyman PARKER SPACE

District 24 (Morris, Sussex and Warren)

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District 37 (Bergen)

Assemblyman HAROLD "HAL" J. WIRTHS

District 24 (Morris, Sussex and Warren)

SYNOPSIS

Establishes "New Jersey Fire and EMS Crisis Intervention Services" telephone hotline.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

Introduced Pending Technical Review by Legislative Counsel.



(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 5/1/2020)

1 **AN ACT** establishing a toll-free "New Jersey Fire and EMS Crisis
2 Intervention Services" telephone hotline and supplementing
3 chapter 27D of Title 52 of the Revised Statutes.

4
5 **BE IT ENACTED** *by the Senate and General Assembly of the State*
6 *of New Jersey:*

7
8 1. As used in this act:

9 "Division" means the Division of Fire Safety in the Department
10 of Community Affairs.

11 "University" means Rutgers University Behavioral Health Care at
12 Rutgers, The State University.

13
14 2. a. The division, in conjunction with the university, shall
15 establish and maintain, on a 24-hour daily basis, a toll-free "New
16 Jersey Fire and EMS Crisis Intervention Services" telephone
17 hotline. The hotline shall receive and respond to calls from fire and
18 emergency services personnel who have been involved in any event
19 or incident which has produced personal or job-related depression,
20 anxiety, stress, or other psychological or emotional tension, trauma,
21 or disorder for the fire or emergency services personnel. The
22 operators of the hotline shall identify those callers who should be
23 referred to further debriefing and counseling services and provide
24 referrals.

25 b. The operators of the hotline shall be trained by the division
26 and the university, and, to the greatest extent possible, shall be
27 persons who by experience or education are: (1) familiar with post
28 trauma disorders and the emotional and psychological tensions,
29 depressions, and anxieties unique to fire and emergency services
30 personnel; or (2) trained to provide counseling services involving
31 marriage and family life, substance abuse, personal stress
32 management, and other emotional or psychological disorders or
33 conditions which may be likely to adversely affect the personal and
34 professional well-being of New Jersey's fire and emergency
35 services personnel.

36 c. To ensure the integrity of the telephone hotline and to
37 encourage fire and emergency services personnel to utilize it, the
38 division and the university shall provide for the confidentiality of
39 the names of the fire and emergency services personnel calling, the
40 information discussed by a caller and operator, and any referrals for
41 further debriefing or counseling. However, the division, after
42 consultation with the university, may, by rule and regulation,
43 establish guidelines for tracking any fire or emergency services
44 caller who exhibits a severe emotional or psychological disorder or
45 condition which the operator handling the call reasonably believes
46 might result in harm to that caller or others.

47
48 3. The division, after consultation with the university, shall

1 prepare a list of appropriately licensed or certified psychiatrists,
2 psychologists, and social workers; appropriately trained and
3 qualified counselors; and experienced former fire and emergency
4 services personnel who are willing to accept referrals and
5 participate in the debriefing and counseling afforded fire and
6 emergency services personnel under this act.

7
8 4. In establishing the hotline pursuant to the provisions of
9 section 2 of P.L. , c. (C.) (pending before the Legislature as
10 this bill), the division and university shall consult with a
11 representative from the New Jersey Career Fire Chiefs Association;
12 New Jersey Firefighters Mutual Benevolent Association;
13 Professional Firefighters Association of New Jersey; New Jersey
14 Hospital Association; New Jersey Association of Paramedic
15 Programs; EMS Council of New Jersey; New Jersey State Fire
16 Chiefs Association; any other exclusive bargaining representative
17 for a New Jersey fire department or force, or emergency services
18 agency or provider; and any others that the division deems
19 appropriate.

20
21 5. This act shall take effect on the first day of the fifth month
22 next following the date of enactment, but the Director of the
23 Division of Fire Safety in the Department of Community Affairs
24 may take any anticipatory administrative action in advance as shall
25 be necessary for the implementation of this act.

26 27 28 STATEMENT

29
30 This bill directs the Division of Fire Safety in the Department of
31 Community Affairs, in conjunction with Rutgers University
32 Behavioral Health Care, to establish a 24-hour, toll-free "New
33 Jersey Fire and EMS Crisis Intervention Services" telephone
34 hotline. The division and university are to consult with
35 representatives of certain fire and emergency services organizations
36 when establishing the hotline.

37 The hotline would be available to fire and emergency services
38 personnel experiencing personal or job-related depression, anxiety,
39 stress, or other psychological or emotional tension, trauma,
40 pressure, or disorder.

41 When necessary and appropriate, hotline operators would refer
42 callers to further debriefing and counseling services. The division,
43 after consultation with the university, is to establish guidelines for
44 tracking any fire or emergency services caller exhibiting a severe
45 emotional or psychological disorder or condition that may result in
46 harm to the caller or others.

47 The division and the university are to train the hotline operators.
48 To the greatest extent possible, these operators are to be: (1)

1 familiar with post trauma disorders and the emotional and
2 psychological tensions, depressions, and anxieties unique to fire and
3 emergency services personnel; or (2) trained and able to provide
4 counseling services involving marriage and family life, substance
5 abuse, personal stress management, and other emotional or
6 psychological disorders or conditions that may adversely affect the
7 personal and professional well-being of New Jersey's fire and
8 emergency services personnel.

9 The bill also directs the division, after consultation with the
10 university, to prepare a list of licensed or certified psychiatrists,
11 psychologists, and social workers; qualified counselors; and
12 experienced former fire and emergency services personnel who are
13 willing to accept referrals and provide debriefing and counseling
14 services.