

SENATE, No. 2447

STATE OF NEW JERSEY
219th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED MAY 7, 2020

Sponsored by:

Senator ANTHONY M. BUCCO

District 25 (Morris and Somerset)

Senator TROY SINGLETON

District 7 (Burlington)

Co-Sponsored by:

Senators Gopal, Holzapfel, O'Scanlon and Madden

SYNOPSIS

Establishes toll free helpline for first responders, health care workers, and other frontline workers experiencing post-traumatic stress disorder.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.



(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 7/22/2020)

1 AN ACT concerning post-traumatic stress disorder and the
2 coronavirus disease 2019 and supplementing Title 26 of the
3 Revised Statutes.

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

7
8 1. a. The Department of Health shall establish, in coordination
9 with University Behavioral HealthCare of Rutgers, The State
10 University of New Jersey, a toll free helpline for first responders,
11 health care workers, and other frontline workers experiencing post-
12 traumatic stress disorder due to their work during the coronavirus
13 disease 2019 pandemic.

14 b. The helpline shall be accessible 24 hours a day, seven days
15 per week and shall respond to calls from first responders, health
16 care workers, other frontline workers, and their families. The
17 operators of the helpline shall seek to identify first responders,
18 health care workers, other frontline workers, and their families who
19 should be referred to further peer support and counseling services,
20 and provide referrals.

21 c. To the greatest extent possible, the operators of the help line,
22 shall be (1) familiar with post-traumatic stress disorder and the
23 emotional and psychological tensions, depressions, and anxieties
24 unique to first responders, health care workers, other frontline
25 workers, and their families or (2) trained to provide counseling
26 services involving marriage and family life, substance abuse,
27 personal stress management, and other emotional or psychological
28 disorders or conditions which may be likely to adversely affect the
29 personal and service related well-being of first responders, health
30 care workers, other frontline workers, and their families.

31 d. The Department of Health and Rutgers, The State University
32 of New Jersey shall provide for the confidentiality of the names of
33 the persons calling, the information discussed, and any referrals for
34 further peer support or counseling; provided, however, the
35 Department of Health and Rutgers, The State University of New
36 Jersey may establish guidelines providing for the tracking of any
37 person who exhibits a severe emotional or psychological disorder or
38 condition which the operator handling the call reasonably believes
39 might result in harm to the first responder, health care worker, other
40 frontline worker, or any other person.

41
42 2. The Commissioner of Health shall adopt rules and
43 regulations, in accordance with the "Administrative Procedure Act,"
44 P.L.1968, c.410 (C.52:14B-1 et seq.), as are necessary to effectuate
45 the provisions of this act.

46
47 3. This act shall take effect immediately.

STATEMENT

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41

This bill establishes a toll free helpline for first responders, health care workers, and other frontline workers experiencing post-traumatic stress disorder.

Under the bill, the Department of Health (DOH) is to establish, in coordination with University Behavioral HealthCare of Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey (Rutgers), a toll free helpline for first responders, health care workers, and other frontline workers experiencing post-traumatic stress disorder due to their work during the coronavirus disease 2019 pandemic.

The helpline is to be accessible 24 hours a day, seven days per week and is to respond to calls from first responders, health care workers, other frontline workers, and their families. The operators of the helpline are to seek to identify first responders, health care workers, other frontline workers, and their families who should be referred to further peer support and counseling services, and provide referrals. To the greatest extent possible, the operators of the help line, are to be (1) familiar with post-traumatic stress disorder and the emotional and psychological tensions, depressions, and anxieties unique to first responders, health care workers, other frontline workers, and their families or (2) trained to provide counseling services involving marriage and family life, substance abuse, personal stress management, and other emotional or psychological disorders or conditions which may be likely to adversely affect the personal and service related well-being of first responders, health care workers, other frontline workers, and their families.

The bill provides that the DOH and Rutgers are to provide for the confidentiality of the names of the persons calling, the information discussed, and any referrals for further peer support or counseling; provided, however, the DOH and Rutgers may establish guidelines providing for the tracking of any person who exhibits a severe emotional or psychological disorder or condition which the operator handling the call reasonably believes might result in harm to the first responder, health care worker, other frontline worker, or any other person.

“Frontline worker” means a person who provides an essential service or key public service, including, but not limited to, employees of the Division of Child Protection and Permanency in the Department of Children and Families.