

# SENATE BILL 324

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By: **Senators Simonaire, Carozza, Carter, Klausmeier, Patterson, Rosapepe, Salling, and Young**

Introduced and read first time: January 22, 2020

Assigned to: Finance

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## A BILL ENTITLED

1 AN ACT concerning

2 **Veterans – Behavioral Health Services – Mental Health First Aid**

3 FOR the purpose of requiring that the behavioral health services for which the Maryland  
4 Department of Health provides service coordination for veterans under certain  
5 provisions of law include mental health first aid; requiring that mental health first  
6 aid consist of training for veterans and the immediate family members of veterans  
7 on how to identify and respond to signs of mental illness and substance use disorders;  
8 requiring certain entities to report certain information to the Department; requiring  
9 the Department, annually beginning on a certain date and under certain  
10 circumstances, to report certain information to the Governor and the General  
11 Assembly; making conforming changes; and generally relating to mental health first  
12 aid for veterans.

13 BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,  
14 Article – Health – General  
15 Section 13–2702  
16 Annotated Code of Maryland  
17 (2019 Replacement Volume)

18 BY adding to  
19 Article – Health – General  
20 Section 13–2703  
21 Annotated Code of Maryland  
22 (2019 Replacement Volume)

23 SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND,  
24 That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

25 **Article – Health – General**

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EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.

[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.



1 13-2702.

2 (a) Subject to the limitations of its budget, the Department:

3 (1) In collaboration with the United States Department of Veterans  
4 Affairs, the Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs, the Maryland National Guard, and  
5 the Maryland Defense Force, shall provide behavioral health service coordination for  
6 veterans in all geographic regions of the State to connect them to behavioral health  
7 services, **INCLUDING MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID DESCRIBED UNDER § 13-2703(B)**  
8 **OF THIS SUBTITLE**, which may be available through the United States Department of  
9 Veterans Affairs;

10 (2) (i) Where behavioral health services are not yet available or  
11 accessible through the United States Department of Veterans Affairs, shall provide service  
12 coordination for veterans in all geographic regions of the State to connect them to  
13 behavioral health services, **INCLUDING MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID DESCRIBED**  
14 **UNDER § 13-2703(B) OF THIS SUBTITLE**, which may be available through the Behavioral  
15 Health Administration, until such federal services can be accessed and obtained; and

16 (ii) Shall provide behavioral health services through the Behavioral  
17 Health Administration based on eligibility and medical necessity criteria established by  
18 these administrations; and

19 (3) Shall provide veterans up-to-date information about behavioral health  
20 services and resources through a web-based resource program.

21 (b) Subject to the limitations of its budget and in addition to the service  
22 coordination provided under subsection (a) of this section, the Department shall provide or  
23 fund certain behavioral health services for veterans who:

24 (1) Meet the eligibility and medical necessity criteria of the Behavioral  
25 Health Administration; and

26 (2) Cannot obtain immediate access to behavioral health services through  
27 the United States Department of Veterans Affairs.

28 (c) (1) The behavioral health services provided under subsection (b) of this  
29 section may include:

30 (i) Crisis services in all geographic regions of the State; and

31 (ii) Short-term behavioral health services, where existing federal  
32 and State behavioral health services are determined by the Department to be inadequate  
33 or inaccessible.

34 (2) The short-term behavioral health services provided under paragraph  
35 (1)(ii) of this subsection:

1 (i) Shall be available only until a veteran is able to access and obtain  
2 adequate behavioral health services through the United States Department of Veterans  
3 Affairs; and

4 (ii) May include:

- 5 1. Screening assessments;
- 6 2. Individual, family, and group therapy;
- 7 3. Substance abuse early intervention and detoxification  
8 services; and
- 9 4. Substance abuse medication–assisted treatment.

10 (3) The Department shall seek reimbursement from the United States  
11 Department of Veterans Affairs or other responsible public or private payer for any  
12 behavioral health services provided under subsection (b) of this section.

13 (d) The Department shall account separately for funds used to provide behavioral  
14 health services to veterans under subsection (b) of this section.

15 **13–2703.**

16 **(A) THE BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES FOR WHICH THE DEPARTMENT**  
17 **PROVIDES SERVICE COORDINATION FOR VETERANS UNDER THIS SUBTITLE SHALL**  
18 **INCLUDE MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID.**

19 **(B) MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID SHALL CONSIST OF TRAINING FOR**  
20 **VETERANS AND THE IMMEDIATE FAMILY MEMBERS OF VETERANS ON HOW TO**  
21 **IDENTIFY AND RESPOND TO SIGNS OF MENTAL ILLNESS AND SUBSTANCE USE**  
22 **DISORDERS.**

23 **(C) EACH ENTITY TEACHING A MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID COURSE SHALL**  
24 **REPORT TO THE DEPARTMENT:**

25 **(1) THE NUMBER OF VETERANS WHO TOOK THE MENTAL HEALTH**  
26 **FIRST AID COURSE; AND**

27 **(2) THE NUMBER OF FAMILY MEMBERS OF VETERANS WHO TOOK THE**  
28 **MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID COURSE.**

29 **(D) ON OR BEFORE JUNE 1 EACH YEAR, BEGINNING IN 2022, IF THE**  
30 **DEPARTMENT RECEIVED A REPORT UNDER SUBSECTION (C) OF THIS SECTION IN**

1 THE IMMEDIATELY PRECEDING YEAR, THE DEPARTMENT SHALL REPORT TO THE  
2 GOVERNOR AND, IN ACCORDANCE WITH § 2-1257 OF THE STATE GOVERNMENT  
3 ARTICLE, THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY, THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION FOR THE  
4 IMMEDIATELY PRECEDING YEAR:

5 (1) THE TOTAL NUMBER OF VETERANS IN THE STATE WHO TOOK A  
6 MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID COURSE;

7 (2) THE TOTAL NUMBER OF FAMILY MEMBERS OF VETERANS IN THE  
8 STATE WHO TOOK A MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID COURSE; AND

9 (3) THE TOTAL NUMBER OF MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID COURSES  
10 TAUGHT IN THE STATE, REPORTED BY THE ENTITY THAT TAUGHT THE MENTAL  
11 HEALTH FIRST AID COURSE.

12 SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect  
13 October 1, 2020.