

CHAPTER 2019-148

Committee Substitute for Committee Substitute for House Bill No. 501

An act relating to alternative treatment options for veterans; creating s. 295.156, F.S.; providing definitions; authorizing the Department of Veterans' Affairs to contract with a state university or Florida College System institution to furnish specified alternative treatment options for certain veterans; providing university or institution responsibilities; providing requirements for provision of alternative treatment options and related assessment data; providing alternative treatment eligibility requirements; requiring direction and supervision by certain licensed providers; requiring an annual report to the Governor and Legislature; authorizing the department to adopt rules; providing an effective date.

Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

Section 1. Section 295.156, Florida Statutes, is created to read:

295.156 Alternative treatment options for veterans.—

(1) As used in this section, the term:

(a) “Posttraumatic stress disorder” means a mental health disorder that is developed after having experienced or witnessed a life-threatening event, including, but not limited to, military sexual trauma.

(b) “Traumatic brain injury” means an acquired injury to the brain. The term does not include brain dysfunction caused by congenital or degenerative disorders or birth trauma.

(2) The Department of Veterans' Affairs may contract with a state university or Florida College System institution to furnish alternative treatment options for veterans who have been certified by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs or any branch of the United States Armed Forces as having a traumatic brain injury or posttraumatic stress disorder. The university or institution shall manage, monitor, and ensure the compliance of contracted providers who provide any of the following alternative treatment options:

(a) Accelerated resolution therapy.

(b) Equine therapy.

(c) Hyperbaric oxygen therapy, which must be provided at a registered hyperbaric oxygen facility.

(d) Music therapy.

(e) Service animal training therapy.

(3) A veteran qualifies to receive alternative treatment under this section if he or she:

(a) Has been diagnosed by a health care practitioner with service-connected posttraumatic stress disorder or a service-connected traumatic brain injury;

(b) Voluntarily agrees to such alternative treatment; and

(c) Can demonstrate that he or she has previously sought services for posttraumatic stress disorder or a traumatic brain injury through the federal Veterans Affairs service delivery system or through private health insurance, if such coverage is available to him or her.

(4)(a) The provision of alternative treatment must be under the direction and supervision of an individual licensed under chapter 458, chapter 459, chapter 460, chapter 464, chapter 490, or chapter 491.

(b) The supervising licensed provider must agree to cooperate with the Department of Veterans' Affairs to provide data sufficient to assess the efficacy of alternative treatment modalities.

(5) By January 1 of each year beginning in 2020, the Department of Veterans' Affairs shall prepare a report detailing each alternative treatment provided pursuant to this section, the provider type, the number of veterans served, and the treatment outcomes and shall submit the report to the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives.

(6) The Department of Veterans' Affairs may adopt rules to implement this section.

Section 2. This act shall take effect July 1, 2019.

Approved by the Governor June 26, 2019.

Filed in Office Secretary of State June 26, 2019.