

CHAPTER 2021-198

House Bill No. 231

An act relating to services for veterans and their families; creating s. 394.9087, F.S.; authorizing the Department of Veterans' Affairs to establish the Florida Veterans' Care Coordination Program to provide veterans and their families with behavioral health care referral and care coordination services; authorizing the department to contract with a certain nonprofit entity to enter into agreements with Florida 211 Network participants to provide such services; providing program goals; providing for the statewide delivery of specified services by program teams; requiring Florida 211 Network participants to collect program implementation data and to submit such data to the department; requiring the department to submit a report to the Governor and Legislature by a specified date; providing requirements for the report; providing an effective date.

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

Section 1. Section 394.9087, Florida Statutes, is created to read:

394.9087 Florida Veterans' Care Coordination Program.—

(1) The Department of Veterans' Affairs may establish the Florida Veterans' Care Coordination Program. If the Department of Veterans' Affairs establishes the program, it may contract with a nonprofit entity that is accredited by the Council on Accreditation, is fully accredited by the National Alliance of Information and Referral Services, and has statewide phone capacity to serve veterans to enter into agreements with Florida 211 Network participants to provide veterans and their families in this state with dedicated behavioral health care referral services, especially mental health and substance abuse services. The Department of Veterans' Affairs shall model the program after the proof-of-concept pilot program established in 2014 by the Crisis Center of Tampa Bay and the Department of Veterans' Affairs in Hillsborough, Pasco, Pinellas, Polk, and Manatee Counties.

(2) The goals of the program are to:

(a) Prevent suicides by veterans.

(b) Increase veterans' use of programs and services provided by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs.

(c) Increase the number of veterans who use other available community-based programs and services.

(3) The program must be available statewide. Program services must be provided by program teams operated by Florida 211 Network participants as

authorized by s. 408.918. A Florida 211 Network participant may provide services in more than one geographic area under a single contract.

(4) The program teams shall provide referral and care coordination services to veterans and their families and expand the existing Florida 211 Network to include the optimal range of veterans’ service organizations and programs. Florida 211 Network participants in the Florida Veterans’ Care Coordination Program must include all of the following:

(a) Telephonic peer support, crisis intervention, and the communication of information on referral resources.

(b) Treatment coordination, including coordination of followup care.

(c) Suicide risk assessment.

(d) Promotion of the safety and wellness of veterans and their families, including continuous safety planning and support.

(e) Resource coordination, including data analysis, to facilitate acceptance, enrollment, and attendance of veterans and their families in programs and services provided by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs and other available community-based programs and services.

(f) Immediate needs assessments, including safety planning and support.

(5) To enhance program services, program teams shall:

(a) Track the number of requests from callers who are veterans or members of a veteran’s family.

(b) Follow up with callers who are veterans or members of a veteran’s family to determine whether they have acted on the referrals or received the assistance needed and whether additional referral or advocacy is needed.

(c) Develop and implement communication strategies, such as media promotions, public service announcements, print and Internet articles, and community presentations, to inform veterans and their families about available programs and services provided by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs and other available community-based programs and services.

(d) Document all calls and capture all necessary data to improve outreach to veterans and their families and report such data to the contracted entity.

(6) Florida 211 Network participants in the Florida Veterans’ Care Coordination Program shall maintain a database of veteran-specific services available in the communities served by the programs. The Department of

Veterans’ Affairs and its selected contractor shall work with managing entities as defined in s. 394.9082(2) to educate service providers about the Florida Veterans Support Line and the Florida Veterans’ Care Coordination Program.

(7) Florida 211 Network participants shall collect data on the program and submit such data to the Department of Veterans’ Affairs in the format prescribed by the Department of Veterans’ Affairs. The Department of Veterans’ Affairs shall use such data to prepare a report for submittal to the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives by December 15, 2022. The report must include all of the following:

(a) The number of calls received.

(b) Demographic information for each caller, including, but not limited to, the caller’s military affiliation, the caller’s veteran status, and whether the caller is receiving services provided by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs or other available community-based programs and services.

(c) The nature of each call, including, but not limited to, the concerns prompting the call and the services requested.

(d) The outcome of each call, including, but not limited to, the services for which referrals were made and the organizations to which the caller was referred.

(e) Services received as a result of each call.

(f) Information regarding followup by the program team, including, but not limited to, the percentage of calls receiving followup and the outcome of followup.

(g) Information regarding the program’s impact on each caller’s quality of life and on the avoidance of negative outcomes, including arrest and suicide.

(h) Each caller’s level of satisfaction with program services.

Section 2. This act shall take effect July 1, 2021.

Approved by the Governor June 29, 2021.

Filed in Office Secretary of State June 29, 2021.