

HB 159/SB 574: Relating to Establishment of Mental Health First Aid Training Program

What is the purpose of HB 159/SB 574?

HB 159/SB 574 would help people with mental illnesses get the help they need.

- ▶ The bill would establish a new Mental Health First Aid Training Program under the Department of Children and Families that would train teachers in public schools, private schools, and universities; first responders; and other community members.
- ▶ The training would include an overview of substance use disorders and the need to reduce stigma, information on the risk factors and warning signs of mental illness, and an action plan to provide community members with the resources needed to access immediate and appropriate help for the person with the mental illness.
- ▶ This initial program will last until 2017 and would be provided \$300,000 in non-recurring funds. Continuation of the program would require further action by the legislature.

Why is HB 159/SB 574 necessary?

Mental illness is common in Florida.

- ▶ According to the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill (NAMI), close to 660,000 adult Floridians live with serious mental health conditions, along with approximately 181,000 children in our state.

The costs of untreated mental illness is high and potentially deadly.

- ▶ Most research estimates that between 40% and 51% of those suffering from mental health conditions are undiagnosed and/or untreated.
- ▶ In 2012, 2,922 (or 8 per day) Floridians died of suicide. Suicide is almost always the result of untreated or undertreated mental illness, according to NAMI.
- ▶ According to the Department of Justice, untreated mental illness also plays a strong role in homelessness, incarceration, violence and homicide, and victimization—each of those at a tremendous cost to the state.

Early treatment leads to better outcomes.

- ▶ The longer individuals with mental illness go untreated, their prospects for long-term recovery become increasingly uncertain. Recent studies have indicated that delaying treatment leads to worse outcomes.

How would HB 159/SB 574 help?

HB 159/SB 574 would engage the public in identifying and treating mental illness.

- ▶ By providing training to those most likely to encounter people with undiagnosed mental illness, teachers and first responders, the state will help people to obtain the treatment they need as early as possible

Promote Florida's mental health by voting "YES" on HB 159/SB 574!