

CHAPTER 59

AN ACT establishing a Blue Heart Law Enforcement Assistance Program and amending P.L.1998, c.149 .

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

1. Section 1 of P.L.1998, c.149 (C.11A:2-25) is amended to read as follows:

C.11A:2-25 "Law Enforcement Officer Crisis Intervention Services" telephone hotline, "Blue Heart Law Enforcement Assistance Program."

1. a. The Commissioner of Personnel shall establish and maintain, on a 24-hour daily basis, a toll-free information "Law Enforcement Officer Crisis Intervention Services" telephone hotline. The hotline shall receive and respond to calls from law enforcement officers and sheriff's officers who have been involved in any event or incident which has produced personal or job-related depression, anxiety, stress, or other psychological or emotional tension, trauma, or disorder for the officer and officers who have been wounded in the line of duty. The operators of the hotline shall seek to identify those officers who should be referred to further debriefing and counseling services, and to provide such referrals. In the case of wounded officers, those services may include peer counseling, diffusing, debriefing, group therapy and individual therapy as part of a coordinated assistance program, to be known as the "Blue Heart Law Enforcement Assistance Program," designed and implemented by the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey's University Behavioral Healthcare Unit.

b. The operators of the hotline shall be trained by the commissioner and, to the greatest extent possible, shall be persons, who by experience or education, are: (1) familiar with post trauma disorders and the emotional and psychological tensions, depressions, and anxieties unique to law enforcement officers and sheriff's officers; 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 professional well-being of a law enforcement officer and a sheriff's officer.

c. To ensure the integrity of the telephone hotline and to encourage officers to utilize it, the commissioner shall provide for the confidentiality of the names of the officers calling, the information discussed by that officer and the operator, and any referrals for further debriefing or counseling; provided, however, the commissioner may, by rule and regulation, (1) establish guidelines providing for the tracking of any officer who exhibits a severe emotional or psychological disorder or condition which the operator handling the call reasonably believes might result in harm to the officer or others and (2) establish a confidential registry of wounded New Jersey law enforcement officers.

2. This act shall take effect immediately.

Approved March 21, 2007.