

COMMITTEE BILL ANALYSIS

Bill: House Bill 1504

Printer's No.: 2068

Sponsor: Rep. Caltagirone

Prepared by: Gregg Warner

Synopsis: This bill amends section 3113 of the Judicial Code, Title 42, to provide training for magisterial district judges in the identification of mental health conditions and intellectual disabilities, and section 2164 of the General Local Government Code, Title 53 of the Pennsylvania Consolidated Statutes, to provide training for police officers with respect to the recognition of mental health conditions and intellectual disabilities.

Summary:

Magisterial district judges

The Minor Judiciary Education Board prescribes and approves the subject matter and the examination required for the course of training and education that magisterial district judges, who are not attorneys, must complete before assuming office. Section 3113(b) of the Judicial Code states that the course of training and instruction shall consist of a minimum of 40 hours of class instruction in civil and criminal law, including evidence and procedure, summary proceedings, motor vehicles, and courses in judicial ethics.

The bill adds instruction in the identification of mental health conditions and intellectual disabilities and the availability of diversionary options for individuals suffering from mental health conditions or intellectual disabilities.

Police officers

The Municipal Police Officers' Education and Training Commission establishes and administers the minimum courses of study for basic and in-service training for police officers. Section 2164 of the General Local Government Code, relating to the powers and duties of the commission, is amended to add paragraph (1.1) to provide for annual training for police officers with respect to:

- (1) Recognition of mental health conditions and intellectual disabilities.
- (2) Proper techniques to interact with and de-escalate individuals suffering from mental health episodes or episodes stemming from intellectual disabilities.
- (3) Instruction on alternative services or diversionary options available to individuals suffering from mental health conditions or intellectual disabilities.

Effective date

This act shall take effect in 60 days.

Background: The House of Representatives passed House Bill 1504 on October 1, 2013 by a vote of 195 to 0.

According to the sponsor, House Bill 1504 includes “new training regarding the identification and recognition of mental health conditions for both police officers and the minor judiciary, such as our magisterial district judges. The training must include proper techniques to be used when interacting with an individual suffering from a mental health episode and information on alternative services or diversionary options available to these individuals.

As a first step to address the significant problem of individuals with mental health conditions ending up in our state prison, we need to better equip our police and minor judiciary with the tools needed to identify these individuals at the earliest point in time and get these individuals the medical treatment they need.

According to Secretary of Corrections John Wetzel, 21% of all inmates and 49% of female inmates in State Correctional Institutions receive mental health treatment. This is a significant cost to the Commonwealth and could be avoided if these individuals were identified early and diverted into programs to receive the mental health care they need. Training police and minor judiciary will ensure that if an individual is suffering from a mental health crisis they know how to help the individual.”