

HB 1705-FN - VERSION ADOPTED BY BOTH BODIES

19Feb2026... 0531h
26Mar2026... 1202h
05/14/2026 1926s

2026 SESSION

26-2393
06/07

HOUSE BILL ***1705-FN***

AN ACT establishing an employee assistance program for small town and volunteer first responders.

SPONSORS: Rep. Selig, Straf. 10; Rep. Damon, Sull. 8; Rep. Drye, Sull. 7; Rep. Newell, Ches. 4; Sen. Prentiss, Dist 5

COMMITTEE: Labor, Industrial and Rehabilitative Services

AMENDED ANALYSIS

This bill establishes a fund to cover the costs of enrolling and supporting first responders from small communities into the state-provided employee assistance program (EAP) and outlines eligibility, enrollment, and reporting requirements for the department of health and human services. Implementation of the program is contingent upon receipt of funding.

Explanation: Matter added to current law appears in ***bold italics***.
Matter removed from current law appears ~~[in brackets and struckthrough.]~~
Matter which is either (a) all new or (b) repealed and reenacted appears in regular type.

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STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

In the Year of Our Lord Two Thousand Twenty-Six

AN ACT establishing an employee assistance program for small town and volunteer first responders.

Be it Enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court convened:

1 1 New Sections; State-Funded Employee Assistance Program for Small Communities;
2 Establishment of Fund. Amend RSA 281-A by inserting after section 17-f the following new sections:

3 281-A:17-g First Responders Support Fund. There is established a first responders support
4 fund, which shall be administered by the department of health and human services. This fund shall
5 be used for costs incurred to enroll and administer volunteer first responders and full-time first
6 responders from towns with 5 or fewer full-time, paid first responders into the state-provided
7 employee assistance program (EAP). All fees, monetary grants, gifts, donations, or interest
8 generated by these funds shall be deposited with the state treasurer in a special nonlapsing fund to
9 be known as the first responders support fund and shall be continually appropriated to the
10 department for the administration of this section.

11 281-A:17-h Eligibility and Enrollment.

12 I. Volunteer first responders and full-time first responders from towns with 5 or fewer full-
13 time, paid first responders shall be eligible for the employee assistance program for small
14 communities.

15 II. The department of health and human services shall ensure that these first responders
16 are enrolled in the state-provided employee assistance program (EAP), which offers comprehensive
17 support services, including those for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and post-traumatic
18 stress (PTS).

19 III. The department of health and human services shall develop and implement guidelines
20 for the administration of the fund, including the process for enrollment and provision of services.

21 IV. The department shall submit an annual report to the legislature detailing the usage of
22 the fund, the number of first responders served, and the outcomes of the program.

23 V. Implementation of the employee assistance program for small communities established in
24 this section shall be contingent upon funding. The department shall indicate the availability of such
25 funding in the report submitted pursuant to paragraph IV, provided that program implementation
26 shall begin upon receipt of such funding, with the initial report submitted shortly thereafter.

27 2 New Subparagraph; New Funding. Amend RSA 6:12, I(b) by inserting after subparagraph
28 (410) the following new subparagraph:

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- 1 (411) Moneys deposited in the first responders support fund as established in RSA
- 2 281-A:17-g.
- 3 3 Effective Date. This act shall take effect July 1, 2027.

HB 1705-FN- FISCAL NOTE
AS AMENDED BY THE SENATE (AMENDMENT #2026-1926s)

AN ACT establishing an employee assistance program for small town and volunteer first responders.

FISCAL IMPACT: This bill does not authorize new positions.

Estimated State Impact				
	FY 2026	FY 2027	FY 2028	FY 2029
Revenue	\$0	\$0	Indeterminable	Indeterminable
<i>Revenue Fund(s)</i>	Gifts, grants, donations, unidentified fee revenue			
Expenditures*	\$0	\$0	\$114,000	\$119,000
<i>Funding Source(s)</i>	General funds and other sources deposited into the newly-established First Responders Support Fund			
Appropriations*	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
<i>Funding Source(s)</i>	None			

***Expenditure = Cost of bill**

***Appropriation = Authorized funding to cover cost of bill**

METHODOLOGY:

This bill makes community first responders eligible for participation in the state Employee Assistance Program (EAP) administered by the Department of Health and Human Services, and establishes a fund to cover the cost of supporting the new participants. The fund is authorized to accept various revenue sources, including gifts, grants, donations, and fees, although the type of fee revenue is not identified. As the bill does not take effect until July 1, 2027, there will be no fiscal impact until the FY28/29 biennium. The Department states that it will need to create a new position to handle the estimated increase of EAP services to qualifying first responders, including eligible family members. The cost of this position is estimated to be \$114,000 in the first year of implementation and \$119,000 in the second. Any remaining costs to the Department are indeterminable, as they will depend on the number of qualifying individuals who choose to utilize the services provided by the EAP.

As amended, the bill stipulates that its implementation shall be contingent upon funding. The Department is responsible for expanding the EAP upon receipt of funding from the various sources identified in the bill, and is tasked with reporting on the availability of such funding shortly thereafter.

AGENCIES CONTACTED:

Department of Health and Human Services