

HB 586-FN - AS INTRODUCED

2025 SESSION

25-0754

06/05

HOUSE BILL

586-FN

AN ACT establishing an employee assistance program for small town first responders and making an appropriation therefor.

SPONSORS: Rep. Selig, Straf. 10; Rep. Damon, Sull. 8; Rep. Proulx, Hills. 15; Rep. S. Pearson, Rock. 13; Sen. Prentiss, Dist 5

COMMITTEE: Labor, Industrial and Rehabilitative Services

ANALYSIS

This bill establishes a fund to cover the costs of enrolling 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. This bill also makes an appropriation for the fund.

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 Matter which is either (a) all new or (b) repealed and reenacted appears in regular type.

STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

In the Year of Our Lord Two Thousand Twenty Five

AN ACT establishing an employee assistance program for small town first responders and making an appropriation therefor.

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 by inserting after section A: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 in enrolling first responders from communities with volunteer fire
6 departments or with no more than 5 full-time paid first responders into the state-provided employee
7 assistance program (EAP). All fees, monetary grants, gifts, donations, or interest generated by these
8 funds shall be deposited with the state treasurer in a special nonlapsing fund to be known as the
9 first responders support fund and shall be continually appropriated to the department for the
10 administration of this section.

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

12 I. First responders eligible for the employee assistance program for small communities shall
13 include those working in communities with volunteer fire departments or with no more than 5 full-
14 time paid first responders.

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 2 Appropriations. The sum of \$150,000 for the biennium ending June 30, 2027, is hereby
24 appropriated to the department of health and human services to provide coverage for first
25 responders from communities with volunteer fire departments or with no more than 5 full-time paid
26 first responders through the state-provided employee assistance program (EAP). This sum is in
27 addition to any other sums appropriated to the department of health and human services for the
28 biennium. The governor is authorized to draw a warrant for said sum out of any money in the
29 treasury not otherwise appropriated.

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- 1 3 New Subparagraph; New Funding. Amend RSA 6:12, I(b) by inserting after subparagraph
- 2 (399) the following new subparagraph:
- 3 (400) Moneys deposited in the first responders support fund as established in RSA
- 4 281-A:17-g.
- 5 4 Effective Date. This act shall take effect July 1, 2025.

HB 586-FN- FISCAL NOTE
AS INTRODUCED

AN ACT establishing an employee assistance program for small town first responders and making an appropriation therefor.

FISCAL IMPACT: This bill does not authorize new positions.

Estimated State Impact				
	FY 2025	FY 2026	FY 2027	FY 2028
Revenue	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
<i>Revenue Fund(s)</i>	None			
Expenditures*	\$0	Indeterminable \$100k to \$500k	Indeterminable \$100k to \$500k	Indeterminable \$100k to \$500k
<i>Funding Source(s)</i>	General Fund			
Appropriations*	\$0	\$150,000	\$0	\$0
<i>Funding Source(s)</i>	General Fund			

*Expenditure = Cost of bill

*Appropriation = Authorized funding to cover cost of bill

METHODOLOGY:

This bill establishes a First Responders Support Fund to cover the costs of enrolling first responders from small communities into the State Employee Assistance Program (EAP) and outlines the eligibility, enrollment, and reporting requirements for the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). The bill also makes a general fund appropriation to the new fund in the amount of \$150,000 for the biennium ending June 30, 2027.

Based on information from the Department of Safety, the DHHS indicates as of July 2022, there were 4,256 on-call or volunteer members of fire departments throughout the state who would be eligible to access EAP services under this bill. In addition, there were 5 fire departments that reported having 5 or fewer firefighters. The DHHS notes that this number does not provide the potential number of firefighters that could be eligible for the program because there was a 72% reporting compliance rate in the Department of Safety data. The DHHS cannot estimate the number of firefighters that would be eligible from the 28% of departments that did not report. The Department assumes, based on the known information above that a conservative estimate would be that 4,281 individuals would become eligible for EAP services under this bill. The State EAP is also available to the employee's household members. Utilization of EAP services include direct services, interventions and referrals. For the prior calendar year, program utilization was conservatively estimated at around 10% which exceeds industry norms. Based on

this information the DHHS assumes an additional full-time Employee Assistance Program Field Representative would be required to support this bill. The cost of this position is estimated to be \$106,000 for FY 2026, \$111,000 for FY 2027 and \$115,000 for FY 2028. The remaining costs to the DHHS are indeterminable and will depend on the number of qualifying first responders or their eligible family members that choose to utilize the services.

AGENCIES CONTACTED:

Department of Health and Human Services