

**SENATE, No. 3247**

**STATE OF NEW JERSEY**

**221st LEGISLATURE**

INTRODUCED MAY 16, 2024

**Sponsored by:**

**Senator LATHAM TIVER**

**District 8 (Atlantic and Burlington)**

**Senator KRISTIN M. CORRADO**

**District 40 (Bergen, Essex and Passaic)**

**SYNOPSIS**

Establishes counseling program for eligible family members of active duty military members and disabled veterans.

**CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT**

As introduced.



**(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 5/16/2024)**

1 AN ACT establishing a counseling program for eligible family  
2 members of active duty military members and disabled veterans  
3 and supplementing chapter 3 of Title 38A of the New Jersey  
4 Statutes.

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

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9 1. a. The Department of Military and Veterans' Affairs, in  
10 consultation with the Department of Human Services, shall  
11 establish a counseling program. The purpose of this program is to  
12 link mental health care professionals with eligible family members  
13 of active duty military members and disabled veterans to facilitate  
14 the provision of mental health counseling by reimbursing mental  
15 health care professionals for counseling sessions with an eligible  
16 family member.

17 b. The department shall reimburse mental health care  
18 professionals who participate in the program for up to 10 mental  
19 health care counseling sessions, either in person or by telehealth,  
20 per eligible family member per year. To be eligible to participate in  
21 and receive reimbursement from the program, a mental health care  
22 professional shall be available to provide 10 mental health care  
23 counseling sessions to each eligible family member the professional  
24 accepts as a client.

25 c. The department, in consultation with the Department of  
26 Human Services, shall:

27 (1) develop, maintain, and distribute a list of available mental  
28 health care professionals on a Statewide basis and shall distribute  
29 the list of available mental health care professionals to each  
30 Veterans Service Office for the distribution thereof.

31 (2) develop a process for mental health care professionals to  
32 apply for and demonstrate eligibility to receive reimbursement from  
33 the program.

34 (3) periodically inform the mental health care professional of an  
35 eligible family member's remaining number of counseling sessions  
36 eligible for reimbursement for a calendar year.

37 (4) determine a reasonable rate of reimbursement for each  
38 mental health care counseling session with an eligible family  
39 member, which rate shall be the same regardless of whether the  
40 counseling session occurs in person or by telehealth.

41 (5) conduct an awareness and outreach campaign about the  
42 program focused on disseminating information about the program to  
43 active duty military members, disabled veterans, and eligible family  
44 members.

45 d. The Adjutant General may apply for and accept on behalf of  
46 the State any grants from the federal government or any agency  
47 thereof, or from any foundation, corporation, association or  
48 individual, and may comply with the terms, conditions, and

1 limitations thereof, to develop and implement the counseling  
2 program. Any money so received shall be appropriated to, and may  
3 be expended by, the department, subject to any limitations imposed  
4 in such grants, and in accordance with guidance from the Director  
5 of the Division of Budget and Accounting of the Department of the  
6 Treasury.

7 e. Within 90 days after the date of enactment of this section,  
8 and notwithstanding the provisions of the "Administrative  
9 Procedure Act," P.L.1968, c.410 (C.52:14B-1 et seq.) to the  
10 contrary, the Department of Military and Veterans' Affairs shall,  
11 immediately upon filing proper notice with the Office of  
12 Administrative Law, adopt the rules and regulations prepared by the  
13 department to implement the counseling program established  
14 pursuant to this section.

15 The rules and regulations shall be in effect for a period not to  
16 exceed one year after the date of the filing. These rules and  
17 regulations shall thereafter be adopted, amended, or readopted by  
18 the Department of Military and Veterans' Affairs in accordance  
19 with the requirements of the "Administrative Procedure Act,"  
20 P.L.1968, c.410 (C.52:14B-1 et seq.).

21 f. As used in this act:

22 "Disabled veteran" means any resident of the State who has been  
23 honorably discharged or released under honorable circumstances  
24 from active service in any branch of the Armed Forces of the United  
25 States and who has been declared by the United States Department  
26 of Veterans Affairs, or its successor, to have a service-connected  
27 disability of any degree.

28 "Eligible family member" means an individual who is a New  
29 Jersey resident and is the spouse, domestic partner, partner in a civil  
30 union, or child, whether of the whole blood or the half blood, or by  
31 adoption, of a member of the Armed Forces of the United States or  
32 the National Guard who is on active duty for the United States or of  
33 a disabled veteran.

34 "Mental health care professional" means a person who provides  
35 mental health services and is licensed or otherwise authorized,  
36 pursuant to Title 45 of the Revised Statutes, to practice a health care  
37 profession that is regulated by one of the following: the State Board  
38 of Medical Examiners; the State Board of Psychological Examiners;  
39 the State Board of Social Work Examiners; the State Board of  
40 Marriage and Family Therapy Examiners; the Alcohol and Drug  
41 Counselor Committee; the Professional Counselor Examiners  
42 Committee; and the Certified Psychoanalysts Advisory Committee.

43  
44 2. This act shall take effect 90 days after the date of enactment,  
45 except that the Department of Military and Veterans' Affairs may  
46 take any anticipatory administrative action in advance as shall be  
47 necessary for the implementation of this act.

STATEMENT

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This bill requires the Department of Military and Veterans' Affairs (DMVA), in consultation with the Department of Human Services (DHS), to establish a counseling program for family members of active duty military members and disabled veterans.

The counseling program will provide eligible family members of active duty military members and disabled veterans with mental health care counseling. The program will reimburse mental health care professionals, who are available to participate in the program, for up to 10 mental health care counseling sessions, either in person or by telehealth, per eligible family member per year.

The bill requires DMVA, in consultation with DHS, to:

(1) develop, maintain, and distribute a list of available mental health care professionals on a Statewide basis and distribute the list of available mental health care professionals to each Veterans Service Office for the distribution thereof.

(2) develop a process for mental health care professionals to apply for and demonstrate eligibility to receive reimbursement from the program.

(3) periodically inform the mental health care professional of an eligible family member's remaining number of counseling sessions eligible for reimbursement for a calendar year.

(4) determine a reasonable rate of reimbursement for each mental health care counseling session with an eligible family member, which rate will be the same regardless of whether the a counseling session occurs in person or by telehealth.

(5) conduct an awareness and outreach campaign about the program focused on disseminating information about the program to active duty military members, disabled veterans, and eligible family members.

The bill defines "eligible family member" to include any individual who is a New Jersey resident and is the spouse, domestic partner, partner in a civil union, or child, whether of the whole blood or the half blood, or by adoption, of a member of the Armed Forces of the United States or the National Guard who is on active duty for the United States or of a disabled veteran.