

[First Reprint]

SENATE, No. 4590

STATE OF NEW JERSEY
221st LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED JUNE 5, 2025

Sponsored by:

Senator JOSEPH A. LAGANA

District 38 (Bergen)

Senator NICHOLAS P. SCUTARI

District 22 (Somerset and Union)

Co-Sponsored by:

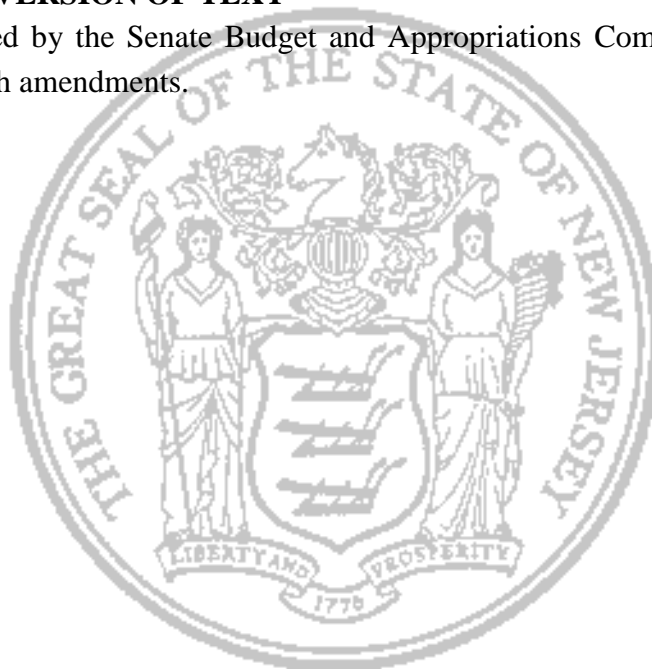
Senators Wimberly and Amato

SYNOPSIS

Provides for workers' compensation coverage of certain counseling services for first responders and provides that certain mental health related communications are confidential.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As reported by the Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee on June 26, 2025, with amendments.



(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 6/30/2025)

1 AN ACT concerning first responders and supplementing chapter 15
2 of Title 34 of the Revised Statutes.

3

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

6

7 1. As used in this act:

8 “Critical incident” means an event involving the firing of a
9 weapon or an exchange of gun fire; serious bodily injury to or the
10 death of a minor; a terrorist act; a hostage situation; serious bodily
11 injury to or the death of another first responder employed in the
12 same agency or unit, when that serious bodily injury or death
13 occurred in the performance of that first responder’s official duties;
14 a personal injury or wound; serious bodily injury received in the
15 performance of the first responder’s official duties; the visual or
16 audible witnessing of the death or maiming, or the visual or audible
17 witnessing of the immediate aftermath of the death or maiming, of
18 one or more persons; the response to or direct involvement in a
19 criminal investigation of an offense involving violent crimes against
20 minors; the need for rescue in the line of duty where one’s life was
21 in danger; or the response to or direct involvement in an
22 investigation regarding the drowning or near drowning of a minor.

23 “First responder” means a ¹paid 9-1-1 first responder
24 dispatcher,¹ law enforcement officer ¹[or] ¹paid firefighter ¹, or
25 paid member of a duly incorporated first aid, emergency,
26 ambulance, or rescue squad association, or any other individual
27 who, in the course of that individual's employment, is dispatched to
28 the scene of an emergency situation for the purpose of providing
29 medical care or other assistance¹.

30 “Law enforcement officer” means a person who is employed as a
31 sworn member of any State, county, or municipal law enforcement
32 agency, department, division, or instrumentality of those
33 governments who is statutorily empowered to act for the detection,
34 investigation, arrest, conviction, detention, or rehabilitation of
35 persons violating the criminal laws of the State.

36 “Mental health professional” means a licensed mental health
37 professional, who holds a current, valid license issued pursuant to
38 subsection a. of section 6 or subsection a. or d. of section 8 of
39 P.L.1991, c.134 (C.45:15BB-1 et seq.), who is culturally competent
40 in mental health issues related to first responders and specializes in
41 treating first responders related to critical incidents in law
42 enforcement and firefighting.

43 “Minor” means a person under the age of 18 years.

44 “Paid firefighter” or “firefighter” means a full-time paid
45 firefighter employed by a public fire department.

EXPLANATION – Matter enclosed in bold-faced brackets **[thus]** in the above bill is
not enacted and is intended to be omitted in the law.

Matter underlined **thus** is new matter.

Matter enclosed in superscript numerals has been adopted as follows:

¹Senate SBA committee amendments adopted June 26, 2025.

1 "Peer support team" means law enforcement officers trained by
2 culturally competent mental health professionals to provide
3 emotional and practical assistance to first responders.

4 "Public fire department" or "department" means any department
5 of a municipality, county, fire district or the State or any agency
6 thereof having employees engaged in firefighting provided that such
7 firefighting employees are included in a negotiating unit exclusively
8 comprised of firefighting employees.

9 "Resiliency program officer" means a designated law
10 enforcement
11 officer who is responsible for the training and implementation of
12 the New Jersey Resiliency Program for Law Enforcement (NJRP-
13 LE) within the officer's employing agency, pursuant to Attorney
14 General Directive No. 2019-1.

15

16 2. a. An employer of first responders shall provide for up to 12
17 hours of paid confidential counseling compensable under the
18 provisions of R.S.34:15-1 et seq. with a mental health professional
19 to a first responder who experiences a critical incident in the course
20 of the first responder's employment, related to the first responder's
21 experience of the critical incident. The counseling is in addition to,
22 and separate from, any benefits already provided by an employer
23 sponsored health plan or a group health insurance trust fund. The
24 first responder shall be authorized to select the mental health
25 professional who will conduct the counseling as provided by this
26 subsection.

27 b. If a mental health professional determines that the first
28 responder would benefit from additional hours of licensed
29 counseling beyond the initial 12 hours and that the additional hours
30 of licensed counseling are likely to improve the first responder's
31 condition, the employer of the first responder shall pay for up to an
32 additional 24 hours of licensed counseling.

33 c. All hours of licensed counseling authorized under this
34 section are required to be completed within one year after the first
35 responder's first visit to a mental health professional.

36 d. The employer of the first responder shall not require the use
37 of accrued annual or vacation leave, personal leave, sick leave, or
38 any other paid leave if a counseling session scheduled pursuant to
39 this section occurs during the first responder's established work
40 hours.

41

42 3. Interactions related to mental health support between a law
43 enforcement officer and a resiliency program officer or a member of
44 a peer support team shall be confidential. A resiliency program
45 officer or a member of a peer support team shall not be required to
46 disclose mental health support related communications with another
47 law enforcement officer, except if the law enforcement officer is
48 reasonably believed to be a risk to themselves or others or when

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1 there is evidence of the commission of a crime by the law
2 enforcement officer.

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4 4. This act shall take effect immediately.