

114TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 2210

To require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to carry out a program to establish peer specialists in patient aligned care teams at medical centers of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

OCTOBER 27, 2015

Mr. BLUMENTHAL (for himself, Ms. BALDWIN, and Mr. MARKEY) introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs

A BILL

To require the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to carry out a program to establish peer specialists in patient aligned care teams at medical centers of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Veteran Partners’ Ef-
5 forts to Enhance Reintegration Act” or the “Veteran
6 PEER Act”.

1 **SEC. 2. PROGRAM ON ESTABLISHMENT OF PEER SPECIAL-**
2 **ISTS IN PATIENT ALIGNED CARE TEAM SET-**
3 **TINGS WITHIN MEDICAL CENTERS OF DE-**
4 **PARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS.**

5 (a) PROGRAM REQUIRED.—The Secretary of Vet-
6 erans Affairs shall carry out a program to establish peer
7 specialists in patient aligned care teams at medical centers
8 of the Department of Veterans Affairs to promote the use
9 and integration of mental health services in a primary care
10 setting.

11 (b) TIMEFRAME FOR ESTABLISHMENT OF PRO-
12 GRAM.—The Secretary shall carry out the program at
13 medical centers of the Department as follows:

14 (1) Not later than 180 days after the date of
15 the enactment of this Act, at not fewer than ten
16 medical centers of the Department.

17 (2) Not later than two years after the date of
18 the enactment of this Act, at not fewer than 25
19 medical centers of the Department.

20 (c) SELECTION OF LOCATIONS.—

21 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary shall select
22 medical centers for the program as follows:

23 (A) Not fewer than five shall be medical
24 centers of the Department that are designated
25 by the Secretary as polytrauma centers.

1 (B) Not fewer than ten shall be medical
2 centers of the Department that are not des-
3 ignated by the Secretary as polytrauma centers.

4 (2) CONSIDERATIONS.—In selecting medical
5 centers for the program under paragraph (1), the
6 Secretary shall consider the feasibility and advis-
7 ability of selecting medical centers in the following
8 areas:

9 (A) Rural areas and other areas that are
10 underserved by the Department.

11 (B) Areas that are not in close proximity
12 to an active duty military installation.

13 (C) Areas representing different geo-
14 graphic locations, such as census tracts estab-
15 lished by the Bureau of the Census.

16 (d) GENDER-SPECIFIC SERVICES.—In carrying out
17 the program at each location selected under subsection (c),
18 the Secretary shall ensure that—

19 (1) the needs of female veterans are specifically
20 considered and addressed; and

21 (2) female peer specialists are included in the
22 program.

23 (e) REPORTS.—

24 (1) PERIODIC REPORTS.—

1 (A) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 180
2 days after the date of the enactment of this
3 Act, and not less frequently than once every
4 180 days thereafter until the Secretary deter-
5 mines that the program is being carried out at
6 the last location to be selected under subsection
7 (c), the Secretary shall submit to Congress a
8 report on the program.

9 (B) ELEMENTS.—Each report required by
10 subparagraph (A) shall include the following:

11 (i) The findings and conclusions of
12 the Secretary with respect to the program
13 during the 180-day period preceding the
14 submittal of the report.

15 (ii) An assessment of the benefits of
16 the program to veterans and family mem-
17 bers of veterans during the 180-day period
18 preceding the submittal of the report.

19 (2) FINAL REPORT.—Not later than 180 days
20 after the Secretary determines that the program is
21 being carried out at the last location to be selected
22 under subsection (c), the Secretary shall submit to
23 Congress a report detailing the recommendations of

- 1 the Secretary as to the feasibility and advisability of
- 2 expanding the program to additional locations.

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