

SENATE HEALTH, HUMAN SERVICES AND SENIOR  
CITIZENS COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

SENATE, No. 3511

**STATE OF NEW JERSEY**

DATED: MAY 13, 2019

The Senate Health, Human Services and Senior Citizens Committee reports favorably Senate Bill No. 3511.

This bill authorizes the provision of certain health and social services to at-risk individuals during a Code Blue alert initiated in response to certain cold weather events.

Under current law, each county, through its office of emergency management, is responsible for establishing a plan for issuing Code Blue alerts to municipalities, social service agencies, and non-profit organizations that provide services to at-risk individuals located in the county. The plans are required to include the provision of emergency warming centers during a Code Blue alert.

Currently, a Code Blue alert is to be declared when National Weather Service forecasts and advisories predict that temperatures: (1) will reach 25 degrees Fahrenheit or lower without precipitation or 32 degrees Fahrenheit or lower with precipitation; or (2) the National Weather Service windchill temperature will be zero degrees Fahrenheit or less for a period of two hours or more.

This bill directs the Commissioner of Health to establish guidelines for health care and social services to be offered to at-risk individuals at emergency warming centers during a Code Blue alert. Services to be offered may include, but will not be limited to: the provision of health care services, vaccinations, and social services deemed appropriate by the commissioner; substance abuse intervention and treatment referral services; and mental health assessment and treatment referral services. The commissioner is required to establish a form for identification cards to be issued to those registered to provide services, and may require training related to the provision of services during a Code Blue alert as a condition of registration.

The bill authorizes a coordinator to establish a registry of healthcare workers, social services providers, and support services personnel who voluntarily consent to provide health care, social services, and support services to at-risk individuals during a Code Blue alert in accordance with the guidelines established by the commissioner. The coordinator is authorized to identify an area of an emergency warming center as a location to provide services authorized by the commissioner and to issue identification cards to personnel

included in the registry. The identification cards are to identify the health care, social services, or support services personnel; identify any professional license or certification held by the individual; and indicate, if required under current law, that the individual is registered as a New Jersey health care worker, social services provider, or support services personnel.

Under the bill, the coordinator may direct that an emergency warming center may provide services during a Code Blue alert and authorizes registered health care workers, social services providers, and support services personnel to voluntarily provide services at an emergency warming center. The bill further provides that registered health care workers or support services personnel who provide health care services on a voluntary basis are not to be liable for any civil damages as a result of the person's acts or omissions in providing medical care or treatment during a Code Blue alert in good faith and in accordance with the provisions of this bill.