

ASSEMBLY LAW AND PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE

STATEMENT TO

ASSEMBLY, No. 807

with committee amendments

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

DATED: MARCH 4, 1996

The Assembly Law and Public Safety Committee reports favorably Assembly Bill No. 807 with committee amendments.

Assembly Bill No. 807 permits counties to establish crisis intervention service programs to provide post traumatic debriefing and counseling services for law enforcement officers who have been involved in incidents which may produce personal or job-related depression, anxiety, stress or other psychological or emotional tensions, traumas, pressures, or disorders.

Under the provisions of this bill, a county could establish a crisis intervention program for the law enforcement officers working in the county. To preserve the integrity of the program and to encourage law enforcement officers to take advantage of the program's services, the bill requires that the program be organized as an independent agency of county government, rather than organized as a part of any county or municipal law enforcement agency or department. For the same reasons, the bill provides that all the employees of the program must be county employees or contractors rather than employees of any law enforcement agency and that the actual facility must not be located in or adjacent to any law enforcement facility, station or barracks.

While the debriefing and counseling services provided under the program would be available to any law enforcement officer in the county, the bill specifies that an officer who is involved in a critical incident must participate in his county's program before returning to active duty. A critical incident is defined as an event involving a shooting; an untimely death; injury to or the death of a juvenile; a terrorist act; a hostage situation; injury to or the death of an associate law enforcement officer; personal wound or injury; or other emotional or psychologically stressful event.

The services are to be provided by properly licensed or certified psychologists and social workers. Again, to ensure the integrity of the program and protect the participating officers, the bill prohibits the use of law enforcement officers in the debriefing and counseling services part of the program, but does encourage each county or municipal department to conduct its own debriefing and counseling

services to help identify those needing the county services and referring those in need to those services. To provide advisory assistance in organizing a crisis intervention program, the bill directs the governing body to establish a county crisis intervention services advisory council. The council is to include a representative of the county Association of Chiefs of Police; a representative from the union or unions, as the case may be, representing the law enforcement officers; the County Prosecutor or his designee; a representative of the county Department of Health specializing in mental health; a certified or licensed psychologist experienced in the diagnosis and treatment of emotional, psychological or post trauma stress disorders, and any other specialists the governing body thinks appropriate.

The committee amendments were adopted to clarify the permissive nature of the bill.

The committee also amended the bill to remove section 6, which proposed using a \$1 surcharge on motor vehicle fines and penalties to provide funding for the counties that decided to establish these crisis intervention programs. The funding mechanism for these crisis intervention programs is now set forth in Assembly Bill No. 806. The committee amendment to that bill permits counties which establish crisis intervention centers to impose a \$0.50 surcharge on motor vehicle offenses occurring in the county and to use those revenues to fund their centers.

This bill was prefiled for introduction in the 1996-97 session pending technical review. As reported, the bill includes the changes required by technical review which has been performed.