

(S. B. 1080)

(No. 12-2019)

(Approved March 26, 2019)

AN ACT

To amend Section 3.3 of Act No. 1-2012, as amended, known as the “Organic Act of the Puerto Rico Government Ethics Office,” for the purpose of including a suicide prevention course and a domestic abuse prevention course as compulsory courses within those already provided by the Government Ethics Office; and for other purposes.

STATEMENT OF MOTIVES

The Senate Mental Health Summit was held in the Municipality of Arecibo on September 5, 2018, and a seventh Senate Mental Health Summit shall be held during the month of October in the Municipality of Guaynabo. In 2017, professionals from the public and private sectors and nonprofit organizations met to join forces in order to promote prevention and intervention with regards to mental health in Puerto Rico, with suicide being one of the main issues discussed during this important initiative.

The painful passage of hurricane María through Puerto Rico further affected the mental health of our citizens. News of people committing suicide throughout the Island were repeated constantly. It seems that individual needs in addition to the devastation left behind by the weather event was a lethal combination that led to the loss of many lives.

This Legislative Assembly has promoted multiple initiatives seeking short-, medium-, and long-term solutions with regards to suicide prevention. However, recent news have made it clear that we have to double our efforts in this difficult task of saving lives by addressing the mental health problems of our Island.

The murder and suicide of two Puerto Rico Police officers as a result of the domestic abuse problems we are facing on the Island reveals a new facet of this problem we are facing. Our government employees, those who work with social problems and are our frontline in addressing this collective crisis have been just as affected and are possibly overwhelmed by their role in helping others. They have inadvertently become invisible figures when preventing and aiding during such tragedies. Having a workforce that is highly trained in the prevention of domestic abuse and suicide has to be a priority for this Legislative Assembly. Thus, we encourage government employees to help prevent such tragic situations. Furthermore, we promote that all of Puerto Rico's public employees become representatives of suicide and domestic abuse prevention, in addition to being public servants.

The aforementioned issue is of vital importance and requires the urgent attention of this Legislative Assembly in order to attain a Puerto Rico free from suicide and domestic abuse like we all desire.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF PUERTO RICO:

Section 1.- Section 3.3 of Act No. 1-2012, as amended, known as the "Organic Act of the Puerto Rico Government Ethics Office," is hereby amended to read as follows:

"Section 3.3.- Continuing Education.

Any public servant in the Executive Branch must complete at least twenty (20) contact hours of ethics-related courses every two (2) years, of which ten (10) hours must be completed through the trainings or any other method developed by the CDET. The Office shall be required to offer a domestic abuse course and a suicide prevention course within the previously established twenty (20) training hours to all government employees covered by this Act. The CDET shall determine an equivalency and validate to the appropriate biannual period any training provided by

other public or private entities. The appointing authority shall grant time, without charge against any leave, to its public servants to comply with the obligation imposed under this Act.

Section 2.- Any Act, Order, Resolution, Joint Resolution, or Concurrent Resolution that is inconsistent with this Act, in whole or in part, is hereby repealed insofar as it is inconsistent.

Section 3.- This Act shall take effect immediately after its approval.

CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify to the Secretary of State that the following **Act No. 12-2019 (S. B. 1080)** of the **5th Regular Session** of the **18th Legislative Assembly of Puerto Rico**:

AN ACT to amend Section 3.3 of Act No. 1-2012, as amended, known as the “Organic Act of the Puerto Rico Government Ethics Office,” for the purpose of including a suicide prevention course and a domestic abuse prevention course as compulsory courses within those already provided by the Government Ethics Office; and for other purposes.

has been translated from Spanish to English and that the English version is correct.

In San Juan, Puerto Rico, on this 9th day of August, 2019.

Orlando Pagán-Ramírez
Director