

SB 66 STAFF MEASURE SUMMARY

Senate Committee On Human Services, Mental Health and Recovery

Prepared By: C. Ross, Counsel

Meeting Dates: 3/2

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES:

Requires medical examiners to notify local mental health authority of suspected suicides involving decedents up to age 24. Specifies content of notice. Directs Oregon Health Authority (OHA) to develop protocols for intervention following a youth suicide event.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

EFFECT OF AMENDMENT:

No amendment.

BACKGROUND:

District medical examiners in the county where a death occurs are responsible for investigating and certifying the cause of death in all manner of circumstances, including circumstances that are unknown, or appear suspicious, homicidal, or suicidal. District medical examiners are required to notify district attorneys when circumstances could involve criminal conduct; they are required to submit reports to the Chief Medical Examiner and county registrars; and they are required to attempt to locate and notify a decedent's next of kin immediately upon identification.

When a suspected suicide involves someone aged 24 or younger, Oregon law provides for communications and information-sharing between the Oregon Health Authority (OHA), educational institutions, local mental health authorities, and others, in order to support individuals and communities coping with confusion and loss and to protect public health. Local mental health authorities in particular are required to inform other local systems of suspected youth suicide, including: the juvenile department, substance use disorder programs, developmental disabilities programs, child welfare organizations, and others in contact with the decedent. There is currently no explicit statutory requirement for medical examiners to notify local mental health authorities when the death of a youth is suspected suicide.

Senate Bill 66 directs medical examiners to notify local mental health authorities of suspected suicides involving decedents up to age 24. The measure also requires OHA to develop interventions for uniform deployment by local mental health authorities in the aftermath of youth suicide.