



Legislative Fiscal Bureau

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Joint Committee on Finance

Paper #417

Comprehensive Health and Wellness Program (Military Affairs)

[LFB 2021-23 Budget Summary: Page 409, #3]

CURRENT LAW

The comprehensive health and wellness program, administered by the Department of Military Affairs (DMA), focuses on physical, mental, spiritual, social, and financial wellness within the Wisconsin National Guard. The program is currently funded through the federal government on a part-time basis and is not authorized full-time staff. The two-week course consists of speakers, physical workouts, writing assignments, surveys, and counseling services. The program currently has the capacity to serve 500 members each year.

DISCUSSION POINTS

1. In 2019, 86% of Army National Guard members in Wisconsin met the medical readiness classification, 21% were considered obese, 18% used tobacco products, and 5% reported symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder. Attrition in the Wisconsin National Guard is between 10% and 14% annually, due to administrative separations, term of service expirations, and retirements. The Department indicates that high attrition rates lead to higher costs, as the National Guard is required to invest in training and equipment for new members. The comprehensive health and wellness program aims to provide members with the self-care tools needed to optimize readiness and maintain participation in the National Guard.

2. The program currently offers a two-week course focused on physical, mental, spiritual, social, and financial health. Most participants are part-time National Guard members who have been recommended by their supervisors because they are struggling to make a health behavior change. According to DMA, the part-time structure of the current program has limited the number of participants, restricted the program's ability to provide ongoing support to participants, and hindered efforts to measure the long-term impact of the program.

3. The Department conducts pre- and post-course surveys for participants to measure the program's impact on coping skills. For example, prior to taking the course, 70% of participants felt stress from their financial situation. Part-time National Guard members are temporarily removed from civilian employment while on active duty, and often earn less money while deployed. The course connects participants with certified financial planners, teaches budgeting skills, and helps participants enroll in military-sponsored health insurance to reduce financial hardship. The post-course survey showed that 51% of participants felt stress from their financial situation. Prior to taking the course, 78% of participants said they often worried about body weight; this percentage decreased to 57% after participants completed a variety of workouts and trained for the army combat fitness test.

4. Assembly Bill 68/Senate Bill 111 would provide \$1,650,100 GPR in 2021-22, \$1,690,200 GPR in 2022-23, and 5.0 GPR positions annually to expand the comprehensive wellness program. The proposed expansion would facilitate the enrollment of all 10,000 National Guard members in the program, which would be integrated into each unit as a proactive measure.

5. Funds would be utilized for program administration, curriculum development and implementation, community partnerships, website and application development, and a mobile health vehicle. Partnerships with the University of Wisconsin System and the YMCA would connect students with resources in their communities, while videos and audio downloads on the course website would provide continuous learning for members across the state. A mobile site would facilitate meetings between National Guard members and a mental health professional, financial professional, nutritionist, tobacco cessation specialist, and other support staff. Table 1 shows the proposed allocation of funds.

TABLE 1

Comprehensive Health and Wellness Program Budget, AB 68/SB 111

	<u>2021-22</u>	<u>2022-23</u>
Salaries	\$186,000	\$248,100
Fringe Benefits	84,100	112,100
Video and Audio Content	480,000	480,000
Website and Application Development	300,000	300,000
Data Collection and Analysis	300,000	300,000
Health and Wellness Conference	120,000	120,000
Mobile Wellness Vehicle	80,000	80,000
Other Supplies and Services	<u>100,000</u>	<u>50,000</u>
Total	\$1,650,100	\$1,690,200

6. The bill would provide five full-time staff members for the program. Four of the positions would be classified as program and policy analysts - advanced and one would be classified as a nutrition program consultant. The staff would be responsible for program management, curriculum development, data collection and analysis, communications and public affairs, and community partnership development. Given the health and wellness program's potential to increase

National Guard readiness and retention, the Committee could expand the program by \$1.7 million GPR and 5.0 GPR positions annually [Alternative 1].

7. On the other hand, the Committee could decide to expand the program but at a lower amount. The Committee could provide \$762,200 GPR in 2021-22, \$766,200 GPR in 2022-23, and 3.0 GPR positions annually. The program would be allocated sufficient authority to employ a nutrition program consultant and two program and policy analysts - advanced. In addition, the program would be allocated supplies and services funding of \$600,000 in 2021-22 and \$550,000 in 2022-23 to support wellness vehicle operations, data collection and analysis, an annual conference, and community partnerships, as shown in Table 2. It is estimated this alternative could allow the program to serve 5,000 National Guard members each year through in-person events, but would not have the funds needed to create a virtual classroom [Alternative 2].

TABLE 2

Comprehensive Health and Wellness Program Budget, Alternative 2

	<u>2021-22</u>	<u>2022-23</u>
Salaries	\$111,700	\$148,900
Fringe Benefits	50,500	67,300
Data Collection and Analysis	300,000	300,000
Health and Wellness Conference	120,000	120,000
Mobile Wellness Vehicle	80,000	80,000
Other Supplies and Services	<u>100,000</u>	<u>50,000</u>
Total	\$762,200	\$766,200

8. If the Committee could takes no action, DMA could continue using federal funds to operate a part-time program with the capacity to serve 500 National Guard members each year [Alternative 3].

ALTERNATIVES

1. Provide \$1,650,100 GPR in 2021-22, \$1,690,200 GPR in 2022-23, and 5.0 GPR positions annually to DMA's general program operations appropriation to expand the National Guard comprehensive health and wellness program.

ALT 1	Change to Base	
	Funding	Positions
GPR	\$3,340,300	5.00

2. Provide \$762,200 GPR in 2021-22, \$766,200 GPR in 2022-23, and 3.0 GPR positions

annually to DMA's general program operations appropriation to expand the National Guard comprehensive health and wellness program.

ALT 2	Change to Base	
	Funding	Positions
GPR	\$1,528,400	3.00

3. Take no action.

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