

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6724

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Labor, Commerce & Financial Institutions, February 6, 2002

Title: An act relating to mental health professionals under industrial insurance.

Brief Description: Including mental health professionals under industrial insurance.

Sponsors: Senators Keiser, Long, Thibaudeau, Prentice, Roach and Kohl-Welles.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Labor, Commerce & Financial Institutions: 1/31/02, 2/6/02 [DPS, DNP].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON LABOR, COMMERCE & FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6724 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Prentice, Chair; Keiser, Vice Chair; Fairley, Franklin, Gardner, Regala and Winsley.

Minority Report: Do not pass.

Signed by Senators Benton and Honeyford.

Staff: Elizabeth Mitchell (786-7430)

Background: The Department of Labor and Industries currently allows injured workers to be treated for mental conditions. Treatment must be goal directed, time limited, intensive, and limited to conditions caused or aggravated by the worker's industrial injury. An initial evaluation report, a treatment plan, and subsequent 60-day narrative reports must be sent to the department and to the worker's attending physician, and all treatment must be authorized by the department. Psychologists and psychiatrists are currently the only mental health care professionals authorized to treat injured workers.

To be licensed by the Department of Health as an advanced or independent clinical social worker, a mental health counselor or a marriage and family therapist, one must complete a degree from a graduate program approved by the Secretary of Health, complete a certain amount of work experience, and successfully complete an examination. These professions were certified, not licensed, by the Department of Health prior to July 2001. If a person was certified and met the education and experience requirements of licensure prior to July 2001, he or she could become licensed without taking the examination.

Summary of Substitute Bill: All mental health professionals licensed by the Department of Health are allowed to treat injured workers upon referral by the workers' attending physicians. These professionals include: licensed advanced social workers, licensed

independent clinical social workers, licensed mental health counselors, licensed marriage and family therapists, and licensed psychologists.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: Mental health professionals must be referred by the worker's attending physician.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: The mental health professionals covered in the bill are included in many health care plans; they should also be available to injured workers at their physicians' discretion. Clinical training of these professionals is equal in many ways to that of psychologists and psychiatrists.

Testimony Against: Only 1,600 of 170,000 cases per year are referred for psychological evaluation. There are currently enough psychologists and psychiatrists to meet demand, so new classes of mental health professionals do not need to be included in the system. Counselors are not as highly trained as psychologists and psychiatrists.

Testified: Laura Groshong; Ann Simons, MFT's (pro); Melanie Stewart (pro); Robby Stern, WSTC (pro); Kathleen Collins, Washington Self Insurers (con); Clif Finch, AWB (con).