

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5187

As of February 18, 2011

Title: An act relating to the accountability of mental health professionals employed by an evaluation and treatment facility for communicating with a parent or guardian about the option of parent- initiated mental health treatment.

Brief Description: Concerning the accountability of mental health professionals employed by an evaluation and treatment facility for communicating with a parent or guardian about the option of parent-initiated mental health treatment.

Sponsors: Senators Becker, Keiser, Hargrove, Stevens and Carrell.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Human Services & Corrections: 1/28/11.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES & CORRECTIONS

Staff: Kevin Black (786-7747)

Background: A parent in Washington may consent to mental health treatment on behalf of a minor child provided that a professional person determines that there is a medical necessity for treatment. An evaluation and treatment facility (E&T) is not obligated to provide treatment to the minor but may not refuse solely on the basis of the lack of consent of the minor. A minor who does not consent to treatment may petition a superior court for review as to whether such treatment is based upon medical necessity.

In 2003 and 2005, the Legislature passed bills obligating an E&T to promptly provide notice of all available treatment options to a parent or guardian of a minor who seeks treatment for that minor, including the option for parent-initiated treatment.

Summary of Bill: Any mental health professional employed or contracted by an E&T who has contact as a part of his or her professional duties with a parent or guardian of a minor who is seeking treatment for that minor must inform the parent or guardian of all statutorily available treatment options. The failure of a mental health professional to fulfill this duty may constitute unprofessional conduct for a license holder under the purview of the Department of Health.

Appropriation: None.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: Providers should be held accountable by sanctions on their license for providing this information. Parents should be informed of their rights. They need all their options laid on the table to make good choices. Our son committed suicide after leaving a mental health treatment facility and we were not informed of our right to consent to treatment on his behalf. When a child is mentally ill, the child is not capable of making rational decisions. Parents should have the right to take care of their children. It's good that a child can seek mental health treatment on his or her own, but if a child refuses, we need to empower parents to help get the child the help he or she needs.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Becker, prime sponsor; Donna Obermeyer, Willie Binion, Deb Binion, parents.