
Health Care & Wellness Committee

HB 1721

Brief Description: Concerning the transport of patients by ambulance to facilities other than hospitals.

Sponsors: Representatives Robinson, Schmick, Cody, Harris, Riccelli and Van De Wege.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Establishes a work group to adopt guidelines for the appropriate transport of patients to chemical dependency treatment programs or mental health facilities by ambulance services.
- Directs the Health Care Authority to develop a reimbursement methodology for ambulance services that transport patients to a mental health facility or chemical dependency treatment program in accordance with regional alternative facility procedures.

Hearing Date: 2/13/15

Staff: Chris Blake (786-7392).

Background:

Ambulance services provide transportation services for the ill and injured according to patient care procedures. Patient care procedures are written guidelines adopted by regional emergency medical services and trauma care councils that identify several elements necessary to coordinate the provision of emergency services, including the type of facility to receive the patient.

Medicaid covers ambulance transportation in several different cases. Generally, these services are covered when it is medically necessary based on the client's condition at the time of the trip, it is appropriate to the client's actual medical need, and it is to a destination that is a contracted Medicaid provider or the appropriate trauma facility.

Summary of Bill:

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.

The Department of Health and the Department of Social and Health Services must convene a work group to establish alternative facility guidelines for the development of protocols and procedures for ambulance services to transport patients in need of mental health or chemical dependency services. The guidelines must establish when transport to a mental health facility or chemical dependency treatment program is required as indicated by the presence of a medical emergency, the severity of the patient's behavioral health needs, the training of emergency medical service personnel, and the risk posed by the patient to himself or herself or to others. The work group must include members of the Emergency Medical Service and Trauma Care Steering Committee, mental health providers, ambulance services, and chemical dependency treatment programs. The guidelines must be completed by July 1, 2016, and be distributed to regional emergency medical services and trauma care councils for inclusion in their regional plans.

Ambulance services are given specific authority to transport patients to nonmedical facilities, such as mental health facilities and chemical dependency treatment programs. Immunity from liability that generally applies to emergency medical services providers is extended to acts or omissions by those providers when transporting a patient to a mental health facility or chemical dependency treatment program in accordance with regional alternative facility procedures.

The Health Care Authority is directed to develop a reimbursement methodology for ambulance services in cases when they transport Medicaid clients to a mental health facility or chemical dependency treatment program in accordance with regional alternative facility procedures.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.