
**Early Learning & Human Services
Committee**

2SSB 5749

Brief Description: Concerning paperwork reduction in order to improve the availability of mental health services to protect children and families.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators Darneille, Frockt, Kuderer, Warnick and Saldaña).

Brief Summary of Second Substitute Bill

- Requires the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) to establish a single set of regulations for providers of behavioral health services by October 1, 2017.
- Establishes requirements related to the DSHS audits of the provision of behavioral health services.
- Requires the DSHS to reduce documentation and paperwork requirements for social workers serving children.

Hearing Date: 3/21/17

Staff: Dawn Eychaner (786-7135).

Background:

The Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) contracts with behavioral health organizations (BHOs) for the provision of community-based mental health and substance use disorder treatment. Contracts between the DSHS and BHOs must include performance measures linked to client outcomes, standards related to financial integrity of the organization and the quality of services provided, and mechanisms for monitoring contract performance, among other provisions. The DSHS has adopted in rule standards for the operation of BHOs. The BHOs must comply with all applicable local, state, and federal rules and laws.

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 (DOH) licenses and regulates health professions and medical facilities.

The DSHS provides child welfare services to children and families. These services may include voluntary services, out-of-home placement, case management, and child protective services.

Summary of Bill:

The DSHS must adopt and maintain rules for the provision of behavioral health services that allow clinicians to exercise professional judgment to conduct age-appropriate, strength-based psychosocial assessments according to current best practices. By October 1, 2017, the DSHS must provide a single set of regulations for agencies to follow concerning mental health, substance use disorder, and co-occurring disorder treatments. Regulations must be clear, not unduly burdensome on providers, and focus on quality, outcomes, and safety above process.

When conducting audits relating to the provision of behavioral health services, the DSHS must:

- rely on a sampling methodology for review of clinical files and records that is consistent with standards of other licensing and accrediting bodies;
- treat organizations with multiple locations as a single entity;
- share audit results with BHOs to assist with their review process and take steps to coordinate and combine audit activities when appropriate;
- coordinate audit functions with the DOH to combine audit activities into a single site visit and eliminate redundancies;
- not require duplicative information to be provided in particular documents or locations except where required by federal law; and
- ensure audits involving manualized evidence, such as Wraparound with Intensive Services or research-based programs, are conducted by personnel familiar with the program.

The DSHS must immediately review its rules, policies, and procedures related to documentation and paperwork requirements for social workers serving children in order to eliminate or streamline duplicative or inefficient requirements. The review must be complete by November 1, 2017, and the DSHS must take immediate steps to amend department rules according to the results of the review.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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