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SENATE BILL 5749

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State of Washington

65th Legislature

2017 Regular Session

By Senators Darneille, Frockt, Kuderer, Warnick, and Saldaña

Read first time 02/07/17. Referred to Committee on Human Services,  
Mental Health & Housing.

1 AN ACT Relating to paperwork reduction in order to improve the  
2 availability of mental health services to protect children and  
3 families; adding a new section to chapter 71.24 RCW; creating new  
4 sections; and providing an expiration date.

5 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

6 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** The legislature finds that a prioritized  
7 recommendation of the children's mental health work group, as  
8 reported in December 2016, is to reduce burdensome and duplicative  
9 paperwork requirements for providers of children's mental health  
10 services. This recommendation is consistent with the recommendations  
11 of the behavioral health workforce assessment of the workforce  
12 training and education coordinating board to reduce time-consuming  
13 documentation requirements and the behavioral and primary health  
14 regulatory alignment task force to streamline regulations and reduce  
15 the time spent responding to inefficient and excessive audits.

16 The legislature further finds that duplicative and overly  
17 prescriptive documentation and audit requirements negatively impact  
18 the adequacy of the provider network by reducing workforce morale and  
19 limiting the time available for patient care. Such requirements  
20 create costly barriers to the efficient provision of services for

1 children and their families. These barriers can be reduced while  
2 creating a greater emphasis on quality, outcomes, and safety.

3 The legislature further finds that social workers serving  
4 children are encumbered by burdensome paperwork requirements which  
5 can interfere with the effective delivery of services.

6 Therefore, the legislature intends to require the department of  
7 social and health services to take steps to reduce paperwork,  
8 documentation, and audit requirements that are inefficient or  
9 duplicative for social workers who serve children and for providers  
10 of mental health services to children and families.

11 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 71.24  
12 RCW to read as follows:

13 (1) Rules adopted by the department relating to the provision of  
14 behavioral health services must:

15 (a) Limit prescriptive requirements for individual initial  
16 assessments to allow clinicians to exercise professional judgment to  
17 conduct age-appropriate, strength-based psychosocial assessments,  
18 including current needs and relevant history according to current  
19 best practices;

20 (b) By October 1, 2017, provide a single set of regulations for  
21 agencies to follow that provide mental health, substance use  
22 disorder, and co-occurring treatment services; and

23 (c) Be clear and not unduly burdensome in order to maximize the  
24 time available for the provision of care.

25 (2) Audits conducted by the department relating to provision of  
26 behavioral health services must:

27 (a) Rely on a sampling methodology to conduct reviews of  
28 personnel files and clinical records based on written guidelines  
29 established by the department that are consistent with the standards  
30 of other licensing and accrediting bodies;

31 (b) Treat organizations with multiple locations as a single  
32 entity. The department must not require annual visits at all  
33 locations operated by a single entity when a sample of records may be  
34 reviewed from a centralized location;

35 (c) Share audit results with behavioral health organizations to  
36 assist with their review process and, when appropriate, take steps to  
37 coordinate and combine audit activities;

1 (d) Coordinate audit functions between the department and the  
2 department of health to combine audit activities into a single site  
3 visit and eliminate redundancies;

4 (e) Not require information to be provided in particular  
5 documents or locations when the same information is included or  
6 demonstrated elsewhere in the clinical file, except where required by  
7 federal law; and

8 (f) Ensure that audits involving manualized programs such as  
9 wraparound with intensive services or other evidence or research-  
10 based programs are conducted to the extent practicable by personnel  
11 familiar with the program model and in a manner consistent with the  
12 documentation requirements of the program.

13 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** (1) The department of social and health  
14 services must immediately perform a review of casework documentation  
15 and paperwork requirements for social workers with the department who  
16 provide services to children. The review must identify areas in which  
17 duplicative or inefficient documentation and paperwork requirements  
18 can be eliminated or streamlined in order to allow social workers to  
19 spend greater amounts of time and attention on direct services to  
20 children and their families. The department must complete the review  
21 by November 1, 2017. Upon completion of the review, the department  
22 must take immediate steps to amend department rules and procedures  
23 accordingly.

24 (2) This section expires December 31, 2018.

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