
SUBSTITUTE SENATE BILL 5749

State of Washington

65th Legislature

2017 Regular Session

By Senate Human Services, Mental Health & Housing (originally sponsored by Senators Darneille, Frockt, Kuderer, Warnick, and Saldaña)

READ FIRST TIME 02/16/17.

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 February 1, 2018, 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 children's
16 administration who provide services to children. The review must
17 identify areas in which duplicative or inefficient documentation and
18 paperwork requirements can be eliminated or streamlined in order to
19 allow social workers to spend greater amounts of time and attention
20 on direct services to children and their families. The department
21 must complete the review by November 1, 2017. Upon completion of the
22 review, the department must take immediate steps to amend department
23 rules and procedures accordingly.

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

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