

FINAL BILL REPORT

HB 1532

C 183 L 95

Synopsis as Enacted

Brief Description: Modifying certification of mental health counselors.

Sponsors: Representatives Dyer, Dellwo, Ballasiotes, Cody, Cooke and Thibaudeau.

House Committee on Health Care

Senate Committee on Human Services & Corrections

Senate Committee on Health & Long-Term Care

Background: Mental health counselors who meet the qualifications specified by law may apply for certification by the Department of Health, and may use the title of "certified mental health counselor" in connection with their practice.

Generally, applicants must possess at least a master's degree in mental health counseling or equivalent semester hours in a substantially equivalent field, as well as postgraduate supervised practice. They must also pass an examination and have 24 months of postgraduate professional experience in a mental health setting.

However, initial applicants for certification who possessed at least a master's degree in mental health counseling and who applied within 18 months of July 26, 1987 (the effective date of the original law), qualified for the examination notwithstanding the supervised practice requirement. Also, no examination, education, postgraduate practice or experience was required of any initial applicant for a year following July 26, 1987, as a condition for certification. These initial qualification provisions are now obsolete.

Certified mental health counseling is defined as a service emphasizing the maintenance of wellness rather than the treatment of illness.

There is no requirement for continuing education for mental health counselors.

Summary: The qualifications for certification of mental health counselors are clarified, and include a behavioral science master's or doctoral degree in a related field with the program equivalency determined by the Secretary of Health, as well as two years of postgraduate supervised practice.

The definition of certified mental health counseling is augmented to include the assessment, diagnosis, and treatment of mental and emotional disorders.

The Secretary of Health is authorized to adopt rules requiring mandatory continuing education.

Obsolete provisions are repealed.

Votes on Final Passage:

House	93	0
Senate	40	0

Effective: July 23, 1995