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HOUSE BILL 1862

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State of Washington

64th Legislature

2015 Regular Session

By Representatives Ortiz-Self, Fagan, Orwall, Johnson, Lytton, Muri, Senn, Pollet, and Moscoso

Read first time 01/30/15. Referred to Committee on Education.

1 AN ACT Relating to professional development for school  
2 counselors, social workers, and psychologists; adding a new section  
3 to chapter 28A.320 RCW; and creating new sections.

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

5 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** The legislature finds that school  
6 counselors, social workers, and psychologists interact with students  
7 on a daily basis, thus putting them in a good position to recognize  
8 the signs of emotional or behavioral distress and make appropriate  
9 referrals. The legislature further finds, however, that so much of  
10 the professional development for these educational staff associates  
11 has been on providing academic guidance, and that they may not have  
12 the ongoing professional development needed to address students'  
13 mental health needs and get students the help they need. The  
14 legislature further finds that Engrossed Substitute House Bill No.  
15 1336, which became chapter 197, Laws of 2013, increased the capacity  
16 of school districts and their personnel to recognize and respond to  
17 youth in need through comprehensive planning and additional training,  
18 but that additional opportunities for training on a regular and  
19 ongoing basis are in order. By providing monthly professional  
20 development opportunities at the school district level to school  
21 counselors, social workers, and psychologists, the legislature

1 intends to take the next step toward enabling these professionals to  
2 recognize and respond with skill and confidence to the signs of  
3 emotional or behavioral distress that they observe in students and  
4 make the appropriate referrals to evidence-based behavioral health  
5 services.

6 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 28A.320  
7 RCW to read as follows:

8 (1) Beginning in the 2015-16 school year, on a monthly basis  
9 throughout each school year, first-class school districts must  
10 provide a minimum of one hour of professional development, preferably  
11 in person, for school counselors, social workers, and psychologists  
12 that focuses on the following: Recognizing signs of emotional or  
13 behavioral distress in students, including but not limited to  
14 indicators of possible substance abuse, violence, and youth suicide,  
15 screening, and making appropriate referrals. School districts that  
16 have mental health centers in their area shall collaborate with local  
17 licensed mental health service providers under chapter 71.24 RCW to  
18 provide the professional development. Those districts without a  
19 mental health center in their area shall collaborate via telephone or  
20 other remote means that allow for dialogue and discussion. By  
21 collaborating with local providers in this manner, educational staff  
22 associates get the professional development they need in short but  
23 regular segments, in their own schools or near school district  
24 facilities, and school districts are not put in a position that they  
25 must obtain substitutes. This local connection will also help foster  
26 a connection between school personnel and the mental health  
27 professionals in the community to whom school personnel may make  
28 referrals, in line with the legislative intent expressed throughout  
29 Engrossed Substitute House Bill No. 1336, chapter 197, Laws of 2013,  
30 to form partnerships with qualified health, mental health, and social  
31 services agencies in the community to coordinate and improve support  
32 for youth in need and the directive to the department of social and  
33 health services with respect to the provision of funds for mental  
34 health first-aid training targeted at teachers and educational staff.

35 (2) Second-class districts are encouraged, but not required, to  
36 collaborate and provide the professional development as provided in  
37 subsection (1) of this section.

1        NEW SECTION.    **Sec. 3.**    This act does not create any civil  
2 liability on the part of the state or any state agency, officer,  
3 employee, agent, political subdivision, or school district.

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