
Judiciary Committee

HB 1753

Title: An act relating to integrating the treatment systems for mental health and substance use disorders.

Brief Description: Concerning professionals qualified to examine individuals in the mental health and substance use disorder treatment systems.

Sponsors: Representatives Cody and Jenkins; by request of Department of Social and Health Services.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Adds designated chemical dependency specialists to the list of qualified professionals that may sign a petition for involuntary commitment of a person who may be in need of substance use disorder treatment.

Hearing Date: 2/7/17

Staff: Edie Adams (786-7180).

Background:

Legislation was enacted in 2016 (Engrossed Third Substitute House Bill 1713) to integrate the involuntary mental health and substance use disorder treatment systems for minors and adults, effective April 1, 2018. The 2016 legislation made short-term changes to the chemical dependency involuntary treatment system that are in effect until the systems are integrated on April 1, 2018. These changes revised provisions of the chemical dependency involuntary treatment laws to be more in line with procedures of the Involuntary Treatment Act. Under the integrated system, "chemical dependency" treatment is replaced with "substance use disorder" treatment.

An adult or minor may be committed for involuntary chemical dependency treatment if the person, due to chemical dependency, poses a likelihood of serious harm or is gravely disabled.

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.

Designated Chemical Dependency Specialists are responsible for investigating and determining whether to detain a person who may be in need of chemical dependency treatment.

If the court, after a hearing, finds by a preponderance of the evidence that the criteria for involuntary treatment are met, and that no less restrictive alternative is appropriate, the court may order a 14-day period of commitment to an approved substance use disorder treatment program. The court may not order commitment of a person if an approved substance use disorder treatment program is not available. If the court determines that treatment in a less restrictive setting is in the person's best interest, the court may order an appropriate less restrictive treatment program for a period of up to 90 days. Upon petition, the court may order a subsequent period of involuntary treatment or treatment in a less restrictive setting for an additional 90 days under similar standards, except the burden of proof for a recommitment is by clear, cogent, and convincing evidence.

One of the short-term changes enacted by the 2016 legislation was a requirement that a petition for involuntary chemical dependency treatment must be signed by a combination of two qualified professionals who have examined the person. The list of qualified examining professionals that may sign a petition for 14-day or 90-day treatment includes physicians, psychiatric advanced registered nurse practitioners, mental health professionals, and physician assistants.

Summary of Bill:

Designated chemical dependency specialists are added to the list of qualified professionals that may, after examination, sign a petition for involuntary commitment of a person who may be in need of substance use disorder treatment.

References to "chemical dependency" and "chemical dependency treatment" are changed to "substance use disorder" and "substance use disorder treatment."

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.