
Health Care & Wellness Committee

HB 1349

Brief Description: Clarifying the definition of a geriatric behavioral health worker for individuals with a bachelor's or master's degree in social work, behavioral health, or other related areas.

Sponsors: Representatives Schmick, Cody, Jenkins, Doglio and Leavitt.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Amends the definition of a geriatric behavioral health worker to include a person who has a bachelor's or master's degree in social work, behavioral health, or other related area, in addition to a person who has received specialized training devoted to mental illness and treatment of older adults.
- Allows a geriatric behavioral health worker who has a bachelor's or master's degree in social work, behavioral health, or related areas to be included in a nursing home's minimum staffing requirements.

Hearing Date: 1/29/19

Staff: Kim Weidenaar (786-7120).

Background:

Nursing homes must meet certain staffing level requirements. The standards require that nursing homes maintain levels of direct care staff that are adequate to provide at least 3.4 hours of direct care per resident per day. Nursing homes may include geriatric behavioral health workers when calculating their minimum staffing requirements. A geriatric behavioral health workers is defined as a person who has received specialized training devoted to mental illness and treatment of older adults.

The Department of Social and Health Services must establish a rule creating an exception allowing geriatric behavioral health workers to be recognized in the minimum staffing requirements as part of the direct care service delivery to individuals who have a behavioral

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health condition. To qualify for the exception the geriatric behavioral health worker must have advanced practical knowledge in aging, disability, mental illness, Alzheimer's disease, and developmental disabilities, and: (1) have at least three years of experience caring for persons with chronic mental health issues, dementia, or intellectual and developmental disabilities in a long-term care or behavioral health setting; or (2) have successfully completed a facility-based behavioral health curriculum.

If a geriatric behavioral health worker holds less than a master's degree in social work, the worker must be directly supervised by an employee who has a master's degree in social work or a registered nurse.

The recognition of hours worked by geriatric behavioral health workers as counting toward minimum staffing requirements is limited to total hours as adjusted by the proportion of resident days of clients at the nursing home with a behavioral health condition.

Summary of Bill:

The definition of geriatric behavioral health works is amended to be a person with a bachelor's or master's degree in social work, behavioral health, or other related areas, or a person who has received specialized training devoted to mental illness and treatment of older adults.

To qualify for the exception allowing a geriatric behavioral health workers to be recognized in the minimum staffing requirements as part of the direct care service delivery to individuals who have a behavioral health condition, the worker must:

- have a bachelor's or master's degree in social work, behavioral health, or other related areas; or
- have at least three years of experience caring for persons with chronic mental health issues, dementia, or intellectual and developmental disabilities in a long-term care or behavioral health setting; or
- have successfully completed a facility-based behavioral health curriculum.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 23, 2019.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.