

# FINAL BILL REPORT

## SHB 1785

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Synopsis as Enacted

**Brief Description:** Limiting disclosure of client information.

**Sponsors:** By House Committee on Health Care (originally sponsored by Representatives Cody, Pflug, Skinner, Schual-Berke, Dickerson and Edwards).

**House Committee on Health Care**  
**Senate Committee on Health & Long-Term Care**

**Background:**

In 2001 the Legislature increased the level of credentialing from certification to licensure for certain types of counselors. These providers include marriage and family therapists, mental health counselors, and social workers.

The Uniform Health Care Information Act protects the disclosure of patient information regarding any care, service, or procedure that a health care provider uses to diagnose, treat, or maintain a patient's physical or mental condition. There are heightened protections for patient information related to sexually-transmitted diseases and AIDS, chemical dependency, and mental health.

**Summary:**

Mental health counselors, marriage and family therapists, and social workers must maintain the confidentiality of disclosure statements and other information received from their clients and used to provide professional services to them. There are exceptions to this requirement when: (1) the client authorizes release of the information; (2) the client waives the privilege by bringing charges against the licensee; (3) the Secretary of Health subpoenas the records; (4) the licensee must report child abuse, vulnerable adult abuse, or testimony and records at a probable cause hearing regarding involuntary detention; or (5) the licensee reasonably believes that disclosure will avoid or minimize an imminent danger to the client or another person.

**Votes on Final Passage:**

House 92 0

Senate 49 0

**Effective:** July 27, 2003

