
Health Care Committee

HB 1785

Brief Description: Limiting disclosure of client information.

Sponsors: Representatives Cody, Pflug, Skinner, Schual-Berke, Dickerson and Edwards.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires mental health counselors, marriage and family therapists, and social workers to maintain the confidentiality of information received from a client and used to provide professional services to them, with specific exceptions.

Hearing Date: 2/18/03

Staff: Chris Blake (786-7392).

Background:

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

The Uniform Health Care Information Act (chapter 70.02 RCW) 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 of Bill:

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 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.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not Requested.

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