H-1275.1

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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

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

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

NEW SECTION. **Sec.**  The legislature finds that school counselors, social workers, and psychologists interact with students on a daily basis, thus putting them in a good position to recognize the signs of emotional or behavioral distress and make appropriate referrals. The legislature further finds, however, that so much of the professional development for these educational staff associates has been on providing academic guidance, and that they may not have the ongoing professional development needed to address students' mental health needs and get students the help they need. The legislature further finds that Engrossed Substitute House Bill No. 1336, which became chapter 197, Laws of 2013, increased the capacity of school districts and their personnel to recognize and respond to youth in need through comprehensive planning and additional training, but that additional opportunities for training on a regular and ongoing basis are in order. By providing monthly professional development opportunities at the school district level to school counselors, social workers, and psychologists, the legislature intends to take the next step toward enabling these professionals to recognize and respond with skill and confidence to the signs of emotional or behavioral distress that they observe in students and make the appropriate referrals to evidence-based behavioral health services.

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

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

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

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

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