

HB 492 -- Professional Counselors

Sponsor: Morris

This bill revises the definition of the "practice of professional counseling." The practice of professional counseling is defined as the application of mental health, behavior, or human development principles in order to facilitate human development; prevent, diagnose, and treat mental and behavior disorders; conduct assessment for the purpose of establishing treatment; and plan, evaluate, and implement treatment plans using counseling treatment interventions.

The bill also revises the definition of "professional counseling." Professional counseling includes individual, group, marriage, and family counseling and psychotherapy; assessment; crisis intervention; diagnosis and treatment of persons with mental disorders; guidance and consultation to facilitate normal growth and development; utilization of functional assessment; consulting; research; and referral. Restrictions are placed on these practices to apply to those persons appropriately trained as a professional counselor.

The bill also requires that all persons making application for licensure as a professional counselor after August 28, 2005, must complete at least three graduate-level semester hours in the diagnosis of mental and emotional disorders. All persons licensed as professional counselors prior to August 28, 2005, have until August 28, 2006, to complete the three semester hours of graduate study or its equivalent, as determined by the State Committee of Psychologists and the State Committee for Professional Counselors, if they wish to engage in the diagnosis of mental and emotional disorders.

The bill also gives the Committee for Professional Counselors the authority to establish continuing education requirements in order for professional counselors to maintain and renew their licenses.