

HB 1174 -- Children's Mental Health

Sponsor: Stefanick

This bill establishes a comprehensive mental health services system for children. The system will be required to:

- (1) Be child centered, family focused, and family driven. The needs of the child and family will dictate the types and mix of services provided;
- (2) Provide community-based mental health services to children and their families;
- (3) Respond in a culturally competent and responsive manner;
- (4) Stress prevention, early identification, and intervention;
- (5) Assure access to a continuum of services;
- (6) Include early screening services;
- (7) Address problems associated with paying for mental health services for children;
- (8) Assure a smooth transition from mental health services appropriate for children to mental health services appropriate for adults;
- (9) Coordinate a service delivery system with providers and schools that serves children with emotional and behavioral disturbance problems; and
- (10) Be outcome based.

The bill requires the Department of Mental Health to develop a comprehensive children's mental health service system plan, which must be submitted to the General Assembly and the Children's Services Commission by December 2004. The requirements for the plan include:

- (1) Defining the mental health service and support needs of children and their families;
- (2) Defining a comprehensive array of services to be provided;
- (3) Establishing short- and long-term goals;
- (4) Describing the parameters for local implementation of the comprehensive children's mental health system;

- (5) Describing the importance of family involvement;
- (6) Describing financing mechanisms for the comprehensive children's mental health system;
- (7) Describing the coordination of services across child-serving agencies with emphasis on the involvement of local schools;
- (8) Describing methods for service, program and system evaluation, and the need for training and technical assistance; and
- (9) Describing the roles and responsibilities of state and local child-service agencies in the comprehensive children's mental health system.

The bill also makes various changes to laws relating to children's mental health services. The bill:

- (1) Adds child-serving agencies within the comprehensive children's mental health service system to the definition of "mental health services" for the purpose of defining services for the Medicaid Program;
- (2) Requires the Children's Division within the Department of Social Services to look at the children in its custody and determine which are there solely because of a mental health issue. Within 60 days of a child being identified, an individualized service plan must be developed to provide the appropriate and necessary services for the child;
- (3) Requires the departments of Social Services and Mental Health to jointly develop a financing plan to provide for the payment by the Department of Social Services for services provided to children who are returned to their parents' custody;
- (4) Requires the Department of Mental Health to develop a Comprehensive System Management Team to facilitate interagency cooperation and to assist the departments in developing strategies and ensuring positive outcomes for children who are served by the system; and
- (5) Allows the means test of the Department of Mental Health to be waived for a child in need of mental health services in order to avoid transfer of custody to the Children's Division.