

Please Support
HB09-1339
Definition of Clinical Social Work Practice
Sponsors: Representatives Green and Frangas and Senator Boyd

Background: The current statutory definition of clinical social work practice places a greater emphasis on psychotherapy than national standards of practice for the social work profession. Based on this current definition, the Board of Social Work Examiners has passed rules and policies that require significant psychotherapy hours from those seeking their Licensure as a Clinical Social Worker.

Problem: There are clinical social workers in a variety of settings who do not necessarily perform “psychotherapy”, but who do perform clinical social work functions.

Hospital social workers may not perform psychotherapy, as they primarily do “discharge, referral, and continuity of care planning and implementation”. They need a license in clinical social work to be hired and reimbursed for these services.

School social workers do not necessarily do psychotherapy, but they perform clinical social work functions such as crisis intervention and treatment evaluation.

These types of social workers and others could be required to accrue additional hours outside of their employment in specific area of psychotherapy to be licensed.

Solution: The statutory definition of “clinical social work practice” needs to be updated to:

- reflect national standards for the social work profession
- be consistent with the teaching of clinical social work in accredited masters programs around the country
- assure that clinical social workers in all settings are able to be licensed by the state
- assure that employers of clinical social workers can be reimbursed for all parts of clinical social work practice.

DORA plans to pass rules and policies that would emphasize psychotherapy more appropriately and still protect the public by assuring that Licensed Clinical Social Workers (LCSWs) have appropriate clinical training, experience and knowledge. Such rules would require a minimum number of experience hours from clinical areas of social work practice, not exclusive to psychotherapy.

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For reference, relevant portions of the definition of “social work practice” are provided below:

12-43-403. Social Work Practice Defined

(2) Professional social work practice may include, but is not limited to:

- (a) Assessment;
- (b) Differential diagnosis;
- (c) Treatment planning and evaluation;
- (d) Measurement of psychosocial functioning;
- (e) Crisis intervention, out-reach, short- and long-term treatment;
- (f) Therapeutic, individual, marital, and family interventions;
- (g) Client education;
- (h) Case management;
- (i) Mediation;
- (j) Advocacy;
- (k) Discharge, referral, and continuity of care planning and implementation;
- (l) Consultation;
- (m) Supervision;
- (n) Research;
- (o) Management and administration;
- (p) Program evaluation and education;
- (q) Social group work;
- (r) Community organization and development;
- (s) Social policy analysis and development;
- (t) Psychotherapy; and
- (u) Consultation, supervision, and teaching in higher education.