

Committee on Children, Families, and Elder Affairs

CS/HB 977 — Behavioral Health Workforce

by Health Quality Subcommittee and Reps. Peters, Pigman and others (CS/CS/SB 1250 by Appropriations Committee; Children, Families, and Elder Affairs Committee and Senator Grimsley)

This bill expands the behavioral health workforce, recognizes the need for additional psychiatrists as a critical state concern, integrates primary care and psychiatry, and allows persons with disqualifying offenses that occurred five or more years ago to work under the supervision of certain qualified personnel until a final determination regarding the request for an exemption from disqualification is made.

The bill modifies the process of retaining a patient in a receiving facility, or placing a patient in a treatment facility under the Baker Act, by allowing the psychiatrist providing the first opinion and the psychiatrist or clinical psychologist providing a second opinion to examine the patient through electronic means. Currently, only the psychiatrist or clinical psychologist providing a second opinion may perform an examination electronically.

The bill provides that persons employed directly or under contract with the Department of Corrections (DOC) in an inmate substance abuse program are exempt from a fingerprinting and background check requirement unless they have direct contact with unmarried inmates under the age of 18 or with inmates who are developmentally disabled.

The bill expands who is eligible to be a service provider in a substance abuse program by allowing persons who have had a disqualifying offense that occurred five or more years ago and who have requested an exemption from disqualification to work with adults with substance abuse disorders.

This bill allows physicians licensed under chapters 458 and 459 the discretion to dispense medications or prescribe a controlled substance regulated under chapter 893 on the premises of a registered pain-management clinic.

The bill allows a psychiatric nurse, as defined in s. 394.455, and working within the framework of an established protocol with a psychiatrist, to prescribe psychotropic controlled substances for the treatment of mental disorders. Grounds for discipline or denial of a license for psychiatric nurses for violations of such prescription duties are included in the bill.

If approved by the Governor, these provisions take effect upon becoming law.

Vote: Senate 39-0; House 111-0