
SUBSTITUTE HOUSE BILL 1900

State of Washington 64th Legislature 2015 Regular Session

By House Education (originally sponsored by Representatives Ortiz-Self, Johnson, Orwall, Muri, Lytton, Tarleton, Pollet, and Bergquist)

READ FIRST TIME 02/20/15.

1 AN ACT Relating to defining the role of the school counselor,
2 social worker, and psychologist; adding new sections to chapter
3 28A.320 RCW; adding a new section to chapter 28A.410 RCW; and
4 creating new sections.

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

6 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** (1) The legislature finds that students'
7 unmet mental health needs pose barriers to learning and development,
8 and ultimately student success in school. The legislature further
9 finds that the need to identify and assist students struggling with
10 emotional and mental health needs has reached a serious level
11 statewide. In order to prioritize students' needs first, the
12 legislature finds that the persons most qualified in the school
13 setting to lead the effort in addressing this epidemic are the school
14 counselor, social worker, and psychologist.

15 (2) The legislature further finds that in chapter 175, Laws of
16 2007, appropriate acknowledgment was given to the fact that a
17 professional school counselor is not just a course and career
18 guidance professional, but a certificated educator with unique
19 qualifications and skills to address all students' academic,
20 personal, social, and career development needs, and that school
21 counselors serve a vital role in maximizing student achievement by

1 supporting a safe learning environment and addressing the needs of
2 all students through prevention and intervention programs that are
3 part of a comprehensive school counseling program. The legislature
4 finds, however, that despite the language in RCW 28A.410.043 that
5 appropriately recognizes that the role of the school counselor is
6 multifaceted, with a focus upon students' mental health needs as well
7 as career guidance needs, the reality in the schools is that
8 counselor staffing levels are well below the national recommendations
9 of one counselor to every two hundred fifty students. As a result,
10 there are not enough counselors in the schools and many school
11 counselors have been tasked primarily with course and career guidance
12 responsibilities at the expense of the mental health side of school
13 counseling. Similarly, school psychologist staffing levels are below
14 the national recommendations of one psychologist to every five
15 hundred to seven hundred students when providing comprehensive school
16 psychological services, and school social worker staffing levels are
17 below the national recommendations of one school social worker to
18 every two hundred fifty students, or one to every fifty students with
19 intensive needs.

20 (3) The legislature further finds that school counselors, social
21 workers, and psychologists interact with students on a daily basis,
22 thus putting them in a good position to recognize the signs of
23 emotional or behavioral distress and make appropriate referrals. The
24 legislature further finds that they need ongoing professional
25 development to address students' mental health needs and get students
26 the help they need. The legislature further finds that Engrossed
27 Substitute House Bill No. 1336, which became chapter 197, Laws of
28 2013, increased the capacity of school districts and their personnel
29 to recognize and respond to youth in need through comprehensive
30 planning and additional training, but that additional opportunities
31 for collaboration on a regular and ongoing basis are in order. By
32 providing monthly professional collaboration opportunities with local
33 mental health service providers at the school district level to
34 school counselors, social workers, and psychologists, the legislature
35 intends to take the next step toward enabling these professionals to
36 recognize and respond with skill and confidence to the signs of
37 emotional or behavioral distress that they observe in students and
38 make the appropriate referrals to evidence-based behavioral health
39 services.

1 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 28A.320
2 RCW to read as follows:

3 A primary role of school counselors, social workers, and
4 psychologists is to focus on student mental health, work with at-risk
5 and marginalized students, perform risk assessments, and collaborate
6 with mental health professionals to promote student achievement and
7 create a safe learning environment. The majority of a school
8 counselor's, social worker's, or psychologist's time should be spent
9 in direct student contact, which should include: Identifying,
10 collaborating, and intervening to meet the mental health needs of all
11 students.

12 The school counselor also works with developing and leading a
13 comprehensive guidance and counseling program to focus on the
14 academic, career, personal, and social needs of all students. School
15 psychologists also carry out special education evaluation duties,
16 among other things. School social workers also promote and support
17 students' health, academic, and social success with counseling and
18 support, and by providing and coordinating specialized services and
19 resources. All of these professionals are also involved in
20 multitiered systems of support for academic and behavioral skills. In
21 order that school counselors, social workers, and psychologists have
22 the time available to prioritize these functions, in addition to
23 other activities requiring direct student contact, responsibilities
24 such as data input and data tracking should be handled by
25 nonlicensed, noncertified staff, where possible.

26 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 3.** A new section is added to chapter 28A.410
27 RCW to read as follows:

28 (1) A school psychologist is a professional educator who holds a
29 valid school psychologist certification as defined by the
30 professional educator standards board. Pursuant to the national
31 association of school psychologists' model for comprehensive and
32 integrated school psychological services, school psychologists
33 deliver services across ten domains of practice. Two domains permeate
34 all areas of service delivery: Data-based decision making; and
35 consultation and collaboration. Five domains encompass direct and
36 indirect services to children and their families: Student-level
37 services, interventions, and instructional supports to develop
38 academic skills; student-level interventions and mental health
39 services to develop social and life skills; systems-level school-wide

1 practices to promote learning; systems-level preventive and
2 responsive services; and systems-level family school collaboration
3 services. The three foundational domains include: Knowledge and
4 skills related to diversity in development and learning; research and
5 program evaluation; and legal and ethical practice.

6 (2) A school social worker is a professional educator who holds a
7 valid school social worker certification as defined by the
8 professional educator standards board. The purpose and role of the
9 school social worker is to provide an integral link between school,
10 home, and community in helping students achieve academic and social
11 success. This is accomplished by providing services that include:
12 Counseling, support for students and parents, crisis prevention and
13 intervention, professional case management, collaboration with other
14 professionals, organizations, and community agencies, and advocacy
15 for students and parents. School social workers work directly with
16 school administrators as well as students and families, providing
17 leadership in forming school discipline policies, and through mental
18 health intervention, crisis management and support services as part
19 of an interdisciplinary team, to help students succeed. School social
20 workers also facilitate community involvement in the schools while
21 advocating for student success.

22 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 4.** A new section is added to chapter 28A.320
23 RCW to read as follows:

24 (1) Beginning in the 2015-16 school year, on a monthly basis
25 throughout each school year, first-class school districts must
26 provide a minimum of one hour of professional collaboration,
27 preferably in person, for school counselors, social workers, and
28 psychologists that focuses on the following: Recognizing signs of
29 emotional or behavioral distress in students, including but not
30 limited to indicators of possible substance abuse, violence, and
31 youth suicide, screening, accessing current resources, and making
32 appropriate referrals. School districts that have mental health
33 centers in their area shall collaborate with local licensed mental
34 health service providers under chapter 71.24 RCW. Those districts
35 without a mental health center in their area shall collaborate via
36 telephone or other remote means that allow for dialogue and
37 discussion. By collaborating with local providers in this manner,
38 educational staff associates get to collaborate in short but regular
39 segments, in their own schools or near school district facilities,

1 and school districts are not put in a position that they must obtain
2 substitutes. This local connection will also help foster a connection
3 between school personnel and the mental health professionals in the
4 community to whom school personnel may make referrals, in line with
5 the legislative intent expressed throughout Engrossed Substitute
6 House Bill No. 1336, chapter 197, Laws of 2013, to form partnerships
7 with qualified health, mental health, and social services agencies in
8 the community to coordinate and improve support for youth in need and
9 the directive to the department of social and health services with
10 respect to the provision of funds for mental health first-aid
11 training targeted at teachers and educational staff.

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

15 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 5.** This act does not create any civil
16 liability on the part of the state or any state agency, officer,
17 employee, agent, political subdivision, or school district.

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