



Representative Ivy Spohnholz

House Health & Social Services Committee Chair

*Serving District 16: College Gate, Russian Jack, Nunaka Valley, Reflection Lake & Wonder Park
Committee Member: Education, Energy, Military & Veterans Affairs, Legislative Budget & Audit*

Sponsor Statement

House Bill 353

Marital & Family Therapy Lic. & Services

“An Act relating to the licensure of marital and family therapists; relating to medical assistance for marital and family therapy services; and providing for an effective date.”

HB 353 updates and clarifies the supervisory requirements for licensed Marital and Family Therapists (LMFTs). LMFTs must be supervised during their 1,500 clinical hours; of those hours, 100 must be for individual supervision and 100 for group supervision. HB 353 will allow the 200 hours of supervision to be attended by more than one supervisor. Currently, LMFTs are restricted to one supervisor to complete their clinical hours. Furthermore, once they have completed their hours and received their license, LMFTs are only allowed to provide services in community health clinics or physician mental health clinics, which limits the number of willing providers in the mental health care arena.

Considering the need for mental health clinicians in Alaska, HB353 expands medical assistance reimbursement services to cover those services provided by LMFTs. Reimbursement for services has also been expanded to psychiatrists, or individuals who are under the direct supervision of a psychiatrist who is licensed to practice as a professional counselor, physician assistant, advanced nurse practitioner, psychologist, psychological associate, and a clinical social worker. This will address the shortage of Medicaid-eligible behavioral health providers in the state, afford more options for beneficiaries, and increase access to care.

In 2016, the Alaska Board of Marital and Family Therapy unanimously recommended the statute changes contained in HB 353. Specifically, designating LMFTs as providers eligible to render and bill for Medicaid-funded services as independent practitioners under AS 47.07.030(b), and clarifying supervisory requirements for licensed marital and family therapists.

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