



THE STATE
of **ALASKA**
GOVERNOR BILL WALKER

Department of Commerce, Community,
and Economic Development

BOARD OF MARITAL AND FAMILY THERAPY

P.O. Box 110806
Juneau, AK 99811-0806
Main: 907.465.2551
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March 20th, 2018

The Alaska State Board of Marital and Family Therapy held a teleconference meeting to discuss Senate Bill 105 and House Bill 353 on March 5th, 2018. The Board unanimously affirmed their support for statutory changes as outlined below.

1. Alaska Statute(AS) 08.63.100(a):
 - a. This amendment **calls for clarification** that the hours required for licensure are 1,700 total hours - 1,500 clinical contact hours and 200 hours of supervision. The supervision hours must include 100 hours of individual supervision and 100 hours of group supervision.
 - b. This amendment further **deletes** the proposed requirement for LMFT's to carry liability insurance. The Board discussed that the intention was to make professional liability insurance available in the case that if an LMFT was under investigation, they would be responsible for those costs individually. Unfortunately, it was discovered that professional liability insurance is not available as desired to offset any investigative costs.
2. AS 08.63.120(b):
 - a. This amendment allows professionals from certain other mental health disciplines to serve as clinical supervisors for group supervision only.
 - b. The amendment further removes Advanced Nurse Practitioners as candidates for clinical supervisors.
3. AS 47.07.030(b)
 - a. The Board fully supports the inclusion of Marital and Family Therapy Services in the list of services available for Medicaid reimbursement.
4. AS 47.07.030(g)
 - a. This amendment defines "direct supervision" and the Board fully supports removing the requirement for a psychiatrist to be on site at least 30% of the time, and replacing it with language defining direct supervision as psychiatric oversight in person or via a communication device.
5. The Board of Marital and Family Therapy supports sections stating that we may adopt regulations in relation to the changes made under this bill. We further support proposed effective dates.

We truly appreciate your continued support of our profession. As members of the Board, we work hard towards making Marital and Family Therapy available to families in need. Marital and Family Therapists are highly trained mental health professionals, specially trained in the dynamics of systems, which allows us to diagnose and treat individuals, couples, and families. Continuing research shows that a strong social connection (the bread and butter of Marital and Family Therapy) leads to a quantifiable decrease in depression and anxiety, increased reported quality of life, greater heart health, increased immune function, and even a longer life span. Again, we thank you for your continued support.

Sincerely,

The Alaska State Board of Marital and Family Therapy



THE STATE
of **ALASKA**
GOVERNOR BILL WALKER

Department of Commerce, Community,
and Economic Development

BOARD OF MARITAL AND FAMILY THERAPY

P.O. Box 110806
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January 16, 2016

At the last meeting of the Board of Marital Family Therapy, the Board unanimously re-approved their recommendation for statutory changes as outlined below.

- 1) the following amendments in bold are to Alaska Statute (AS) 08.63.100(a)(3)(C):
 - (i) practiced marital and family therapy, including 1,500 supervised clinical contact hours of contact with couples, individuals, and families; and
 - (ii) been supervised concurrently during clinical contact for at least 200 hours, including 100 hours of individual supervision and 100 hours of group supervision approved by the board; and
 - (iii) group supervision conducted by State of Alaska licensed supervisor of Marital and Family Therapists, Social Workers, Professional Counselors, Psychologists, Psychiatric A.N.P.s, or Psychiatrists.
- 2) Marital Family Therapist Licensees must have Liability Insurance with a provision for Regulatory Investigation Fees of at least \$30,000.
- 3) Marital Family Therapist Licensees included in Title 47 under AS 47.07.030.

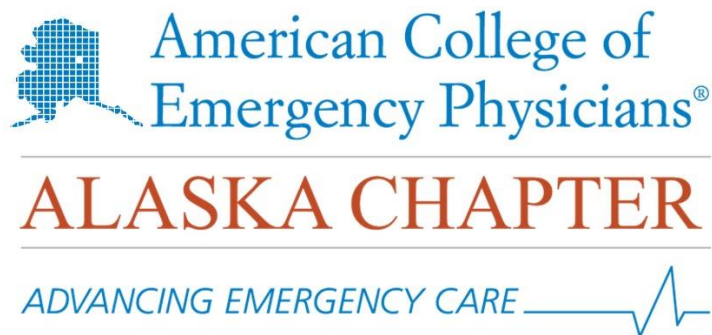
We appreciate your continued support of our profession and ask for your support of these changes, which will benefit the public and strengthen our profession. One of our Board members may be contacting your office to meet and discuss these items with you and be available to answer any questions you may have about them. Thank you again.

Sincerely,

Leon T Webber Digitally signed by Leon T Webber
Date: 2017.01.18 13:44:06 -09 00

Leon Webber, LMFT, Board Chair

Alaska Board Marital and Family Therapy



The Honorable David Wilson
Alaska State Senate
State Capitol, Rm 115
Juneau, AK 99801

April 5, 2018

RE: SB 105 Letter of Support

Dear Senator Wilson:

As a practicing emergency physician, we frequently care for patients in crisis due to a Mental Health condition. Too many have been unable to access timely outpatient care in the time preceding their crisis, care that could possibly have averted the deterioration of their condition to the point they are potentially a danger to them self or others and require emergency care or psychiatric hospitalization. We write to express support for Senate Bill 105, which would increase access to mental health care professionals. It would remove a current barrier which requires the physical presence of a psychiatrist at least 30% of the time. By allowing for psychiatry oversight via telemedicine, it would extend the ability for mental health therapists to provide care for patients in need both in remote areas of the state, as well as in the urban centers. Currently the need for care in all locations is far exceeded by availability, and Senate Bill 105 is a step to closing that gap and works towards enhancing the health and safety of Alaskans.

Respectfully,
Alaska Chapter, American College of Emergency Physicians

Benjamin Shelton, MD, President
Nathan P. Peimann, MD, President Elect
Nicholas Papcostas, MD, Secretary
David Scordino, MD, Treasurer
Anne Zink, MD, Immediate Past President
Russ Johanson, MD, Board Member
Danita Koehler, MD, Board Member
Megan Lea, MD, Board Member
Stanley Robinson, MD, Board Member
Mark Simon, MD, Board Member



**MAT-SU HEALTH
FOUNDATION**

950 East Bogard Road, Suite 218 • Wasilla, AK 99654
Phone: (907) 352-2863 • Fax (907) 352-2865
www.matsuhealthfoundation.org

March 16, 2018

Senator David Wilson
Alaska State Legislature
120 4th Street, State Capitol Room 511
Juneau, AK. 99801

Dear Senator Wilson:

Please accept this letter of support for SB 105 from the Mat-Su Health Foundation (MSHF). MSHF is the official business name of Valley Hospital Association, which shares ownership in Mat-Su Regional Medical Center (MSRMC). MSHF invests its share of the profits back into the community through grants and scholarships to improve the health and wellness of Alaskans living in Mat-Su.

As you are aware, we are experiencing a behavioral health (BH) crisis statewide, including here in Mat-Su. In terms of both volume and cost, the MSRMC Emergency Department (ED) is the number one portal for people experiencing a mental health or substance use disorder crisis in our community, even though the hospital currently offers no BH specialty care. In 2016, 3,443 patients with BH diagnoses went to the Mat-Su Regional ED. Their charges totaled \$43.8 million, and that's not counting the additional costs borne by law enforcement or Mat-Su Borough EMS for dispatch and ambulance services.

If more of our citizens could receive BH care to avert crisis, our citizens and State would be better off for it. The prevalence of mental health and substance use problems is increasing in Mat-Su and across AK. The average annual growth rate for visits to the MSRMC ED by patients with a BH diagnosis grew 20% from 2015 to 2017 due to the opioid epidemic and lack of outpatient treatment access. Additionally, from 2014 to 2017, the number of BH assessments required for patients in crisis in our ED grew from 349 to more than 1,000. By allowing Marriage and Family Therapists (MFTs) to bill Medicaid, SB105 will help more people receive care upstream in lower cost settings and prevent their issues from becoming emergent.

In the 2013 Mat-Su Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA), Mat-Su residents ranked health issues they were concerned about. The top five were all related to mental health and substance use. In a forum with all Mat-Su Borough School District (MSBSD) nurses, they demanded that we change our conversation from "access to healthcare" to "access to behavioral healthcare" and "access to physical healthcare" because they were so frustrated with lack of access to mental health care for the kids and parents they served. Both the nurses and school district administrators and principals confessed they thought they could meet the needs of the children if their parents could just access behavioral healthcare.

As a follow-up to the CHNA, MSHF conducted a Mat-Su Behavioral Health Environmental Scan, where we looked at policies that could address barriers to access care and improve the BH systems challenges we're facing. One recommendation was to expand access to BH care by making the statutory changes to allow providers like MFTs to bill Medicaid, which SB105 does.

MSHF is actively doing its part at the local level. We funded additional BH placements where the State's SHARP loan repayment program fell short on dollars and have made grants to fill gaps in the BH continuum of care. We are financing a High Utilizer Mat-Su (HUMS) project and Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) to case manage high need patients circulating through the MSRMC ED and through provider offices across the borough to ensure these patients are accessing care upstream and preventing costly ED visits. These projects and services keep people out of expensive emergency rooms and institutional care, and they help keep our economy strong by providing local jobs.

We also work to advocate for smart policy, like SB105, and we hope you will move this timely and important legislation forward. Many thanks for all your advocacy on behalf of the health of Alaskans.

Sincerely,

Chief Executive Officer



February 23, 2018

Senator Lyman Hoffman
Co-Chair, Senate Finance Committee
State Capitol Room 532
Juneau AK, 99801

Senator Anna MacKinnon
Co-Chair, Senate Finance Committee
State Capitol Room 532
Juneau AK, 99801

RE: Senate Bill 105

Dear Co-Chairs Hoffman and MacKinnon, Vice Chair Bishop, and members of the Senate Finance Committee:

The American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy (AAMFT) thanks you for the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of Senate Bill 105 (SB 105). AAMFT represents the professional interests of over 62,000 Marital and Family Therapists (MFTs) in the United States, including Alaska. The Alaska Association for Marriage and Family Therapy, the state organization for MFTs, is affiliated with AAMFT. AAMFT urges your support for SB 105.

Marital and Family Therapy is a nationally and internationally recognized profession. MFTs are licensed to provide mental health services in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. Public and private health plans recognize MFTs as independent providers of mental health services. Marital and Family Therapy is one of the five federally recognized core mental health professions, and MFTs are recognized as eligible providers by the Department of Veterans Affairs. Licensed MFTs must meet a rigorous standard, including the completion of a Master's or Doctoral Degree in marital and family therapy or a related field, supervised clinical experience that includes at least 1,500 hours of direct client contact, and passing an examination.

Allowing the services of licensed MFTs to be included in the state medical assistance program would expand access to qualified mental health providers for the state's most vulnerable. Increasing access to mental health providers may in turn improve health outcomes and reduce health spending on physical health ailments. The services of licensed MFTs are included in the medical assistance program in over 35 states, the majority of which allow direct reimbursement of services provided to beneficiaries.

Thank you for your time and consideration. AAMFT urges your support of SB 105.
Please feel free to contact me at levans@aamft.org or via phone at 703-253-0453 if you
need additional information or have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Laura A. Evans". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Laura" being more prominent than the last name "Evans".

Laura Evans
State Government Affairs Manager
American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy

CC: Senate Finance Committee

Karen Cunningham
880 H Street, Suite 202
Anchorage, AK 99502
March 25, 2018

Office of Senator David Wilson
Senate District D
Alaska State Capitol, Room 115
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

Dear Office of Senator David Wilson:

I am a life-long Alaskan, the third generation to live in this community, proudly raising my family's fourth generation here! I am also a Licensed Marital and Family Therapist (LMFT); this letter is in support of SB 105.

I graduated with a Master's Degree in Psychology with a specialty in Marital and Family Therapy in January, 2013. While many of my out-of-state colleagues quickly started working at agencies and in clinics, it wasn't until late October, 2013, that I was able to start working in the field. In Alaska, as in many states, a candidate for LMFT must first apply for an associate license, a Marital and Family Therapy Associate (MFT-A). In order to apply for this associate license, a Board Approved Supervisor must agree to commit to a minimum of two (2) years providing individual and group supervision. Although current Alaska Statute requires that only LMFT's can supervise MFT-A's, there is a very limited number of Board Approved Supervisors, in fact there are only 18 in the entire State. Some of these Board Approved Supervisors are either semi-retiring, or have too full a case load to take on another supervisee. Thankfully, I eventually found a supervisor willing and able to work with me. We created a plan and submitted it to the Board.

Between January and October of 2013, I was unable to practice in my chosen field, had student loan payments due, and was becoming more and more discouraged. Other new graduates in similar situations decided to apply for a different license that was more easily attainable. These graduates are educated in Marriage and Family Therapy, yet working under a different type of license and seeing different people for different needs. The field of Marriage and Family Therapy lost some very good candidates.

There are some unnecessary hurdles along the way from graduate to full licensure. SB 105 eliminates one very big challenge and I thank you for sponsoring this bill! Increasing the number of disciplines eligible for group supervision will give new graduates many more choices and opportunities, and there will be less of a brain drain.

I also fully support the inclusion of LMFT's in the list of optional services for Medicaid. This change in the statutes will enable families in need to access mental health services that had previously not been available. The State of Alaska is demonstrating its commitment to providing a full range of medical and mental health services to families and children in need.

Marital and Family Therapy has been proven to be as effective or more effective in treating depression, anxiety, and other mood disorders. Working within the family for substance use and abuse yields excellent results for sobriety. Working with new parents on handling the stress of a new baby prevents child abuse. Marriage and Family Therapists work with families on handling conflict, decreasing the likelihood of domestic violence. There is ongoing research showing strong connections with others (another area in which LMFT's are highly trained) can be the most important factor for heart health and even longevity! These are just a few facts about the efficacy of Marriage and Family Therapy. Availability of and access to LMFT's will help reduce some of the chronic issues Alaska faces, notably domestic violence, substance abuse, and parenting issues, both short term and long term. The only possible outcome of passing this bill is that Alaskan families will be happier and healthier.

I thank you for your hard work sponsoring this bill and offer my full support moving forward.

Sincerely,

Karen Cunningham

Discovery Cove Recovery and Wellness Center, LLC

Eagle River / Kodiak

11901 Business Blvd. Suite 201

Eagle River, AK 99577

(907) 694-5550 * FAX (907) 694-5570

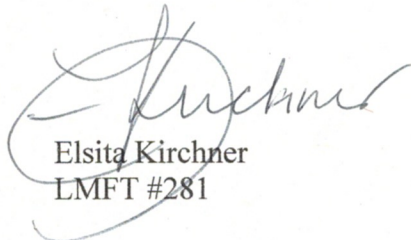
Re: Senate Bill 105

February 6, 2018

To Whom It May Concern:

I urge you to press Senate Bill 105. Without this legislation Marriage and Family Therapists are unable to work with Medicaid patients. These patients need services that we can provide if we are allowed.

Sincerely,



Elsita Kirchner
LMFT #281

Discovery Cove Recovery and Wellness Center, LLC

Eagle River / Kodiak

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Eagle River, AK 99577

(907) 694-5550 * FAX (907) 694-5570

February 8, 2018

To The Senate Labor and Commerce Committee,

I am writing this letter in support of Senate Bill 105. This bill will allow Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist to provide therapy services to Medicaid patients. Having worked in both community mental health and private practice settings I can say the number one group of people who are having difficulty finding services are Medicaid recipients as there are so few providers able to provide services to this vulnerable population we are increasing their likelihood of getting services in a timely manner. Timely outpatient services significantly decrease the likelihood of more expensive crisis services, which I think we can all agree with our state's budget woes would serve our state's best interest.

Curry Long, LMFT



LMFT
2-8-18

Discovery Cove Recovery and Wellness Center, LLC

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Eagle River, AK 99577

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March 13th, 2018

Representative Ivy Spohnholz & Senator David Wilson;


I am in favor of the passing of HB 353 and SB 105 to expand opportunity to help Alaskans. The Bills clarify current confusing language in the Statute and expands resources for MFT Supervisors. Also the recognition of Marital Family Therapists in Title 47 will provide more mental health services to Alaskans.

The recognition and inclusion of Marital and Family Therapists in Title 47 will result in the following:

- Increase in additional providers who are already recognized in State Statutes (e.g. 08, 21)
- Increased availability of services for Alaskans who cannot receive services or are on a waiting list under current Mental Health paradigms
- Increased intervention by Mental Health professionals who understand and specialize in Systemic approaches, which are Traditional Values of Alaskans
- Increase in Opioid treatment services
- Increased specialized professionals available to serve those effected by Domestic Violence
- Increase in State savings due to decrease in higher level interventions and expenses (e.g. E.R., crisis physician visits, API, hospitalization)
- Decrease in overwhelmed agencies by availing more options
- Decrease in frustrated Alaskans who want help but cannot get services
- Decrease in Opioid Addicted Alaskans

Thank you for your time and energy to consider and approve these Bills.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Justin Dobrenz LMFT". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the initials "LMFT" written in a slightly different style at the end.

Justin Dobrenz, LMFT

Gary Zepp

From: Mercy Dennis <info@mercydennis.com>
Sent: Sunday, March 25, 2018 5:30 PM
To: Gary Zepp
Subject: SB 105

As a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist (LMFT) in the state of Alaska I ask that you support Senate Bill 105 regarding Marital and Family Therapy Licensing and Services. These changes in the licensing statutes will enable consumers to access mental health services that previously have not been available to them. The mental health consumers it will serve are frequently the most underserved population in our community.

Also, in SB 105, the requested changes will allow applicants for the LMFT license to broaden their ability to meet their required supervision hours by being able to except group supervision hours from other licensed mental health professionals. This is particularly important to Marriage and Family Therapy Associates (MFT-A) who are working in mental health agencies as they complete their clinical licensing requirements. These professionals are very valued employees for these community agencies and this statute change will encourage MFT-As to seek employment in these agencies.

This is a benefit to the community agencies, the MFT-As and the consumers of mental health services.

Mercy Dennis LMFT
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