



Alaska Association of Marriage and Family Therapists

Linda R. King, President

Phone: 907 862-2352 • Fax: 907 522-7088 • E-Mail: lrking@hotmail.com
www.akamft.org

February 9, 2011

Governor Sean Parnell
Governor of the State of Alaska
Juneau, Alaska

Dear Governor Sean Parnell,

I am writing to you on behalf of the Board of the Alaska Division of the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy.

We have been a part of the Alaska Mental, Behavioral, and Family Health system for many years. Our profession is recognized throughout the United States and in Alaska. Alaska has its own licensing Board of Marriage and Family Therapy in the Division of Professional Licensing. Our scope of practice includes most all mental health issues with a specialized perspective involving relationships (AS 08.63.900(5)(A) (B)). From this perspective, our colleagues are trained and treat all manner of mental health issues from a systems approach/awareness.

It has come to our attention through colleagues and Department of Health and Human Services publications that Alaska has a significant decrease in mental health providers. It appears that the State paradigm overlooks available and capable therapists already within the State. This can easily be corrected by amending AS47.07.030 to include licensed marriage and family therapists (LMFTs) and by changing the Medicaid regulations to pay fee for services to those professionals acknowledged on AS47.07.030.

We implore you to support the necessary changes to include LMFTs. The following is based on our research and analysis of the issues:

- Psychologists and licensed clinical social workers (LCSWs) are already acknowledged.
- The reimbursement rate for LMFTs would be the same as LCSWs.
- If there was an increase of beneficiary services by LCSWs the fiscal impact would be the same as if LMFTs were added to the State Medicaid Provider List.
- There are already LMFTs in State granted programs that currently bill Medicaid for acknowledged services rendered. This margin appears to represent two-thirds of current LMFTs.

- Of the total number of LMFTs in Alaska, many would not elect to become providers for a variety of reasons. It could be due to low reimbursement rates, a large number of existing clients, paperwork hassle, etc. It would be good to know the percentage of total LCSWs who are Medicaid eligible. For instance, in one state that I looked at last month, only 24% of the total number of licensed professional counselors (LPCs), who are Medicaid eligible in this state, elected to participate in Medicaid. Many LMFTs will elect not to participate in Medicaid.
- Almost all of the LMFTs would be treating clients who would receive treatment anyway even if LMFTs were not in the plan. In other words, most MFT services would merely be in substitution for the services of another provider type. Russell Crane, Ph.D. at Brigham Young University describes this "substitution effect" in terms of MFT access to Medicare (see supplemental attachment). This study conservatively estimates the substitution effect at 50%. I could argue that this percentage would actually be higher than 50%.
- The administrative cost of adding LMFTs would be zero or very minimal. LMFTs would be performing the same services as LCSWs. There would not be expansion of Medicaid services, but merely the addition of a new profession that enrollees would be allowed to access.
- Also, according to State Statute AS21.36.090(d) it is unfair discrimination to a beneficiary of a group health insurance policy to exclude providers who are recognized State licensed providers, which includes LMFTs.
- In addition, the Governor's office has taken a stance against domestic violence (DV). The etiology of DV is complex, involving more than the issue of anger. The common thread in DV is relational conflict learned through multi-generational patterns. What professional therapist is better equipped to help with mental health/relational issues of DV than a LMFT.

Now is the time to fix this dilemma. The need is current, the problem is real, the desire to change is echoed throughout the State, and the fiscal impact is minimal compared to other more intrusive interventions that result without inclusion (e.g., law enforcement, hospitalization, court involvement, etc). Therefore, we of the Board of the Alaska Association for Marriage and Family Therapy encourage supporting any Bills or Regulation changes to avail all LMFTs to serve Medicaid Beneficiaries whether it be in an agency or private practice setting.

Linda R. King, LMFT
 Linda R. King, LMFT
 President of AK AMFT

Board Members: John Pagan, President Elect : Cynthia Boliver, Treasurer: Richard Kurtz,
 Secretary, Ken McCarty, Markie Blummer, Michael Murray, Members at large

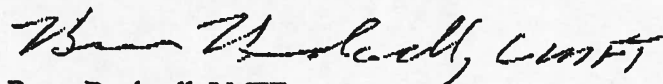
Bruce Bardwell, LMFT
PO Box 3343
Homer, AK 99603
bruce.bardwell@gmail.com
907-235-9241

Re: SB118

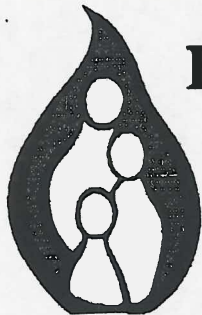
To Senator Davis

I am a licensed Marriage and Family Therapist in the state of Alaska (Lic#- 235), and I have been a practicing therapist for 30 years both in Alaska and in Washington State. I am writing in support of SB118 which would reimburse LMFTs in Alaska for serving Medicaid clients. I currently work as an outpatient therapist at The Center in Homer with therapists who have MSW, LPA, LPC, designations, and I have found that we all have had a similar level of training and supervision. There isn't one type of therapy degree that is better, more rigorous, or more competent than another. By granting reimbursement to LMFTs, citizens of Alaska will be given a greater selection of competent therapists to choose from which will lead to better outcomes for all. Thank you for your support of this legislation.

Sincerely,



Bruce Bardwell, LMFT



Human Relations Center

1600 A Street, Suite 104
Anchorage, Alaska 99501

Phone: (907) 272-5500

Fax: (907) 277-0985

Val Anderson
Office Manager

Sandy Bhargava, LPC
Licensed Professional Counselor

Vicki Heinz, LMFT
Licensed Marriage & Family Therapist

Karen Senzig, Psy. D.
Licensed Clinical Psychologist

Glen Williams, Ph. D.
Licensed Clinical Psychologist

March 3, 2011

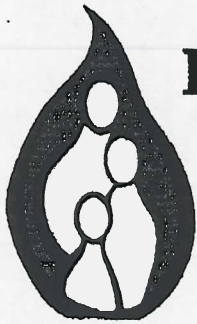
Dear Senator Davis,

I am a licensed marriage and family therapist practicing in the Anchorage area for over 20 years. I am writing for your support to include me and my fellow marriage and family therapists in AS47.07.030. I feel that this will give the Medicaid recipients in Alaska seeking behavioral health services more choice and availability when their need is greatest. I also feel that it expresses parity among the licensed mental health providers.

Thank you so much for your interest and attention to this important legislation.

Vicki Heinz, LMFT

Vicki Heinz, LMFT
Past President AKAMFT



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Sandy Bhargava, LPC
Licensed Professional Counselor

Vicki Heinz, LMFT
Licensed Marriage & Family Therapist

Karen Senzig, Psy. D.
Licensed Clinical Psychologist

Glen Williams, Ph. D.
Licensed Clinical Psychologist

April 4, 2011

Dear Senator Bettye Davis,

It was nice to meet you and thank you personally for your sponsorship and support of HB118 recently at Baxter Elementary. We feel that it is important that our profession is recognized as one of the key providers of family therapy in Alaska. It is also important that our clientele who have Medicaid insurance have options when they are in need of mental health care. Due to the shortage of Medicaid providers available, they are often met with long waiting lists or in some cases fly to other locations in the state to receive care at an even greater cost.

Thank you for your support of HB118.

Sincerely,

Vicki Heinz, LMFT
Past President AKAMFT

Sen. Bettye Davis

From: Mike Magowan [mmagowan@gci.net]
Sent: Monday, April 04, 2011 9:56 PM
To: Sen. Bettye Davis
Subject: SB118

RECEIVED

APR 05 2011

Senator Davis. I support SB118. Thank you very much for your efforts. Michael Magowan, LMFT

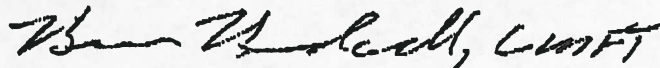
Bruce Bardwell, LMFT
PO Box 3343
Homer, AK 99603
bruce.bardwell@gmail.com
907-235-9241

Re: SB118

To Senator Davis

I am a licensed Marriage and Family Therapist in the state of Alaska (Lic#- 235), and I have been a practicing therapist for 30 years both in Alaska and in Washington State. I am writing in support of SB118 which would reimburse LMFTs in Alaska for serving Medicaid clients. I currently work as an outpatient therapist at The Center in Homer with therapists who have MSW, LPA, LPC, designations, and I have found that we all have had a similar level of training and supervision. There isn't one type of therapy degree that is better, more rigorous, or more competent than another. By granting reimbursement to LMFTs, citizens of Alaska will be given a greater selection of competent therapists to choose from which will lead to better outcomes for all. Thank you for your support of this legislation.

Sincerely,


Bruce Bardwell, LMFT

RECEIVED

Mercy Dennis M.A., L.M.F.T.

MAR 24 2011

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March 23, 2011

Attention: Senator Davis

Regarding: AS47.07.030.

First I want to thank you for authoring legislation that incorporates Licensed Marriage and Family Therapists As Eligible Medicaid Providers under Statute AS47.07.030. It is important that consumers have the right to choose from those Alaska licensed professionals who are qualified to provide the services they need.

Licensed Marriage and Family Therapists have been a part of the Alaska Mental Health System for many years. Our scope of practice includes treating most all mental health issues, as do Licensed Clinical Social Workers and Psychologists, who are already acknowledged in AS47.07.030.

From my experience of talking with prospective clients there is a shortage of Medicaid Eligible Mental Health Providers in the state. Since I am not authorized to see Medicaid clients I always try to refer those folks to qualified professionals who are authorized. I find this pool of available providers to be very small and I hear the frustration of those inquiring clients. Including LMFTs to the list of eligible Medicaid providers will help correct this shortage and better serve our Alaskan Mental Health Consumers.

Sincerely,

Mercy Dennis
Mercy Dennis, LMFT

Mercy Dennis, LMFT

1010 West Tenth Avenue Anchorage, Alaska 99501 (mailing address)
2605 Denali, Suite 203 Anchorage Alaska 99503 (office address)
907-278-5522 phone / 907-258-6613 fax / info@mercydenis.com

Sen. Bettye Davis

From: Michael Weingarten [michaelweingarten@yahoo.com]
Sent: Wednesday, March 16, 2011 12:03 PM
To: Sen. Bettye Davis
Subject: LMFT Support

RECEIVED

MAR 16 2011

I am a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist. I have been an Anchorage resident since 1979.

LMFT's are well trained to treat many types of mental health problems, including many issues that arise in the Medicaid population.

I understand that you are moving forward to assist us with legislation which incorporates Licensed Marriage and Family Therapists As Eligible Medicaid Providers under AS47.07.030

I appreciate your efforts!

Sincerely,
Michael Weingarten, MA, LMFT
Anchorage, AK

Michael Weingarten
3705 Arctic Blvd. #1516
(District 22) 99503

Therapists Bill

Sen. Bettye Davis

From: Vicki Heinz [vickiheinz@hotmail.com]
Sent: Monday, March 21, 2011 6:51 PM
To: Celeste Hodge; Ken McCarty; Linda King; Leon Weber; joann.young@premera.com
Cc: Sen. Bettye Davis
Subject: RE: An Act providing medical assistance reimbursement for the services of licensed marriage & family therapists

Celeste,

I am past president of AKAMFT and a board member. I am in support of the draft legislation. I would like to thank Senator Davis again for her support of our occupation and this legislation.

Vicki Heinz, LMFT

From: Celeste Hodge@legis.state.ak.us
To: discoverycove@alaska.net; vickiheinz@hotmail.com; lrking@hotmail.com; ltw@alaska.net; joAnn.Young@PREMERA.com
CC: Senator_Bettye_Davis@legis.state.ak.us
Date: Mon, 21 Mar 2011 15:08:45 -0800
Subject: An Act providing medical assistance reimbursement for the services of licensed marriage & family therapists

Senator Davis would like you to review the attached draft legislation "An Act providing medical assistance reimbursement for the services of licensed marriage and family therapists" and email if you support or have concerns with the legislation. Please call me if you have questions. Thanks.

Celeste Graham-Hodge, Committee Aide

Senate Health & Social Services Committee

Office of Senator Bettye Davis

716 W. 4th Avenue #400

Anchorage, Alaska 99501

(907) 269-4049; (907) 269-0148 (Fax)

(While in Session)

State Capitol

Juneau, Alaska 99801

(907) 465-4906; (907) 465-3756 (Fax)

Toll Free: 1-800-770-3822

Celeste_Hodge@legis.state.ak.us

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Celeste Hodge

From: Linda King [lrking@hotmail.com]
Sent: Monday, March 21, 2011 7:32 PM
To: Celeste Hodge
Subject: Re: An Act providing medical assistance reimbursement for the services of licensed marriage & family therapists

Celeste

I am the president of the AKAMFT. I regret I was out of town and couldn't personally tell senator Davis thank you! It looks great please accept our appreciation for all your work.

With regards,
Linda King, LMFT

Sent from Linda's iPhone

On Mar 21, 2011, at 4:08 PM, Celeste Hodge <Celeste_Hodge@legis.state.ak.us> wrote:

Senator Davis would like you to review the attached draft legislation "An Act providing medical assistance reimbursement for the services of licensed marriage and family therapists" and email if you support or have concerns with the legislation. Please call me if you have questions.
Thanks.

Celeste Graham-Hodge, Committee Aide

Senate Health & Social Services Committee

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<Providing Medical Assistance Reimb LMFT.pdf>



Alaska Association of Marriage and Family Therapists

Linda R. King, President

Phone: 907 862-2352 • Fax: 907 522-7088 • E-Mail: lrking@icloudmail.com
www.akamft.org

March 3, 2011

Dear Senator Davis,

I am writing to you on behalf of the Board of the Alaska Division of the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy and as a clinician.

I am the clinical supervisor for Cornerstone Clinic in Anchorage. For years we have been fighting the battle of not being able to see Medicaid clinics. We have pursued several psychiatrists with no success. We are unique clinic that includes family practice medical facility and a counseling center. Two years ago equipped a play therapy room to better serve children. We have two therapists who have received extra training in play therapy. Every week we turn away children who desperately could use our services because we cannot take Medicaid. These children are referred to agencies with waiting list and are eventually seen. The Medicaid dollar is being spent on many of these children, but unfortunately it takes our qualified therapists out of the loop because they don't choose to work for one the few agencies available to these clients.

Please seriously consider putting Marriage and Family Therapist on the Statute AS47.07.030.

Sincerely,

Linda R. King, LMFT

Linda R. King, LMFT
President of AK AMFT

Sen. Bettye Davis

From: Karla Gelhar [karlamarie507@gmail.com]
Sent: Monday, April 11, 2011 10:04 AM
To: Sen. Bettye Davis
Subject: Include MFTs in SB118

Dear Senator Davis,

I am writing to support including Marriage and Family Therapists (MFTs) in the SB118 bill. I live in Ketchikan and am in graduate school to become a licensed marriage and family therapist in Alaska. There is such a need for holistic care of children, parents and couples here in Ketchikan and all over the state. Please include MFTs in the bill so everyone has the opportunity to access support for their family and relationships. Often times a child will be referred for services and progress will occur, however, the child is sent right back to the hurting environment of the family. Children, parents and couples need support as a group as well as individually. Please include MFTs in the SB118 bill to support Alaska's families.

On a side note. When choosing marriage and family therapy I was shocked that the masters program was 92 credit hours versus a masters in counseling psychology was only 52 credits. MFTs are the 'newest kid on the block' and have extensive training and supervision and have earned equal status within licensed mental health professionals.

Thank you for the work you do on behalf of Alaskan families,

Karla M Gelhar
Ketchikan, AK
karlamarie507@gmail.com
[907.821.1543](tel:907.821.1543)

LAURA PATIN LMFT, LPC

11517 Old Glenn Highway Suite 204
Eagle River, AK 99577
(907) 694-2314
laurapatin@ci.net
laurapatin@yahoo

April 4, 2011

Attention: Senator Dyson
Regarding: AS47.07.030.

First I want to thank you for authoring legislation that incorporates Licensed Marriage and Family Therapists As Eligible Medicaid Providers under Statute AS47.07.030. It is important that consumers have the right to choose from those Alaska licensed professionals who are qualified to provide the services they need.

Licensed Marriage and Family Therapists have been a part of the Alaska Mental Health System for many years. Our scope of practice includes treating most all mental health issues, as do Licensed Clinical Social Workers and Psychologists, who are already acknowledged in AS47.07.030.

From my experience of talking with prospective clients there is a shortage of Medicaid Eligible Mental Health Providers in the state. Since I am not authorized to see Medicaid clients I always try to refer those folks to qualified professionals who are authorized. I find this pool of available providers to be very small and I hear the frustration of those inquiring clients. Including LMFTs to the list of eligible Medicaid providers will help correct this shortage and better serve our Alaskan Mental Health Consumers.

Sincerely,

L. Patin LMFT-LPC

Laura Patin, LMFT, LPC

Ken McCarty, LMFT
Licensed Marriage Family Therapist
Discovery Cove Recovery and Wellness Center
2975 Mill Bay Rd. Suite B - Kodiak, AK 99615
Phone: (907) 487-2223 * Fax (907) 487-2229

3/10/11

Bettye Davis
Senator
Juneau, Alaska

Dear Senator Betty Davis,

Thank you for serving our community in Anchorage and this Great State of Alaska. Senator Stevens knows about this issue. Senator Stevens is informed and interested in this issue but as the President of the Senate does not believe that it is his role to present a bill at this time. The proposal is amending AS 47.07.030 to include Licensed Marriage Family Therapists to the list of eligible, viable professionals to serve Alaskans who are beneficiaries of Medicaid.

The problem is Medicaid and the current State Statutes and Regulations that avail Medicaid benefits. The problem is providers and not having enough of them who are willing to take Medicaid payments and demands. The problem is State Statutes that currently disqualify licensed professional therapist because of their license, though such licenses are recognized by the State of Alaska, but not recognized on a Statute "role call." The problem is State regulations that inhibit professional therapists from even being a candidate to serve Medicaid beneficiaries even if their name is on the "Statute role call list."

In October 2010, according a representative of the Department of Behavioral Health (D.B.H.) that there is a 28% decline in therapists throughout the State. When asked if that decline is due to funding the answer was no, rather due to the inability to find qualified therapists. The current system with the D.B.H. appears to exclusively serve agency recipients who qualify under their selective criteria. This process eliminates providers throughout the State that can fill the need.

I am a licensed Marriage Family Therapist in Kodiak. I came to Kodiak to direct / team lead a D.B.H. authorized agency. I was asked to come to integrate mental health and substance treatments. In March of 2009 I departed the agency and was led to start a private practice named Discovery Cove. Over the nearly two years I had multiple requests from constituents in Kodiak if I could see them for counseling. Their funding source was Medicaid. The consistent theme was these individuals did not want to go to the "only Medicaid service center in town." I explored avenues to be a Medicaid provider but to no avail. I was told on several occasions by D.B.H. that these constituents do have options...the single service center in town. To have only one place to be served is not an option.

In February 2010 Discovery Cove began the medicated assisted treatment (Suboxone) for those addicted to opiates. The efficacy of the program is in the collaboration of medication and psycho-social group / individual treatment. We are the only provider in Kodiak that is doing this treatment. The psychiatrist who serves Discovery Cove flies in monthly to serve these clients. The psycho-social groups occur twice a week for beginning clients and once a month for those in continuing care clients. To date we have served 23 clients. Discovery Cove can bill Medicaid for services with the psychiatrist but we cannot bill for services for the psycho-social groups and individual sessions, as they are conducted by licensed professionals not on the "roll call list." The D.B.H. approved agency refuses to do this treatment and even proclaims the treatment ineffective. The D.B.H. endorses the treatment and this year the State of Alaska Annual School of Addiction Conference theme is Rx Treatment, which I have been honored again as a guest speaker. Therefore, those constituents who are Medicaid beneficiaries who cannot afford "out-of-pocket" treatment are flown to Anchorage by Medicaid for their treatment.

The D.B.H. has informed me that Discovery Cove is the only private practice agency in the State of Alaska that is offering a comprehensive (physician / mental health) program for clients. I have tried to help other private practice facilities and agencies establish similar programs but they have not been able to duplicate what we have created. The week of Thanksgiving 2010 I received a telephone call from the Anchorage Neighborhood Health Clinic informing me that they were shutting down their Suboxone program for various reasons, none of which was the ineffectiveness of the treatment. I have been asked by several entities in Anchorage if I could come and create a treatment center, like Kodiak's Discovery Cove. I am courting the idea. The problem again is with treating the Medicaid beneficiaries. I already have a Licensed Professional Counseling (LPC) who is experienced in substance treatment, who is eager to help. I have been looking for offices near The People Mover stops. The need is great. There are few treatment providers and those in existence are already at their maximum capacity to receive clients. The Anchorage Neighborhood Health Clinic just let go of some 70 people this past year who were in their program. Opportunity to serve exists but the Statute and Regulation guidelines are thwarting that service. Even this week as we move forward to establishing another office in Alaska in the Anchorage area I have been receiving call throughout Alaska of people willing to fly in for services.

The issue that I am present does not exclusively affect Ken McCarty and Discovery Cove. I know of providers in Fairbanks, Talkeetna, Nome, Anchorage, and Juneau who are willing to be Medicaid providers but because of D.B.H. rules of being a private practice provider and/or having the "wrong" professional license they cannot serve. I believe that the 28% void of therapist can be easily filled without soliciting outside of Alaska. Over 2,000 years ago a saying was made of "the harvest is plentiful the workers are few, pray to the Lord of the harvest for more workers." It is my belief that just as in the case then as it is now that the issue is not that there are an insufficient amount of workers to help in the harvest rather restrictive paradigms that inhibit. I implore you to change the paradigm and unleash the workers.

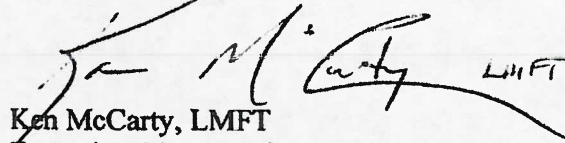
Necessity to resolve the lack of licensed mental health professionals:

- Amend Statute AS 47.07.030 to include licensed Marriage Family Therapists (LMFT) and Licensed Professional Counselors (LPC)
- Amend State of Alaska Medicaid Regulations to pay private providers who are acknowledged in the amended State Statute
- Amend the Department of Behavioral Health to acknowledge and be more provider friendly with private providers who are willing to receive Medicaid

- Allow for Fee for Service paradigms with allowance of multiple available providers in a given area thus availing true options and stimulation of healthy professionalism.

I have been blessed with a thriving private practice to serve and bring healing to the community of Kodiak. I am a provider for many managed care insurance programs. I am frequently solicited by the military to come provider services in Anchorage and Fairbanks. I am honored to serve those who have the means to pay and have done pro-bono work for those who cannot. I am honored to serve on the Governor Board of Marriage Family Therapists. And, as you have read, I am grieved by those Medicaid beneficiaries who are restricted to receive appropriate health services whether it be for mental health or substance treatment.

I am at your service,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ken McCarty', with the letters 'LMFT' written in a smaller, less stylized font to the right of the signature.

Ken McCarty, LMFT
Executive Director of Discovery Cove
(907) 487-2223

MAUREEN CHRISTENSEN, M.ED.

Licensed Marital and Family Therapist

1107 8 0 8 2011
RECEIVED

April 7, 2011


Attention: Senator Davis
Senator Egan
Senator Ellis
Senator Meyer
Senator Dyson

Regarding: SB1118

Thank you for your support of SB118. Licensed Marriage and Family Therapists are qualified to be providers of mental health services for individuals and families who are Medicaid eligible.

I appreciate your support for this legislation.

Sincerely,


Maureen Christensen LMFT