



Capitol Network News

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Weekly Edition, Friday, May 3, 1996

KEATING VETOES FAMILY THERAPIST BILL

By Brandon Beard
Staff Writer

■(GIT) Governor Frank Keating this week vetoed a bill (HB1066) that would have included licensed marital and family therapist (LMFT) in the definition of "licensed mental health professional."

"This bill diminishes the current safeguards to assure the protection of the public and the mentally ill from potentially inaccurate mental health evaluation by under qualified persons," was the statement in the governor's veto message.

The mental health community is split on the issue, with proponents of the governor's action saying the LMFTs do not have enough course-work and training to merit their inclusion in the definition.

"We support the governor's veto," said Dr. Bob Sanders, spokesman for the Department of Mental Health. "We believe academic standards for provision of mental health services need to be very stringent, especially since we are entering the era of managed care."

LMFTs must have a minimum of a

master's degree in mental health, behavioral science or counseling related field. A master's degree in marital and family counseling is also acceptable, though few schools offer the degree program.

Also, 300 hours of internship and practicum work is required, along with a two-year period of supervised practice and a final examination.

Joan Faught, director of counseling for Sunbeam Family Services in Oklahoma

City, said educational requirements for LMFTs are not as stringent as requirements for other mental health professionals.

While numerous degrees can lead to LMFT licensure, there is only one degree (master's of social work) that satisfies the requirements to become a licensed social worker (LSW).

A two-year program, LSW licensure requires some 1050 hours of internship work, two years of supervised practice and an exam, which Faught said, is equivalent to exams taken by attorneys and certified public accountants.

David Fournier, chairman of the LMFT

Advisory Committee to Commissioner of Health Dr. Jerry Nida, blames resistance to the initiative on mental health professionals not wanting to let others into the fold. He accused them of trying to "block other people from doing mental health work."

"If you look at the problems people have when they go to psychologists and social workers, almost 80 percent of those problems are relationship issues," he said.

Faught said, while she knows many LMFTs, she thinks it is inappropriate for one group to claim exclusivity to marital and family therapy.

"There are many accountability and accreditation issues," she said. "There is a niche for them, but social workers have been dealing with marital and family problems for years. For someone else to come in and say 'we are the only group that can deal with family issues' — that is not an accurate statement."

Fournier said LMFTs will continue to adapt and increase their educational requirements, in hopes of attaining recognition.

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Dr. Bob Sanders

LAW AGENCIES ASK FOR MORE PAY

By Shawn Ashley
Staff Writer

■(GIT) Two state law enforcement agencies have asked the General Conference Committee's subcommittee on judicial, public safety and law enforcement services for pay raises in addition to the statewide plan already approved by the legislature and governor.

The requests came last week when the subcommittee heard presentations from eight of the 14 agencies under its jurisdiction.

The subcommittee is working to determine how to divide an estimated \$52 million in additional revenue projected for the 1997 fiscal year. Approximately \$30 million of that money is already dedicated to the

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