
National Association of Social Workers

Testimony: SB 290

January 24, 2012

Senate Public Health and Welfare

Presented by Sky Westerlund, LMSW

The Kansas Chapter, National Association of Social Workers (KNASW) is the professional association working on behalf of the profession and practice of social work in Kansas. Social workers have been licensed to practice at three levels of expertise since 1976. These are the baccalaureate (LBSW), the master (LMSW), and the clinical social worker (LSCSW). There are over 6000 social workers practicing in the majority of the 105 counties in Kansas. The practice of social work is inclusive across many fields of interest including adoptions, addictions, child welfare, corrections, hospitals and health, hospice and palliative care, mental health, community based prevention, schools, veterans and military, and more.

The implementation of the new Addictions Practice Act has encountered challenges and as implementation continues, other wrinkles may develop.

Social Workers at all three levels of expertise are authorized to offer counseling to individuals, families and groups. The counseling can include working with people who have substance abuse problems or other addictions. The Master Social Worker and the independent Clinical Social Worker are authorized to provide diagnosis through the Diagnostic Statistics Manual (DSM), which includes substance use disorders. Many social workers choose to dedicate their social work career to working in the field of addictions.

Some of these social workers may now want to identify themselves as an "addictions counselor." This title license does not alter the scope of practice that they already have with their social work license. However, in order to call themselves an addictions counselor, they must be licensed as an addictions counselor or clinical addictions counselor. The current language resulted in requiring these already licensed professionals to go back to school and obtain redundant supervision for the title of addictions counselor.

SB 290 corrects this problem.

- The amended language permits a Licensed Baccalaureate Social Worker (LBSW) to obtain the title license of Addictions Counselor (LAC) by having a minimum number of coursework on substance abuse and passing the addictions national examination. Since the LBSW and the LAC are baccalaureate level licenses, the minimum number of coursework in substance abuse must not be a burden to meet. KNASW and the eight schools of Social Work in Kansas anticipate working closely with the BSRB to establish this detail.
- The independent Licensed Specialist Clinical Social Worker (LSCSW) will be able to obtain the title license of Clinical Addictions Counselor by presenting an attestation and passing the national addictions examination.

These amendments represent a compromise worked out between the long time licensed professions under the BSRB and the newly licensed addictions counselors, meeting the needs of both.

KNASW supports the amended language and asks for your support as well.