

REVENUE: No revenue impact
FISCAL: Fiscal statement issued

Action: Do Pass
Vote: 4 - 1 - 0
Yeas: Bonamici, Dingfelder, Kruse, Prozanski
Nays: Whitsett
Exc.: 0
Prepared By: Bill Taylor, Counsel
Meeting Dates: 2/1, 2/16

WHAT THE MEASURE DOES: Allows the Department of Corrections (DOC) and the Oregon Youth Authority (OYA) to certify, pursuant to rule, employees to provide mental health services to inmates.

ISSUES DISCUSSED:

- One standard for public another for DOC and OYA as it relates to mental health care providers
- Mental health agencies have the exemption that DOC and OYA seek

EFFECT OF COMMITTEE AMENDMENT: No amendment.

BACKGROUND: The Oregon Department of Corrections and the Oregon Youth Authority are constitutionally required to provide mental health care to inmates with mental illness. The DOC has at any one time 14,000 inmates; the OYA has 900. At least fifty percent of the populations are diagnosed with a mental disorder. Thirty-two percent of DOC's population need ongoing mental health care and twenty-four percent have a persistent mental illness such as schizophrenia, a bipolar disorder or major depression. The DOC employs 48 mental health specialists to treat inmates.

In 2009 the Oregon Legislative Assembly enacted SB 177, a bill that prohibits a person from providing clinical social work services in this state without a license. The measure also established minimum qualifications for licensed clinical social workers. Employees of local community mental health agencies were exempted from the minimum qualifications. Both DOC and OYA initially believed that they were within the mental health agency exception. However, their legal counsel does not believe this is the case. Consequently, only thirteen of the department's mental health specialists are licensed under the new standards.