

From the Desk of
Rep. Jim Thompson



TO: Oregon State Senate
FR: Coalition of Oregon Professional Associations for Counseling and Therapy
DA: Regular Session 2013
RE: Support for SB 491, Improving Access to Mental Health Services

SB 491 Increases Access to Mental Health Services for Oregon Teens in Crisis

The Coalition of Oregon Professional Associations for Counseling and Therapy (COPACT) represents Licensed Professional Counselors (LPCs) and Licensed Marriage and Family Therapists (LMFTs) across Oregon. LPCs and LMFTs are highly trained Masters level mental health providers who offer psychotherapy services to individuals of all ages, families, couples, groups, and organizations. These professions have been licensed to practice in Oregon Statutes since 1991.

For almost 30 years, Oregon Law has granted teens 14 years of age or older the ability to consent to a variety of outpatient mental health and chemical dependency treatment services. No testimony was offered in either chamber siting specific problems with the existing law. Currently, unless clear clinical indications of risk are identified, providers must involve the parents before the end of treatment. Under the ORS, only physicians, psychologists, nurse practitioners, and Licensed Clinical Social Workers are authorized to provide services. **SB 491 would simply add Licensed Professional Counselors and Licensed Marriage and Family Therapists to the list of licensed providers.**

Teens seek help for a variety of issues such as, drug or alcohol abuse, depression or anxiety. Some parents are abusive, neglectful or facing challenges of their own that can create barriers for teens seeking help. Following a divorce, teens can sometimes get caught up in parental conflict, making it hard to obtain permission for counseling services.

We know suicide is the leading cause of death among Oregonians aged 10 to 24. It is of the utmost importance that we make sure teens have full access to quality mental health care. **Creating parity between all providers of mental health services helps ensure an LPC or LMFT is not forced to turn away a teen in crisis because of a lack of ability to provide services.**

The bill enjoyed bi-partisan support in the Senate and passed the Floor 26-3 with 1 excused. **It simply creates parity among mental health care providers and continues to help support access to mental health services and appropriate treatment for troubled teens.**

SB 491 is good for Oregon families and teens!

We respectfully ask you to vote "Aye" on Senate Bill 491