



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 allowed teens 14 years of age or older to consent to a variety of outpatient mental health and chemical dependency treatment services. Under current law, services provided by a physician, a psychologist, a nurse practitioner, and a Licensed Clinical Social Worker are authorized in statute. **SB 491 would simply add Licensed Professional Counselors and Licensed Marriage and Family Therapists to statute.**

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.**

SB 491 is good for Oregon families and teens. It creates parity among mental health care providers and helps ensure access to mental health services and supports appropriate treatment for troubled teens.

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