

REMOVING BARRIERS TO COUNSELING SERVICES FOR AT-RISK YOUTH

HB3709 Representative Litesa Wallace

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Youth struggle with discussing their problems with their parents or guardians. For this reason, Illinois law allows minors over age 12 to consent to counseling and talk therapy on their own. However, these young people are limited to only 5 visits, which are far too few for youth that may not yet be ready to talk to their parents about their struggles. This legislation allows providers to use their judgment and experience to continue serving these struggling youth.

What does this legislation do?

- ✓ Increase the number of counseling visits available to minors 12 years old and older from 5 sessions to 8 sessions.
- ✓ Permit the counselor to provide additional sessions after the initial set of sessions if:
 - ➔ it is in the minor's best interest to continue services and
 - ➔ parental notification would be detrimental to the minors wellbeing.

Who will benefit from this expansion?

- ➔ Unaccompanied homeless minors
- ➔ LGBTQ youth
- ➔ Minors in need of early intervention for mental health crisis
- ➔ Minors in conflict with their family

Why do we need this legislation?

- ✓ **Quality.** Counselors can better serve minors in need with the increased number of visits by having time to build trust, reduce harm, and facilitate difficult conversations within families.
- ✓ **Trust.** Counselors report that 5 sessions limits minors' ability to trust in the process and in their counselor. Eight sessions plus more if needed gives providers and the minors the space to develop this connection.
- ✓ **Harm Reduction.** The counselor will provide minors with more tools to make good and safe decisions and reduce harm.
- ✓ **Strengthen Families.** Counseling can give minors the courage to talk to their parents or guardian in a productive way and strengthen their bond.



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