



Florida Counseling Association

A Branch of the American Counseling Association

SB 1440/HB 945: Children's Mental Health

The Florida Counseling Association supports these identical bills (HB 945 and SB 1440) that identify and collaboratively support children who frequently are hospitalized for crisis services. It helps to create and coordinate mobile response teams to provide prevention and earlier intervention services for children in need of crisis response.

- ▶ From the committee summary:
 - HB 945 & SB 1440 requires the Department of Children and Families (DCF) and the Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA) to identify individuals under age 18 who are the highest users of crisis stabilization services, collaboratively take action to meet the behavioral health needs of such children and submit a joint quarterly report during Fiscal Years 2020-2022 to the Legislature.
 - The bill also requires DCF to contract with managing entities for mobile response teams throughout the state to provide additional services minors. The bill requires the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) to participate in the planning process for promoting a coordinated system of care to provide mental health services to minors.
 - The bill requires DCF and AHCA to assess the quality of care provided in crisis stabilization units to children and adolescents who are high utilizers of such services and submit a joint report to the Governor and Legislature. The bill also requires AHCA to regularly test managed care plan provider network databases to ensure that behavioral health providers are accepting enrollees and confirm that enrollees have access to behavioral health systems.
- ▶ Between the 2001-02 through the 2017-18 state fiscal years, Baker Act examinations of children increased nearly 141 percent. The sharpest increase in committals – 84 percent – was among children between the ages of 14 to 17, according to a 2017 state report. But even the committals of children between the ages of 5 and 10 grew 76 percent.
- ▶ The most common involuntary examination for children is initiated by law enforcement which can be more upsetting for the child and their families. With the use mobile response teams that include collaboration with mental health professionals and law enforcement, the opportunity for a positive and therapeutic experience could improve for these children in need.

We ask that you support these bills providing coordinated crisis response services for the children of Florida. Please contact us below with any questions or concerns.

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