

ECR Legislative Newsletter

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Bills to Watch

Here are three bills that have recently been introduced in Des Moines that could reduce the barriers to professionals entering and staying in our field.

SSB3116 -- ECR Registration: For

This bill increases the amount of monies a mental health and disability services (MHDS) regional combined account may have before payments to the MHDS region are reduced and an MHDS region is disqualified from receiving funding from an MHDS incentive fund. The bill provides that, for fiscal years beginning on or after July 1, 2023, an MHDS region's cash reserves cannot exceed 10 percent of the actual expenditures from the combined account for the fiscal year preceding the fiscal year in progress. Under current law, for fiscal years beginning on or after July 1, 2023, an MHDS region's cash reserves cannot exceed 5 percent of the actual expenditures from the combined account for the fiscal year preceding the fiscal year in progress.

House File 2157 -- ECR Registration: Undecided

This bill requires the University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics (UIHC) to administer a state-funded psychiatric residency program in cooperation with the state mental health institutes at Independence and Cherokee and the Iowa Medical and Classification Center at Oakdale. The UIHC shall expand the psychiatric residency program to provide additional residency positions in excess of those approved under the federal residency cap.

Participating residents shall complete the majority of their psychiatric training at one of the state mental health institutes or the Iowa Medical and Classification Center at Oakdale. The program shall award 12 additional residency positions for each class of residents and preference in the awarding of residency positions shall be given to candidates who are residents of Iowa, attended and earned an undergraduate degree from an Iowa college or university, or attended and earned a medical degree from a medical school in Iowa.

HF2137 -- ECR Registration: Undecided

This bill establishes a mental health practitioner loan repayment program. The bill requires the Iowa Student Aid Commission to establish a mental health practitioner loan repayment program for the purposes of providing loan repayments for mental health practitioners who agree to practice in service commitment areas for at least five years and meet the requirements of the bill. "Mental health practitioner" means a psychiatrist, a psychologist, a mental health professional, a physician assistant practicing under the supervision of a psychiatrist, or a psychiatric advanced registered nurse practitioner. Under this bill, the qualifying practitioners will be eligible for varying amounts of loan forgiveness.

(The ECR registers on various legislative bills as "For, Against, or Undecided". Generally, we register Undecided on a bill when it is introduced and initially considered by the legislature. This gives us more leverage to work with our legislators to constructively amend or change bills. Generally, it does not mean that we have no opinion on a bill -- but that we are waiting until the right time to take a definitive stand on the issue.)



The Status of our Field Today

Iowa faces a chronic shortage of mental health and disability services professionals across the care continuum. To address this systemic problem, our own MH/DS region **hosted a workforce taskforce** to talk about issues and brainstorm solutions; is **providing cash assistance (through grants)** to providers for hiring and retaining staff; is **in support of new certificate programs** at community colleges which will educate more people faster, and get them into the workforce faster; is **spearheading a marketing and advertising campaign** to let people know they can enter this rewarding field; and **is in support of a Human Services Apprenticeship program**.

Apprenticeship Program

There is currently an apprenticeship program for human services that was approved in Iowa, but it has never been implemented. The MH/DS Regions are already working with Iowa Workforce Development on this issue and would welcome assistance from the legislature to move the apprenticeship program forward.

Governor Reynolds is in favor of developing more apprenticeships across the various sectors of Iowa's economy, including health care. All 14 MH/DS regions are advocating for the legislature to support the Governor's initiative and include funding for a Human Services Apprenticeship.

What can you do? Let your representatives know that an apprenticeship for human services should be included in their budget considerations.

How to Contact Legislators

Want to have a say in the legislative process? Not quite sure how to go about it? Here are some tips for contacting your legislators to make your voice heard on important mental health and disabilities issues.

Find Your Legislators

- Visit the legislative website at legis.iowa.gov to find the legislators in your area, and their contact info. Also, you can contact your county auditor and/or the Secretary of State's office at sos.iowa.gov.
- Connect on social media with your legislators and follow them.
- Write to legislators via email.
- Visit your legislators in person at the State Capitol.
- Sign up for your legislators' newsletters.
- Attend your legislators' local event when advertised in your area.

Put Your Thoughts Together

- Identify your issue -- What do you want? Define the problem and focus on the solution.
- Know the issue and gather facts to talk knowledgeably.
- Write down your thoughts before you communicate.
- Share a personal story on the issue.
- Be polite. Say thank you!
- Follow up after your communication.



Providing services for 9 Iowa counties:

Benton, Bremer, Buchanan, Delaware, Dubuque, Iowa, Johnson, Jones, Linn