Legislative Briefing

OHA Health Policy Action

Your guide to proposed health legislation, what we think about it, and what we're doing about it.

March 2013

H.B. 5740; *An Act Concerning Uniform Standards and the Provision of Mental Health Services at School-based Health Centers*

What is this bill about?

H.B. 5740 will provide a uniform design and make-up for school-based health centers that include mental health services and require the development of a mechanism for the school nurse and the school-based health center to work collaboratively. These health center's primary focus in prevention, early intervention and risk reduction, are uniquely situated to play a pivotal role in this area. The creation of uniform standards for screening and management of behavioral health issues, as well as the logical integration of school nurses with them, will create a system of consistent and efficient care as students progress through the school system. Student utilization of School Based Health Centers is now routine in our schools, and for many students, represents their primary source of healthcare, and should be included in the evolution of our behavioral health system in Connecticut.

We recognize the bill is limited in that children age 16 and older must consent to the disclosure of any clinical records related to sensitive information, mental health and substance use included.

What are the implications of this bill for healthcare consumer advocacy?

Our office receives numerous calls regarding mental health, and is at present a significant problem that needs to be addressed.

Please refer all media, agency, and legislator inquiries to Vicki Veltri

Talking Points

1. OHA is aware of this proposed legislation and submitted written public testimony **in support** of this bill.
2. This legislation will redirect focus on prevention and early intervention of mental health services at a school setting..
3. OHA supports this legislation based on the principles of access to quality healthcare, evidence-based improvements to our healthcare system, and reduction of mental health frequency and severity in the future.

OHA represents the collective voice of 3.5 million healthcare consumers. For our state to be competitive, our people must be healthy. Our mission is to • assure managed care consumers have access to medically necessary healthcare • educate consumers about their rights and responsibilities under health insurance plans • inform legislators of problems consumers face in accessing care and propose solutions to those problems.