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## **MARRIAGE COUNSELORS: EXPERIENCE REQUIREMENTS**

**House Bill 5259 as introduced  
First Analysis (11-5-97)**

**Sponsor: Rep. Gerald Law  
Committee: Health Policy**

### ***THE APPARENT PROBLEM:***

Prior to January 1, 1996, marriage and family therapists were licensed under the Occupational Code. Public Act 126 of 1995 placed licensure of marriage and family therapists within the Public Health Code (for more information, see the House Legislative Analysis Section's analysis of House Bill 4317 dated 7-18-95). Licensing requirements include a master's or Ph.D. in marriage and family therapy from an accredited program, or a master's or Ph.D. in an alternate discipline (e.g., social work or psychology) and completion of prescribed graduate level course work in related subject matters. Applicants for licensure are also required to complete 1,000 hours of direct client contact after completion of a degree in marriage and family therapy or completion of the alternate degree and course work. Under the Public Health Code, this provision has been interpreted as meaning that for those with alternate degrees, the required graduate level course work must be completed before any of the direct client contact hours are earned. However, the Michigan Board of Marriage and Family Therapists had previously given the provision a broader interpretation and allowed people to begin acquiring the required 1,000 hours while they completed the additional course work. Legislation has been proposed to clarify that the direct client contact hours may be obtained either after or concurrently with the completion of the prescribed course work for those with degrees other than a graduate degree in marriage and family therapy.

after obtaining the degree, and those with a Ph.D. would

### ***THE CONTENT OF THE BILL:***

The bill would amend the Public Health Code to specify that for those applicants for licensure as a marriage and family therapist who do not have a degree in marriage and family therapy, the required 1,000 hours of direct client contact could be obtained after completing a master's or Ph.D. in another discipline and either after or concurrently with completing the mandatory graduate level course work prescribed by the code. (The bill would not affect those with a degree in marriage and family therapy from an accredited program. Those with a master's degree would still complete the 1,000 hours

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be exempt from the 1,000-hour requirement. Further, the 1,000 hours are in addition to the 300 hours of direct client contact required to be completed during a person's educational program.)

MCL 333.16909

**FISCAL IMPLICATIONS:**

The House Fiscal Agency reports that the bill would have no state or local fiscal impact. (11-4-97)

**ARGUMENTS:**

**For:**

The bill would result in a clarification of the code, and not a change per se. According to a representative from the Michigan Association for Marriage and Family Therapy, the Michigan Board of Marriage and Family Therapists historically interpreted the provision, when it was part of the Occupational Code, as meaning that an applicant with a degree in a discipline other than marriage and family therapy (such as social work) could earn the direct client contact hours either after completing the required course work or at the same time. However, after the licensing regulations were moved from the Occupational Code to the Public Health Code, it was then interpreted as meaning that the direct client contact hours could only be earned after completing the additional course work. This has proved not only to be a hardship, but has also delayed licensure as a marriage and family therapist for many. It is important to remember that the additional graduate level course work is required for people who already have advanced degrees. Many are social workers, psychologists, and licensed professional counselors who are seeking dual licensure to broaden the services they can offer to clients, and so have already completed practicums as part of their graduate programs. In addition, some may have completed up to 2,000 clinical hours as a requirement for their present license or certification. Therefore, it makes sense to permit applicants to count the direct client contact hours earned during the time they are completing the required course

work towards the 1,000-hour requirement for licensure. The bill would not institute a new policy but instead would clarify the language, and in so doing would reestablish the historical interpretation of the provision.

**POSITIONS:**

The Department of Consumer and Industry Services supports the bill. (10-27-97)

The Michigan Association for Marriage and Family Therapy supports the bill. (11-4-97)

Analyst: S. Stutzky

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■ This analysis was prepared by nonpartisan House staff for use by House members in their deliberations, and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.