

Kansas Chapter
National Association of Social Workers
...advocating for the practice and profession of Social Work...

Testimony: SB 149

February 20, 2013

Senate Commerce

Presented by Sky Westerlund, LMSW

The Kansas Chapter, National Association of Social Workers (KNASW) is the professional association working on behalf of the profession and practice of social work in Kansas. Social workers have been licensed to practice at three levels of expertise since 1976. These are the baccalaureate (LBSW), the master (LMSW), and the independent clinical social worker (LCSW). There are over 6000 social workers practicing in the majority of the 105 counties in Kansas. The practice of social work is inclusive across many fields of interest including adoptions, addictions, child welfare, corrections, domestic violence, hospitals and health, hospice and palliative care, mental health, community based prevention, problem gambling, schools, veterans and military, and more. We work in both the public and private sectors of the economy.

SB 149, if passed, could create an avenue to early and lasting intervention, if carried out properly.

If an individual is using drugs and/or abusing alcohol, the chances are very high that there is a co-occurring mental health and substance use disorder. A positive drug test is an indicator of a potential problem. The only way to accurately determine what is occurring with the individual is to conduct a comprehensive clinical evaluation to determine the correct diagnosis and subsequent interventions and supports necessary.

The comprehensive clinical evaluation would identify the primary mental health problems as well as the secondary substance use disorder. Many persons who abuse alcohol and/or drugs are doing what is known as 'self-medicating.' It is a coping mechanism that helps to cover up the primary problems that cause pain and overwhelming emotions in a person's life. Unless the underlying cause of the substance abuse behavior is addressed, it is unlikely that an individual will achieve lasting recovery.

Service intervention and support that is integrated and comprehensive can lead to a stronger, healthier individual. That means a parent who would be better equipped and prepared to turn their attention and activity to nurturing and taking care of their child or children.

We are asking for a balloon amendment that would require the individual who tested positive for drug use to receive a comprehensive clinical evaluation and correct diagnosis that would determine the appropriate treatment. The success of intervention and services means the right treatment at the right time with the right provider.

Thank you.

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