

**LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE
BILL ANALYSIS**

Bill No: SB 484

49th Legislature, 1st Session, 2009

Short Title: Marriage & Family Therapists in Schools

Sponsor(s): Senator Cisco McSorley

Analyst: James Ball

Date: February 16, 2009

Bill Summary:

SB 484 amends the *Public School Code* to add marriage and family therapists to the list of instructional support providers to be licensed by the Public Education Department (PED) to provide educational support services in schools.

Fiscal Impact:

SB 484 carries no appropriation.

Issues:

According to the analysis of the Office of Education Accountability, the school counseling and family support services provided in public schools would benefit from including the specific expertise of marriage and family therapists (MFTs) as licensed instructional support providers.

The PED analysis of SB 484 states that the federal government has designated marriage and family therapy as a core mental health profession along with psychiatry, psychology, social work, and psychiatric nursing. Currently 48 states support and regulate the profession by licensing or certifying MFTs. New Mexico licenses MFTs through the Regulation and Licensing Department based on standards that are substantially equivalent to those of the American Association of Marriage and Family Therapists Clinical Membership (AAMFT), which include:

- a period of post-degree supervised clinical experience following graduation from an accredited program; and
- passing a state licensing exam or the national examination for MFTs conducted by the AAMFT.

Background:

According to PED, MFTs are mental health professionals with graduate training in marriage and family therapy and at least two years of clinical experience in psychotherapy and family systems. They are licensed to diagnose and treat mental and emotional disorders within the context of marriage, couples, and family systems. They evaluate and treat mental and emotional disorders, health and behavioral problems, and address a wide array of relationship issues within the context of the family system. MFTs, through individual and family sessions, treat a wide range of serious clinical problems including:

- depression;
- children's conduct disorders;
- adolescent drug abuse;
- childhood autism;
- chronic physical illness in children;
- anxiety and other psychological problems; and
- child-parent relationships.

Related Bills:

None as of 02-16-2009.