

- SUBJECT:** Requiring psychological associates to practice under a psychologist
- COMMITTEE:** Public Health — favorable, without amendment
- VOTE:** 10 ayes — Kolkhorst, Naishtat, Coleman, J. Davis, Gonzales, Hopson, Laubenberg, McReynolds, Truitt, Zerwas
- 0 nays
- 1 absent — S. King
- WITNESSES:** For — Brian Stagner, Texas Psychological Association; (*Registered, but did not testify:* Ollie Seay and David White, Texas Psychological Association)
- Against — Betty Dawson, Claudia Ghio, Texas Association of Psychological Associates (TAPA); Pamela Parsons; Norma Salazar-Cortez
- On — Sherry Lee, Carl Settles, Texas State Board of Examiners of Psychologists
- BACKGROUND:** Occupations Code, ch. 501 regulates and governs the practice of psychology.
- Sec. 501.259 requires that the Texas State Board of Examiners of Psychologists set standards for the issuance of licenses to psychological personnel who hold a master’s degree that is primarily psychological in nature and that the board designate these individuals by a title that includes the word “psychological” followed by a noun such as “associate,” “assistant,” “examiner,” or “technician.”
- DIGEST:** HB 858 would amend Occupations Code, sec. 501.259, adding subsection (c) to prohibit a psychological associate from engaging in the practice of psychology unless the psychological associate practiced under the supervision of a psychologist.
- The bill would take effect September 1, 2009.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

HB 858 would codify existing Texas State Board of Examiners of Psychologists (TSBEP) rules and national American Psychological Association (APA) guidelines. Both state and national guidelines have historically and uniformly held that the practice of psychology is a doctoral level profession.

Licensed psychological associates (LPAs) are individuals who have obtained master's degrees in psychology. LPAs have repeatedly petitioned the board to change the rules to allow independent practice by LPAs. The board has consistently declined to do so, respecting industry-wide practices. The bill would finally resolve the issue by codifying the long-held state and national guidelines requiring an LPA to work under the supervision of a licensed psychologist.

HB 858 is not a scope bill. The bill would in no way change the authority or scope of either licensed psychologists or licensed psychological associates. It would simply codify existing practice.

**OPPONENTS
SAY:**

LPAs are well trained, licensed professionals with master's degrees in psychology and clinical psychology and yet continue to be restricted from practicing. The state is in the midst of a mental health crisis due to shortages of mental health professionals to provide services. LPAs can provide needed services, especially in rural areas of the state. But the requirement of supervision by a licensed psychologist can mean that LPAs often cannot provide services because there is no psychologist in the area to supervise them. Therefore, more and more LPAs are unable to find work while more and more areas of the state go unserved. In the midst of a crisis, where waiting periods to obtain psychological evaluations are long, this valuable category of professionals is being underutilized, and the bill would assure that this underutilization continued.

NOTES:

The companion bill, SB 484 by Deuell, was left pending in the Senate Health and Human Services Committee on March 12.