

- SUBJECT:** Allowing psychologists to delegate certain care to interns
- COMMITTEE:** Public Health — favorable, without amendment
- VOTE:** 11 ayes — Crownover, Naishtat, Blanco, Coleman, Collier, S. Davis, Guerra, R. Miller, Sheffield, Zedler, Zerwas
- 0 nays
- WITNESSES:** For — Megan Mooney, DePelchin Children’s Center; James Bray and Amanda Phillips, Texas Psychological Association; (*Registered, but did not testify*: Katharine Ligon, Center for Public Policy Priorities; Jason Sabo, DePelchin Children’s Center; Cate Graziani, Mental Health America of Texas; Miryam Bujanda, Methodist Healthcare Ministries; Lee Johnson, Texas Council of Community Centers; David White, Texas Psychological Association; Casey Smith, United Ways of Texas)
- Against — (*Registered, but did not testify*: Kulvinder Bajwa, Harris County Medical Society)
- On — Charles Walker
- BACKGROUND:** Occupations Code, sec. 501.351(a) provides licensed psychologists with general authority to delegate certain psychological tests or services to a provisionally licensed psychologist, a newly licensed psychologist not eligible for managed care panels, a person who holds a temporary license to practice, and a person qualified to take the provisional license exam who has had at least two years of supervised experience in psychological services.
- Under sec. 501.351(b), the test or service delegated by the licensed psychologist is considered for billing purposes to have been delivered by the delegating psychologist.
- DIGEST:** HB 1924 would allow a licensed psychologist to delegate certain tests or services to a person enrolled in a formal internship, as provided by the

rules of the Texas State Board of Examiners of Psychologists.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2015.

**SUPPORTERS
SAY:**

HB 1924 would amend current law to allow psychologists to delegate certain tasks to supervised pre-doctoral interns so the psychologists could bill for those services. The majority of Texas counties are experiencing a mental health workforce shortage. Granting psychologists the ability to bill intern services to insurance companies would give psychologists an added incentive to take on pre-doctoral interns, which could help to increase the number of qualified mental health professionals in the state.

Many doctoral students have difficulty finding somewhere to intern when they reach the internship stage of their training. Allowing psychologists to bill for certain services provided by interns would incentivize them to provide internships. This also could increase the likelihood that they would provide paid internships. Earning a small income as interns could help psychology doctoral students to reduce their overall debt, which can be substantial.

When they complete their training, most newly licensed psychologists choose to practice near the area where they interned. Increasing the number of internships available in Texas would encourage more of the state's graduates to practice here instead of exporting the state's educational investment elsewhere. At the same time, increasing the available internships would encourage more out-of-state students to intern in Texas, which also would make them more likely to practice here and eventually contribute to the state's mental health workforce.

HB 1924 would not expand the scope of services that psychologists could delegate. Currently, these psychologists already may delegate certain tests and services to others who are eligible to perform them. The bill simply would allow the supervising psychologist to delegate these tasks to interns and to bill for their work.

**OPPONENTS
SAY:**

HB 1924 could decrease the quality of psychological care in the state and lead to the erosion of care over time. A patient who paid to visit a licensed

psychologist instead might end up seeing an intern. The state should limit the tests and services psychologists may delegate to maintain high-quality care in Texas and minimize scope-of-practice concerns.

NOTES: The companion bill, SB 546 by Eltife, was referred to the Senate Health and Human Services Committee on February 18.