

Assembly Bill No. 1454

CHAPTER 642

An act to amend Section 5777 of, and to add Section 5405 to, the Welfare and Institutions Code, relating to mental health.

[Approved by Governor September 17, 2002. Filed with Secretary of State September 18, 2002.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 1454, Thomson. Mental health: facilities: criminal record checks: managed care.

Existing law requires the State Department of Mental Health to perform various functions and duties with respect to the provision of mental health services, including the licensure of facilities that provide these services.

This bill would require the department, prior to the initial licensure or first renewal of a license of any person to operate or manage certain facilities, upon the employment of any direct care staff, as defined, and prior to the provision of services by a direct care contractor, to submit fingerprint images and related information pertaining to these persons to the Department of Justice for purposes of a criminal record check, as prescribed.

This bill would also require the department, except under specified circumstances, to deny any application for any license, suspend or revoke any existing license, and disapprove or revoke any employment or contract for direct services, if the applicant, licensee, direct care staff person, or direct services contractor has been convicted of or incarcerated for specified crimes within the preceding 10 years.

Existing law requires the State Department of Mental Health to implement managed mental health care for Medi-Cal beneficiaries through fee-for-service or capitated rate contracts with mental health plans, including individual counties, counties acting jointly, any qualified individual or organization, or a nongovernmental entity. Existing law further requires that contract renewal be on an annual basis.

This bill would instead provide that, at the discretion of the department, each contract may be renewed for a period not to exceed 3 years.



The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

SECTION 1. Section 5405 is added to the Welfare and Institutions Code, to read:

5405. (a) This section shall apply to each facility licensed by the State Department of Mental Health, or its delegated agent, on or after January 1, 2003. For purposes of this section, “facility” includes psychiatric health facilities, as defined in Section 1250.2 of the Health and Safety Code, licensed pursuant to Chapter 9 (commencing with Section 77001) of Division 5 of Title 22 of the California Code of Regulations and mental health rehabilitation centers licensed pursuant to Chapter 3.5 (commencing with Section 781.00) of Division 1 of Title 9 of the California Code of Regulations.

(b) (1) (A) Prior to the initial licensure or first renewal of a license on or after January 1, 2003, of any person to operate or manage a facility specified in subdivision (a), the department shall submit fingerprint images and related information pertaining to the applicant or licensee to the Department of Justice for purposes of a criminal record check, as specified in paragraph (2), at the expense of the applicant or licensee. The Department of Justice shall provide the results of the criminal record check to the department. The department shall determine whether the applicant or licensee has ever been convicted of a crime specified in subdivision (c). The department shall submit fingerprint images and related information each time the position of administrator, manager, program director, or fiscal officer of a facility is filled and prior to actual employment for initial licensure or an individual who is initially hired on or after January 1, 2003. For purposes of this subdivision, “applicant” and “licensee” includes the administrator, manager, program director, or fiscal officer of a facility.

(B) Commencing January 1, 2003, upon the employment of any direct care staff the department shall submit fingerprint images and related information pertaining to the direct care staff person to the Department of Justice for purposes of a criminal record check, as specified in paragraph (2), at the expense of the direct care staff person or licensee. The Department of Justice shall provide the results of the criminal record check to the department. The department shall determine whether the direct care staff person has ever been convicted of a crime specified in subdivision (c). The department shall notify the licensee of these results.

(C) Commencing January 1, 2003, any contract for services provided directly to patients or residents shall contain provisions to ensure that the direct services contractor submits to the department fingerprint images and related information pertaining to the direct services contractor for



submission to the Department of Justice for purposes of a criminal record check, as specified in paragraph (2), at the expense of the direct services contractor or licensee. The Department of Justice shall provide the results of the criminal record check to the department. The department shall determine whether the direct services contractor has ever been convicted of a crime specified in subdivision (c). The department shall notify the licensee of these results.

(2) If the applicant, licensee, direct care staff person, or direct services contractor specified in paragraph (1) has resided in California for at least the previous seven years, the department shall only require the submission of one set of fingerprint images and related information. The Department of Justice shall charge a fee sufficient to cover the reasonable cost of processing the fingerprint submission. Fingerprints submitted pursuant to this subdivision include fingerprints taken by the use of live scan technology. When requested, the Department of Justice shall forward one set of fingerprint images to the Federal Bureau of Investigation for the purpose of obtaining any record of previous convictions or arrests pending adjudication of the applicant, licensee, direct care staff person, or direct services contractor. The results of a criminal record check provided by the Department of Justice shall contain every conviction rendered against an applicant, licensee, direct care staff person, or direct services contractor, and every offense for which the applicant, licensee, direct care staff person, or direct services contractor is presently awaiting trial, whether the person is incarcerated or has been released on bail or on his or her own recognizance pending trial. The department shall request subsequent arrest notification from the Department of Justice pursuant to Section 11105.2 of the Penal Code.

(c) (1) The department shall deny any application for any license, suspend or revoke any existing license, and disapprove or revoke any employment or contract for direct services, if the applicant, licensee, employee, or direct services contractor has been convicted of or incarcerated for a felony defined in subdivision (c) of Section 667.5 of, or subdivision (c) of Section 1192.7 of, the Penal Code, within the preceding 10 years.

(2) The application for licensure or renewal of any license shall be denied, and any employment or contract to provide direct services shall be disapproved or revoked, if the criminal record of the person includes a conviction in another jurisdiction for an offense that, if committed or attempted in this state, would have been punishable as one or more of the offenses referred to in paragraph (1).

(d) (1) The department may approve an application for, or renewal of, a license, or continue any employment or contract for direct services, if the person has been convicted of a misdemeanor offense that is not a



crime upon the person of another, the nature of which has no bearing upon the duties for which the person will perform as a licensee, direct care staff person, or direct services contractor. In determining whether to approve the application, employment, or contract for direct services, the department shall take into consideration the factors enumerated in paragraph (2).

(2) Notwithstanding subdivision (c), if the criminal record of a person indicates any conviction other than a minor traffic violation the department may deny the application for license or renewal, and may disapprove or revoke any employment or contract for direct services. In determining whether or not to deny the application for licensure or renewal, or to disapprove or revoke any employment or contract for direct services, the department shall take into consideration the following factors:

(A) The nature and seriousness of the offense under consideration and its relationship to the person's employment, duties, and responsibilities.

(B) Activities since conviction, including employment or participation in therapy or education, that would indicate changed behavior.

(C) The time that has elapsed since the commission of the conduct or offense and the number of offenses.

(D) The extent to which the person has complied with any terms of parole, probation, restitution, or any other sanction lawfully imposed against the person.

(E) Any rehabilitation evidence, including character references, submitted by the person.

(F) Employment history and current employer recommendations.

(G) Circumstances surrounding the commission of the offense that would demonstrate the unlikelihood of repetition.

(H) The granting by the Governor of a full and unconditional pardon.

(I) A certificate of rehabilitation from a superior court.

(e) Denial, suspension, or revocation of a license, or disapproval or revocation of any employment or contract for direct services specified in subdivision (c) and paragraph (2) of subdivision (d) are not subject to appeal, except as provided in subdivision (f).

(f) After a review of the record, the director may grant an exemption from denial, suspension, or revocation of any license, or disapproval of any employment or contract for direct services, if the crime for which the person was convicted was a property crime that did not involve injury to any person and the director has substantial and convincing evidence to support a reasonable belief that the person is of such good character as to justify issuance or renewal of the license or approval of the employment or contract.



(g) A plea or verdict of guilty, or a conviction following a plea of nolo contendere shall be deemed a conviction within the meaning of this section. The department may deny any application, or deny, suspend, or revoke a license, or disapprove or revoke any employment or contract for direct services based on a conviction specified in subdivision (c) when the judgment of conviction is entered or when an order granting probation is made suspending the imposition of sentence.

(h) (1) For purposes of this section, “direct care staff” means any person who is an employee, contractor, or volunteer who has contact with other patients or residents in the provision of services. Administrative and licensed personnel shall be considered direct care staff when directly providing program services to participants.

(2) An additional background check shall not be required pursuant to this section if the direct care staff or licensee has received a prior criminal history background check while working in a mental health rehabilitation center or psychiatric health facility licensed by the department, and provided the department has maintained continuous subsequent arrest notification on the individual from the Department of Justice since the prior criminal background check was initiated.

(3) When an application is denied on the basis of a conviction pursuant to this section, the department shall provide the individual whose application was denied with notice, in writing, of the specific grounds for the proposed denial.

SEC. 2. Section 5777 of the Welfare and Institutions Code is amended to read:

5777. (a) (1) Except as otherwise specified in this part, a contract entered into pursuant to this part shall include a provision that the mental health plan contractor shall bear the financial risk for the cost of providing medically necessary mental health services to Medi-Cal beneficiaries irrespective of whether the cost of those services exceeds the payment set forth in the contract. If the expenditures for services do not exceed the payment set forth in the contract, the mental health plan contractor shall report the unexpended amount to the department, but shall not be required to return the excess to the department.

(2) If the mental health plan is not the county’s, the mental health plan may not transfer the obligation for any mental health services to Medi-Cal beneficiaries to the county. The mental health plan may purchase services from the county. The mental health plan shall establish mutually agreed-upon protocols with the county that clearly establish conditions under which beneficiaries may obtain non-Medi-Cal reimbursable services from the county. Additionally, the plan shall establish mutually agreed-upon protocols with the county for the conditions of transfer of beneficiaries who have lost Medi-Cal eligibility



to the county for care under Part 2 (commencing with Section 5600), Part 3 (commencing with Section 5800), and Part 4 (commencing with Section 5850).

(3) The mental health plan shall be financially responsible for ensuring access and a minimum required scope of benefits, consistent with state and federal requirements, to the services to the Medi-Cal beneficiaries of that county regardless of where the beneficiary resides. The department shall require that the definition of medical necessity used, and the minimum scope of benefits offered, by each mental health contractor be the same, except to the extent that any variations receive prior federal approval and are consistent with state and federal statutes and regulations.

(b) Any contract entered into pursuant to this part may be renewed if the plan continues to meet the requirements of this part, regulations promulgated pursuant thereto, and the terms and conditions of the contract. Failure to meet these requirements shall be cause for nonrenewal of the contract. The department may base the decision to renew on timely completion of a mutually agreed upon plan of correction of any deficiencies, submissions of required information in a timely manner, or other conditions of the contract. At the discretion of the department, each contract may be renewed for a period not to exceed three years.

(c) (1) The obligations of the mental health plan shall be changed only by contract or contract amendment.

(2) A change may be made during a contract term or at the time of contract renewal, where there is a change in obligations required by federal or state law or when required by a change in the interpretation or implementation of any law or regulation. To the extent permitted by federal law and except as provided under subdivision (r) of Section 5778, if any change in obligations occurs that affects the cost to the mental health plan of performing under the terms of its contract, the department may reopen contracts to negotiate the state General Fund allocation to the mental health plan under Section 5778, if the mental health plan is reimbursed through a fee-for-service payment system, or the capitation rate to the mental health plan under Section 5779, if the mental health plan is reimbursed through a capitated rate payment system. During the time period required to redetermine the allocation or rate, payment to the mental health plan of the allocation or rate in effect at the time the change occurred shall be considered interim payments and shall be subject to increase or decrease, as the case may be, effective as of the date on which the change is effective.

(3) To the extent permitted by federal law, either the department or the mental health plan may request that contract negotiations be reopened



during the course of a contract due to substantial changes in the cost of covered benefits that result from an unanticipated event.

(d) The department shall immediately terminate a contract when the director finds that there is an immediate threat to the health and safety of Medi-Cal beneficiaries. Termination of the contract for other reasons shall be subject to reasonable notice of the department's intent to take that action and notification of affected beneficiaries. The plan may request a public hearing by the Office of Administrative Hearings.

(e) A plan may terminate its contract in accordance with the provisions in the contract. The plan shall provide written notice to the department at least 180 days prior to the termination or nonrenewal of the contract.

(f) Upon the request of the Director of Mental Health, the Director of the Department of Managed Health Care may exempt a mental health plan contractor or a capitated rate contract from the Knox-Keene Health Care Service Plan Act of 1975 (Chapter 2.2 (commencing with Section 1340) of Division 2 of the Health and Safety Code). These exemptions may be subject to conditions the director deems appropriate. Nothing in this part shall be construed to impair or diminish the authority of the Director of the Department of Managed Health Care under the Knox-Keene Health Care Service Plan Act of 1975, nor shall anything in this part be construed to reduce or otherwise limit the obligation of a mental health plan contractor licensed as a health care service plan to comply with the requirements of the Knox-Keene Health Care Service Plan Act of 1975, and the rules of the Director of the Department of Managed Health Care promulgated thereunder. The Director of Mental Health, in consultation with the Director of the Department of Managed Health Care, shall analyze the appropriateness of licensure or application of applicable standards of the Knox-Keene Health Care Service Plan Act of 1975.

(g) The department, pursuant to an agreement with the State Department of Health Services, shall provide oversight to the mental health plans to ensure quality, access, and cost efficiency. At a minimum, the department shall, through a method independent of any agency of the mental health plan contractor, monitor the level and quality of services provided, expenditures pursuant to the contract, and conformity with federal and state law.

(h) County employees implementing or administering a mental health plan act in a discretionary capacity when they determine whether or not to admit a person for care or to provide any level of care pursuant to this part.

(i) If a county chooses to discontinue operations as the local mental health plan, the new plan shall give reasonable consideration to



affiliation with nonprofit community mental health agencies that were under contract with the county and that meet the mental health plan's quality and cost efficiency standards.

(j) Nothing in this part shall be construed to modify, alter, or increase the obligations of counties as otherwise limited and defined in Chapter 3 (commencing with Section 5700) of Part 2. The county's maximum obligation for services to persons not eligible for Medi-Cal shall be no more than the amount of funds remaining in the mental health subaccount pursuant to Sections 17600, 17601, 17604, 17605, 17606, and 17609 after fulfilling the Medi-Cal contract obligations.

