

Jeri Stevens PhD, LCPC, CCS
1580 Pond Rd
Sidney, Me 04330

207-872-7558

LD 394:Chapter 117

Dear Senator Rafferty, Representative Brennan, and respected members of the Education and Cultural Affairs committee,

I am Jeri Stevens, PhD, LCPC, CCS. I am halftime assistant professor and clinical coordinator in the counseling graduate program at Husson University as well as clinical supervisor for school counselors and school behavioral health clinicians.

I am asking you to vote **in favor of LD394 with suggested recommendations** by my peers, colleagues and myself.

Chapter 117 was originally developed in the '80s when these rules made sense. At the time, there were only school counselors, who served all students with a general focus on academic, career and social emotional guidance and counseling, and social workers, who served the special education needs to provide 'social work services" through then what was called PET. Psychologists were primarily providing testing services and LCPC's were not yet licensed in the state. Therefore the use of "social work services" and "Social Worker" were the primary words to describe behavioral health.

Fast forward to 2023, the services in the school are complex and have changed drastically from the 1980's. Some of the language in the current proposals are not clear enough and put some clinicians at risk of working out of their scope. For example, to call a Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor (LCPC) a Social Worker puts the LCPC in a complicated place of calling themselves something other than what their credential are. See PL 233 **An Act To Address Licensure of Behavioral Health Practice in the State.**

School "guidance" counselors are highly trained and skilled graduate level counselors who work under certification 075. In the current proposal, the reference to school counselors only identifies "support" when they are trained to and provide a wide varied of services to include but not limited to College/Academic, Career and Social Emotional Guidance and Counseling to all students. My request is that the "school counseling" language in Chapter 117 clearly reflect the vast roles of the school counselor.

The proposed rules for LD 394 continue to use the words "social work services" and "Social Worker", creating a very minimal scope. Social Workers along with the other clinically licensed behavioral health providers work in the schools providing behavioral and mental health services to general education and special education. It is recommended that the words "social worker services" be changed to better define the scope of service and that the provider list be included to reflect all the clinical licensed providers. A possibility is to call they service "behavioral and mental health services" to be provided by a qualified licensed clinician.

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It appears that some readers believe that section 4008 privilege communication is new to this chapter. It is not new, and it is crucial for student development. Adding “social workers/behavioral health providers” to this language is only consistent with meeting the needs of all students as well as consistent with their respective regulator licensure laws.

I am happy to participate in the work session or to be available for any future discussions. Thank you for taking the time to read this testimony.

Kindly,

Jeri W Stevens, PhD, LCPC, CCS

Jeri Stevens PhD, LCPC, CCS
Clinical Supervisor
Husson University Assistant Professor / Clinical Coordinator