

Senator Jim Abeler, Chair
Human Services Reform Finance and Policy Committee
Minnesota State Senate
March 22, 2022

Chair Abeler and Members of the Committee

On behalf of Lakeland Mental Health Center, I am writing to convey our strong support for and urge the Committee to pass Senator Nelson's Senate File 3690 – policy changes and updates to Children's Therapeutic Supports Services (CTSS).

Minnesota Community Mental Health Perspective

Lakeland Mental Health Center
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The proposal in SF 3690 incorporates collective work from a joint effort across community providers, schools, the Departments of Education and Human Services and the Governor's Children's Cabinet to increase access to children's mental health care. The workgroups formed under this effort developed recommendations across the multiple areas of children's mental health care access, including opportunities to streamline program environments, provider roles and reporting requirements. While the work under these workgroups continue, SF 3690 language is aligned with their discussions and recommendations.

In calendar years 2021 and 2022, our state's community behavioral health programs are struggling to maintain services under the ongoing pandemic and the extreme workforce crisis. The full impact of these forces is resulting in our mental health agencies not being able to keep programs open or keep up with our clients' growing needs for care. A critical sustainability challenge is in the ongoing regulatory and reporting requirements of public our behavioral health programs, including children's therapeutic supports services (CTSS).

Lakeland Mental Health Center provides services in a six county region including: Becker, Clay, Douglas, Grant, Otter Tail and Pope. LMHC has provided children and families services for many years. This now includes CTSS including Children's Day Treatment. Over the past two years we have experienced a significant decrease in our service levels compared to 2019. The decrease is due in part to turnover in staff and difficulty in quickly recruiting new staff to those open positions. Staff report dissatisfaction with their jobs because the burden of documentation keeps them from feeling like the child/family and their needs come first. The required documentation is very time consuming. The pandemic and its impact on schools has also brought consequential challenges to our service delivery. Below is our CTSS service numbers for the past three years:

2021	15,034 total visits	19,959 total hours of service
2020	19,004 total visits	18,513 total hours of service
2019	26,012 total visits	28,685 total hours of service

We are faced with more needs, the same immense administrative burdens and less people to do it all. Lakeland Mental Health Center asks for the Committee's support in increasing access to CTSS services by passing SF 3690, which takes many steps toward removing significant regulatory barriers demanding/ taking much of providers time away from client care.

Thank you for considering our request.

Sincerely,
Donna

Donna Baker

Chief Executive Officer

LMHC

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