

LEGISLATIVE YEAR CLOSES WITH IMPORTANT CHANGES TO MFT LAWS

Benjamin E. Caldwell, PsyD

The regular legislative year has ended, and several of the bills signed into law by Governor Jerry Brown will impact marriage and family therapists. As usual, AAMFT-CA has been very active in Sacramento this year, taking positions on more than a dozen bills and working directly with legislators on many of these measures. In most cases, we achieved our desired results – bills we opposed failed, and bills we supported passed. We are an active and respected, sought-after voice in Sacramento on a wide variety of mental-health-related efforts.

The following bills were signed by the Governor and take effect January 1, 2013. Names in parentheses refer to the bills' authors:

Ban on reparative therapy for minors. SB1172 (Lieu) prohibits licensed therapists from providing sexual orientation change efforts (otherwise known as reparative or conversion therapy) to minors, defining such therapy as unprofessional practice. AAMFT-CA made this bill a legislative priority for 2012, and joined NASW-CA as the first mental health professional associations to come on in support of the measure. This landmark legislation will protect lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth from a so-called therapy that all mental health associations, including AAMFT, already caution their members against using. Read the bill [here](#).

Changes in elder abuse reporting. AB40 (Yamada) significantly alters the standards and timelines for reporting elder abuse that occurs in long-term care facilities. It makes those standards and timelines far more complex, and requires duplicate and even triplicate reporting, ostensibly to solve an information-sharing problem between the county ombudsperson and law enforcement. AAMFT-CA opposed this bill on the grounds that mandated reporters should not be burdened with filing multiple reports to fix such an information-sharing problem. While we were not successful in stopping this bill, we will work with the legislature next year on reducing needless and costly duplicative reporting. Read the bill [here](#).

University employees added to mandated reporters of child abuse. AB1434 (Feuer) makes all university employees who regularly work with children or supervise those who work with children mandated reporters of child abuse if the abuse takes place on university premises or at university events. The bill is a response to the Jerry Sandusky case at Penn State. Read the bill [here](#).

Expedited licensure for military spouses. AB1904 (Block) will allow the BBS to expedite license applications from military spouses. The BBS has said it is unsure how it would go about implementing the law, but it may be as simple as a checkbox on the licensure application that would move an application farther “up in line.” Read the bill [here](#).

Delay in licensing exam restructuring. SB1527 (Negrete McLeod) delays the

implementation date for the new MFT license exam structure to January 1, 2014. Read the bill [here](#).

Other bills signed into law this year prohibit therapists from including “no licensure complaint” clauses in civil settlements ([AB2570](#), Hill); clarify the therapist immunity statute surrounding our duty to warn potential victims of imminent violence ([SB1134](#), Yee); extend the existence of the BBS through 2016 ([SB1236](#), Price); and continue “Laura’s Law,” which allows county courts to mandate outpatient mental health services in limited circumstances ([AB1569](#), Allen).

Benjamin E. Caldwell chairs the AAMFT-California Legislative and Advocacy Committee. He can be reached by email at bcaldwell@alliant.edu