Mental Health America

Legislative Session Update

Issue No. 08-25, 02/28/2025



Lawmakers listen to testimony for and against House File 334, a bill to allow chaplains in public schools. (Photo by The Capitol Group.)

First Major Procedural Hurdle Arrives Next Friday

Next Friday, March 7, is the so-called “First Funnel,” the day by which policy bills must be approved by at least one committee in the bill’s chamber of origin to remain eligible for continued consideration.

This day is the first procedural hurdle of the 2025 Session of the Iowa Legislature, with the next procedural milestone coming on April 4.

The early April date is the day by which a policy bill must be approved by at least one committee in the chamber not of its origin.

It is important to note that bills in the Appropriations Committee, Ways and Means Committee and Government Oversight Committee are not governed by procedural deadlines requiring committee approval by specific dates.

The final day of the 2025 Legislative Session is scheduled to be May 2. That is the day when Legislative per diem expense payments end.

School Chaplain Bill Moves Forward

House File 334, a bill that authorizes school districts to employ chaplains, or engage volunteer chaplains, to provide support, services, and programs for students, is now ready for consideration by the House Education Committee.
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Please send a short email note to your State Representative and tell them:

- Note “NO” on House File 334;
- The bill is dangerous because it does not require any qualifications whatsoever for persons presenting themselves as chaplains;
- The bill does not prohibit school chaplains from attempting to convert students to the chaplain’s faith tradition;
- The bill does not prohibit school chaplains from belittling or denying the tenants of other faiths;
- Iowa schools need more mental health professionals such as school counselors, school social workers and school psychologists. Iowa schools don’t need chaplains.

Here is the link to the “Find Your Legislator” tool: https://www.legis.iowa.gov/legislators/find

Just type in your address and hit the “search” button to obtain the lawmaker’s email address.

Bills of Interest

(HF - House File, HSB - House Study Bill, HR House Resolution, SF - Senate File, SSB - Senate Study Bill, SR - Senate Resolution) (F - For, A - Against, M - Monitoring)

SF 370 (formerly SSB 1065) - Governor’s Phone Proposal (M) - This bill relates to electronic devices in schools, including student access during instructional hours, school safety plans, and instruction related to the effects of social media in grades six through eight.
Commencing with the school year beginning July 1, 2025, the bill requires school districts, charter schools, and innovation zone schools to adopt policies regarding student use of personal electronic devices during school hours.
On Senate debate calendar

SF 172 - Child Sexual Abuse and Assault Prevention (F) - The bill requires the director of the Department of Education to develop and distribute to school districts and accredited nonpublic schools model guidelines related to how to best provide instruction to students enrolled in kindergarten through grade six in child sexual abuse and child sexual abuse awareness and prevention. The bill establishes requirements related to the model guidelines. The bill requires school districts and accredited nonpublic schools to provide instruction related to child sexual abuse and child sexual assault awareness and prevention that is consistent with the model guidelines to students enrolled in kindergarten through grade six. The bill also requires the Board of Educational Examiners to adopt rules that establish continuing education requirements for renewal of a license, certificate, authorization, or statement of recognition. The bill establishes that continuing education activities may include participating in or presenting at in-service training programs related to child sexual abuse and child sexual assault awareness and prevention.
Referred to Education. Subcommittee: Taylor, Gruenhagen, and Trone Garriott. Subcommittee Meeting: 02/20/2025 1:00pm, Room 315. Approved by subcommittee

SF 168 (formerly SSB 1022) - Supplemental Weighting Modification (M) - The bill provides that the supplementary weighting associated with a shared operational function in the area of a master social worker, an independent social worker, a mental health professional, or a school resource officer shall not count toward the maximum amount of additional weighting for budget years beginning on or after July 1, 2025.
Referred to Education. Subcommittee: Gruenhagen, Evans, and Staed. Subcommittee Meeting: 01/27/2025 2:30PM Room 217. Approved by subcommittee. Approved by committee. On Senate debate calendar.

SF 102 - School Mental Health Training (M) - The bill requires each board of directors of a school district by July 1, 2026, to require annual, evidence-based training on educator mental wellness and self-identification and mitigation of negative mental health symptoms for all school personnel who hold a license, certificate, authorization, or statement of recognition issued by the Board of Educational Examiners and who have regular contact with students in kindergarten through grade 12. The bill makes a similar requirement for training on student social and emotional wellness and the identification and mitigation of negative mental health symptoms in students.
Referred to Education. Subcommittee: Evans, Donahue, and Taylor.

SF 100 - School Mental Health Resources (M) - The bill requires schools to publish on the school's internet site the mental health resources created by Your Life Iowa, or a link to where such mental health resources may be accessed on Your Life Iowa's internet site, and to partner with students enrolled in the school in order to find additional ways to increase student awareness of mental health resources and information related to mental health.
Referred to Education. Subcommittee: Evans, Staed, and Taylor

HF 409 - Past MH History Questions (M) - The bill requires the Department of Inspections, Appeals, and Licensing to adopt rules prohibiting a hospital or rural emergency hospital from including on an application for clinical privileges a question regarding whether the applicant has a past history or diagnosis of mental illness, substance use disorders, or other physical or behavioral health conditions. The rules shall allow a hospital or rural emergency hospital to include a question regarding whether the applicant currently has any condition that is not being appropriately treated which impairs or adversely affects the applicant's ability to practice with reasonable skill and safety in a competent, ethical, and professional manner.
The bill similarly prohibits licensing boards for health-related professions from asking about an applicant's past history or diagnosis of mental illness, substance use disorders, or other physical or behavioral health conditions. The bill allows licensing boards for health-related professions to ask whether the applicant currently has any condition that is not being appropriately treated which impairs or adversely affects the applicant's ability to practice.
Referred to Health and Human Services. Subcommittee: Gehlbach, Andrews and Johnson, R. Subcommittee Meeting: 02/25/2025 8:30AM House Lounge. Approved by subcommittee

HF 385 (formerly HF 124) - Discharge Plans For Those Involuntarily Committed (M) - The bill requires that, prior to the discharge of a person that was committed for a substance use disorder or hospitalized for inpatient care for a serious mental impairment, that the facility treating the person refer the person to an administrative services organization for evaluation, case management, and post-discharge services; assess the person for suicide risk; provide the person with a 30-day supply of all medications prescribed for the person before or during the person's treatment; provide the person or the person's legal representative with a discharge report; and notify certain persons listed in the bill.
On House debate calendar

HF 334 - Allowing Schools To Hire Chaplains (A) - This bill authorizes school districts, charter schools, and innovation zone schools to employ chaplains, or engage volunteer chaplains, to provide support, services, and programs for students. The bill provides that such chaplains are not required to have a license, endorsement, certification, authorization, or statement of recognition issued by the Board of Educational Examiners.
Referred to Education. Subcommittee: Kniff McCulla, Hayes and Levin. Subcommittee Meeting: 02/25/2025 12:30pm, room 19. Approved by subcommittee

HF 330 (formerly HF 5) - Autism Spectrum Coverage (F) - This bill relates to insurance coverage for covered individuals for the treatment of autism spectrum disorder. The bill also changes the definition of autism under current law to align with the American Psychiatric Association's diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders.

On House debate calendar

HF 312 (formerly HF 123) - Psych Deterioration Treatment Orders (M) - Under current law, a court may order the treatment of a person if the court finds by clear and convincing evidence that the person is seriously mentally impaired. The bill allows a court to also order the treatment of a person if the court finds by clear and convincing evidence that the person is experiencing psychiatric deterioration. The bill defines “psychiatric deterioration” as a deterioration of a person’s mental health such that based on that person’s history the person is unlikely to seek treatment, the person is unable to understand the need to treat the person’s mental health condition, and, within a reasonable degree of medical certainty, the person is likely to continue to deteriorate until they have a serious mental impairment unless they receive treatment.
On House debate calendar

HF 163 (formerly HSB 47) - Threat Assessment Teams (M) - The bill allows covered entities that provide services to students enrolled in kindergarten through grade 12 who are experiencing or at risk of an emotional disturbance or mental illness, or who pose an articulable and significant threat to the health and safety of any person, to share records or information that are reasonably necessary to ensure access to appropriate services for such students, or to ensure the safety of such students or others, with any other such covered entity. The bill authorizes all such covered entities to communicate, collaborate, and coordinate efforts to best serve students. The bill defines “covered entity” to include nonpublic schools, charter schools, innovation zone schools, the judicial branch, a criminal or juvenile justice agency, political subdivisions, state agencies, and any service or support provider that contracts with such persons.
The bill authorizes school districts, accredited nonpublic schools, charter schools, and innovation zone schools to establish a multidisciplinary threat assessment team. The multidisciplinary threat assessment team is required to coordinate resources and assess and intervene when a student enrolled in the school exhibits behavior that may pose a threat to the safety of the school, school employees, or other students enrolled in the school.
Referred to Public Safety. Subcommittee: Stone, Behn and Kurth. Subcommittee Meeting: 01/28/2025 12:00PM RM 304.1. Approved by subcommittee. Approved by committee. On House debate calendar.

HF 8 - School Nurses and Broad-Spectrum Cannabidoil (M) - This bill requires school boards and authorities in charge of accredited nonpublic schools to establish procedures for a school nurse to provide a broad-spectrum cannabidiol product to a student. The procedures shall provide that a school nurse shall only provide a broad-spectrum cannabidiol product to a student if the product was provided to the school district or accredited nonpublic school by the parent or guardian of the student and if the product is provided in accordance with written instructions provided by the parent or guardian.
Referred to Education

HSB 10 - Athletic Trainers As School Nurses (M) - This bill provides that beginning July 1, 2025, school districts are required to employ either a school nurse or an athletic trainer licensed under Code chapter 152D (athletic training) to provide health services to students.
Subcommittee: Lundgren, Nordman and Turek. Approved by subcommittee.