

**NORTH CAROLINA GENERAL ASSEMBLY
LEGISLATIVE ACTUARIAL NOTE**

BILL NUMBER: House Bill 109

SHORT TITLE: Reimbursement for Marriage/Family Therapists

SPONSOR(S): Rep. Alexander

SYSTEM OR PROGRAM AFFECTED: Teachers' and State Employees' Comprehensive Major Medical Plan.

FUNDS AFFECTED: State General Fund, State Highway Fund, other State employer receipts, premium payments for dependents by active and retired teachers and State employees, and premium payments for coverages selected by eligible former teachers and State employees.

BILL SUMMARY: The bill allows licensed marriage and family therapists to be paid directly for their services in the treatment of mental illness and chemical dependency under the Teachers' and State Employees' Comprehensive major Medical Plan.

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2001.

ESTIMATED IMPACT ON STATE: The consulting actuary for the Teachers' and State Employees' Comprehensive Major Medical Plan, Aon Consulting, and the consulting actuary for the General Assembly's Fiscal Research Division, Hartman and Associates, both concur that the bill will not measurably increase the costs to the Plan. Any increases in costs through expanded utilization of services would be expected to be offset through lower professional and institutional unit costs.

ASSUMPTIONS AND METHODOLOGY: The Comprehensive Major Medical Plan for Teachers and State Employees is divided into two programs. From October, 1982, through June, 1986, the Plan only had a self-funded indemnity type of program which covered all employees, retired employees, eligible dependents of employees and retired employees, and eligible former employees and their eligible dependents authorized to continue coverage past a termination of employment other than for retirement or disability purposes. A prepaid program of coverage by health maintenance organizations (HMOs) was offered in July, 1986, as an alternative to the Plan's self-insured indemnity program. The benefits of the self-insured indemnity type of program are spelled out in Part 3 of Article 3 of Chapter 135 of the North Carolina General Statutes (i.e., \$250 annual deductible, 20% coinsurance up to \$1,000 annually, etc. paid by the program's members). HMOs are required to offer benefits that are comparable to those provided by the self-insured indemnity program. Beginning in July, 2000, firefighters, rescue squad workers, and members of the National Guard and their eligible dependents were allowed to voluntarily participate in the Plan on a fully contributory basis, provided they were ineligible for any other type of group health benefits and had been without such benefits for at least six months. Employer-paid non-contributory premiums are only authorized for the indemnity program's coverage for employees and retired employees. All other types of premium in the indemnity program are fully contributory. The Plan's Executive Administrator has set the premium rates for firefighters, rescue squad workers, and members of the National Guard and their families at 47% more than the comparable rates charged for employees, retired employees, and their families. Premiums paid by employers to HMOs are limited to like amounts paid to the indemnity program with employees and retired employees paying any

HMO amounts above the indemnity program's non-contributory rates. Both types of coverage continue to be available in the Plan with three HMOs currently covering about 9% of the Plan's total population in 24 of the State's 100 counties. The Plan's employees and retired employees select the type of program that they wish for themselves and their dependents during the months of August and September of each year for coverage beginning in October. The demographics of the Plan as of December 31, 2000, include:

	<u>Self-Insured Indemnity Program</u>	<u>Alternative HMOs</u>	<u>Plan Total</u>
<u>Number of Participants</u>			
Active Employees	248,518	28,822	277,340
Active Employee Dependents	134,795	17,376	152,171
Retired Employees	104,305	3,185	107,490
Retired Employee Dependents	17,936	594	18,530
Former Employees & Dependents with Continued Coverage	2,865	381	3,246
Firefighters, Rescue Squad Workers, National Guard Members & Dependents	3	-	3
Total Enrollments	508,422	50,358	558,780
<u>Number of Contracts</u>			
Employee Only	270,322	23,223	293,545
Employee & Child(ren)	38,775	6,006	44,781
Employee & Family	45,764	3,026	48,790
Total Contracts	354,861	32,255	387,116
<u>Percentage of Enrollment by Age</u>			
29 & Under	28.0%	41.6%	29.2%
30-44	20.9	26.6	21.4
45-54	21.3	19.2	21.1
55-64	14.5	9.2	14.0
65 & Over	15.4	3.4	14.3
<u>Percentage of Enrollment by Sex</u>			
Male	39.1%	36.9%	38.9%
Female	60.9	63.1	61.1

Assumptions for the Self-Insured Indemnity Program: For the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2000, the self-insured program started its operations with a beginning cash balance of \$188 million. Receipts for the year are estimated to be \$930 million from premium collections, \$10 million from investment earnings, and \$10 million in risk adjustment and administrative fees from HMOs, for a total of \$950 million in receipts for the year. Disbursements from the self-insured program are expected to be \$1.070 billion in claim payments and \$31 million in administration and claims processing expenses for a total of \$1.101 billion for the year beginning July 1, 2000. For the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2001, the self-insured indemnity program is expected to have an operating cash balance of only \$37 million. The self-insured indemnity program is consequently assumed to be unable to carry out its operations for the 2001-2003 biennium without increases in its current premium rates or a reduction in existing benefits or payments to health care providers or both. This assumption is further predicated upon the fact that the program's cost containment strategies (hospital DRG

reimbursements, pre-admission hospital testing, pre-admission hospital inpatient certification with length-of-stay approval, hospital bill audits, required second surgical opinions, mental health case management, coordination of benefits with other payers, Medicare benefit “carve-outs”, cost reduction contracts with participating physicians and other providers, prescription drug manufacturer rebates from formularies, and fraud detection) are maintained and improved where possible. Of particular note in these cost containment strategies is that the program’s contract with its pharmacy benefit manager, AdvancePCS, calls for a further reduction in claim payments for outpatient prescription drugs for the 2001-03 biennium. Effective July 1, 2001, dispensing fee benchmarks for pharmacies will be reduced from \$4.00 to \$1.50 per prescription. In addition, ingredient prices for pharmacies will be reduced from 90% to 85% of average wholesale price (AWP) for branded drugs and from maximum allowable charges (MAC) by the federal Health Care Financing Administration (HCFA) or 80% of AWP to 45% of AWP for generic drugs. Current non-contributory premium rates are \$143.10 monthly for employees whose primary payer of health benefits is Medicare and \$187.98 per month for employees whose primary payer of health benefits is not Medicare. Fully contributory premium amounts for employee and child(ren) contracts are \$89.06 monthly for children whose primary payer of health benefits is Medicare and \$117.16 monthly for other covered children, and \$213.60 per month for family contracts whose dependents have Medicare as the primary payer of health benefits and \$281.04 per month for other family contract dependents. Claim cost trends are expected to increase 12% annually. Total enrollment in the program is expected to increase about 3% annually over the next two years due to enrollment losses from alternative HMOs. The number of enrolled active employees is expected to show a 3% increase annually over the next two years, whereas the growth in the number of retired employees is assumed to be 5% per year. The program is expected to have an increase in the number of active employee dependents and retiree dependents of 2% per year. Investment earnings are based upon a 6% return on available cash balances. The self-insured indemnity program maintains a claim stabilization reserve for claim cost fluctuations equal to 7.5% of annual claim payments without reserving additional funds for incurred but unreported claims.

Assumptions for Indemnity Plan's Mental Health and Chemical Dependency: For the fiscal year ending June 30, 1999, the Plan’s self-insured indemnity program paid \$19,995,800 in mental health claims plus another \$2,047,800 in substance abuse claims. Approximately 72%, or \$14,451,900, of the mental health claims was outpatient claims and some 28% of the substance abuse claims were outpatient claims. Mental health and substance abuse claims accounted for a little more than 3% of the program’s total claim payments for the 1998-99 fiscal year.

Based upon information supplied by the North Carolina Marriage and Family Therapy Licensure Board, there were 444 licensed therapists residing in 64 of the State’s 100 counties as of February 15, 2001. Another 59 licensed therapists reside out of the State. Of the number of licensed therapists residing in the State, approximately 70% reside in the counties of Buncombe, Cumberland, Durham, Forsyth, Guilford, Mecklenburg, Orange, Pitt, and Wake. Also according to the Licensure Board’s staff, therapists practice using the same procedure codes and charges as certified clinical social workers, fee-based pastoral counselors, and licensed professional counselors. A comparison of charges for most procedures billed by these professional providers to the Plan’s self-insured indemnity program for calendar year 2000 reveals:

Procedure	<u>Cert. Clin. Soc. Work.</u>		<u>Fee-Bas. Past. Counsel.</u>		<u>Lic. Profess. Counsel.</u>	
	<u>No. Visits</u>	<u>Average Charge</u>	<u>No. Visits</u>	<u>Average Charge</u>	<u>No. Visits</u>	<u>Average Charge</u>
Outpatient Psych.						
45-50 Min. (90806)	23,119	\$87	2,300	\$87	11,487	\$88
75-80 Min. (90808)	292	\$110	179	\$105	261	\$109
Individ. Psychother.						
45-50 Min. (90844)	2,221	\$86	434	\$85	704	\$88

Group Psychother. (90853)	505	\$58	36	\$49	108	\$51
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Charges by other providers for these same procedure codes averaged 10-15% more than the charges by the certified clinical social workers, fee-based pastoral counselors, and licensed professional counselors.

SOURCES OF DATA:

- Actuarial Note, Hartman & Associates, House Bill 109, March 4, 2001, original of which is on file in the General Assembly's Fiscal Research Division.
- Actuarial Note, Aon Consulting, House Bill 109, March 6, 2001, original of which is on file with the Comprehensive Major Medical Plan for Teachers and State Employees and the General Assembly's Fiscal Research Division.
- Calendar Year 2000 Report on Claims, Visits, Charges, and Claim Payments by Provider under the self-insured indemnity program of the North Carolina Teachers' and State Employees' Comprehensive Major Medical Plan prepared by the program's claims processor, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina.
- Fiscal Years 1995-1999 Report on Mental Health and Substance Abuse for the North Carolina Teachers' and State Employees' Comprehensive Major Medical Plan prepared by the self-insured indemnity program's claims processor, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina.
- Membership data from the North Carolina Marriage and Family Therapy Licensure Board, February 15, 2001.

TECHNICAL CONSIDERATIONS: None.

FISCAL RESEARCH DIVISION 733-4910

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DATE: March 12, 2001



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