

Expand Access to Qualified Mental Health Professionals who can Prescribe, Improve Quality of Care for Patients

SB XXXX creates a new license in Illinois for prescribing psychologists that will enable licensed clinical psychologists with additional specialized training in psychopharmacology to prescribe psychotropic medications for their patients when needed.

This measure represents one important step the state can take to increase the availability of mental health professionals who can provide comprehensive treatment for those who struggle with mental illness.

There is a strong policy rationale for authorizing licensed clinical psychologists, with advanced, specialized training, to prescribe:

1. There is a statewide critical shortage of prescribing mental health professionals.
2. One logical means for expanding the number of prescribing mental health professionals is to authorize licensed clinical psychologists, with advanced, specialized training, to prescribe.
3. This only makes sense if the training for clinical psychologists, who would want to prescribe, is rigorous and comprehensive and ensures efficacy and safety for patients.

Prescribing psychologists undergo thorough training and are practicing safely in other states; in the U.S. military throughout the world; on Indian reservations administered by the Indian Health Service; in the United States Public Health Service; and in the United States Coast Guard. This legislation builds on that track record and carefully sets forth the requirements that psychologists in training must meet before they can be licensed to prescribe in Illinois:

- Completion of a doctoral program in psychology.
- Possession of a valid license to practice clinical psychology in Illinois.
- Completion of a Master's degree in clinical psychopharmacology. The training includes, but is not limited to, instruction in: neuroanatomy, neurophysiology, clinical biochemistry, neurochemistry, clinical pharmacology, psychopharmacology, clinical medicine, pathophysiology, chemical dependence.
- Completion of 80 hours of supervised training in physical assessment and pathophysiology.
- Completion of a supervised practicum of 400 hours, in which the trainee formulates prescriptive recommendations for 100 patients with mental disorders.
- Both physical assessment and practicum training in prescriptive recommendations will be supervised by an appropriately trained physician or prescribing psychologist. A portion of this supervised clinical experience will take place in one or more of the following settings:
 - o Correctional facilities;
 - o Federally Qualified Health Clinics (FQHCs);
 - o Community agencies that serve the seriously mentally ill
- Completion of a national exam in clinical psychopharmacology, developed by The American Psychological Association.

The legislation also clarifies the collaborative relationship between prescribing psychologists and the physicians responsible for their patients' general medical care, requiring that prescribing psychologists collaborate with the appropriate physician to ensure that:

- All necessary medical examinations are conducted.
- All medical and psychological issues are communicated.
- No prescribed medications are contraindicated.
- All significant changes in the patient's medical or psychological condition are communicated.

The bill sets forth a number of other requirements prescribing psychologists must follow to ensure patient safety.