

Sponsor Statement for House Bill 245

“An Act relating to marital and family therapists.”

[HOUSE BILL 245](#) was submitted by request of the Alaska Association for Marriage and Family Therapy. The law that established the [Board of Marital and Family Therapy](#) has been in place for ten years and the Association believes it is time to pursue the placement of updated language within the statute.

The goal of HB 245 is to bring the Alaska Statutes for Marriage and Family Therapy in line with the laws regarding other professions in the state and Marriage and Family Therapy statutes nationally. A task force comprised of representatives from the State Boards of Psychology, Social Work, and Marriage and Family Therapy met and identified the following areas needing change:

HB 245 ~

- *adds* the Board of Marital and Family Therapy to the list of boards that may request the Division of Occupational Licensing to contract for substance abuse treatment under licensed therapists,
- *gives* the Board of Marital and Family Therapy authority to order a licensed marital and family therapist to submit to a reasonable physical or mental examination if the board has credible evidence sufficient to conclude that the therapist’s physical or mental capacity to practice safely is at issue,
- *allows* for individual client contact to be used as hours toward licensing,
- *requires* the therapist to communicate to a potential victim or law enforcement officer if serious harm to an identified victim has been made by a client,
- *imposes* disciplinary sanctions with regard to therapist sexual misconduct.

HOUSE BILL 245 not only brings parity to the mental health professions in the state, it also adds additional consumer protection for Alaskans seeking professional counsel.