AN ACT CONCERNING SOCIAL WORKER TITLE PROTECTION.

SUMMARY

This bill prohibits anyone from using the title “social worker,” or any associated initials, or advertising clinical social work services, unless the person has (1) a bachelor’s or master’s degree in social work from a Council on Social Work Education (CSWE)-accredited program or (2) a doctoral degree in social work.

By law, the Department of Public Health (DPH) licenses both master and clinical social workers, each of which require at least a master’s degree in social work and a specified number of clinical training hours. Thus, the bill conflicts with existing law by allowing a person to advertise clinical social work services with only a bachelor’s degree and without obtaining the training hours required for social work licensure (see COMMENT).

Existing law already prohibits anyone who is unlicensed from using the title of licensed master or clinical social worker or advertising services as such.

The bill also requires the DPH commissioner or his representative to notify violators and, if applicable their employers, to cease using the social worker title or advertising clinical social work services.

Additionally, the bill exempts from the prohibition anyone employed by the state before July 1, 2019, with the title in the social work series of classified state service (see BACKGROUND). Existing law already allows any person employed by the state prior to October 1, 1996, with the title in the social work series of the classified service to have such a title to describe or perform his or her duties (CGS § 20-195r).
It also allows the state to hire social work trainees and social workers who do not have a social work degree at the time of hire and allow these employees to use the title of “social worker trainee” or “social worker” if they attain a (1) master’s degree in social work from a CSWE-accredited program or (2) doctoral degree in social work within five years after their employment date.

EFFECTIVE DATE: January 1, 2020

BACKGROUND

Social Work Series in State Service

The following job titles are included in the Department of Administrative Services’ social work series of classified state service:

1. clinical social worker,
2. clinical social worker associate,
3. social work – case aide,
4. social worker – health care professional,
5. social worker – social and human services, and
6. social worker trainee.

Related Bill

sHB 7198, favorably reported by the Public Health Committee, generally prohibits anyone from using the title “social worker” or advertising services as a social worker unless he or she has a bachelor’s, master’s, or doctoral degree in social work from a CSWE-accredited program.

COMMENT

Conflict with Social Work Licensing Provisions

The bill conflicts with existing state law by allowing a person to advertise clinical social work services with only a bachelor’s degree. By law, licensed clinical and master social workers must (1) attain at least a master’s degree in social work, (2) pass an examination, and (3) for
clinical social workers, complete at least 3,000 post-graduate training hours (CGS §§ 20-195n(c) and 20-195q(b)).

COMMITTEE ACTION
Labor and Public Employees Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute
Yea 10  Nay 3  (03/21/2019)