

House Bill 1065

By: Representatives Scott of the 76th, Davis of the 87th, and Schofield of the 63rd

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT

1 To amend Chapter 2A of Title 31 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to the
2 Department of Public Health, so as to create the Temporary Youth Behavioral Health
3 Services Program; to provide for definitions; to provide for duties and responsibilities of the
4 department; to provide for program requirements; to provide for behavioral health care
5 provider reimbursement requirements; to provide for funding contingency; to provide for
6 automatic repeal; to provide for related matters; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other
7 purposes.

8 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GEORGIA:

9 **SECTION 1.**

10 Chapter 2A of Title 31 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to the Department
11 of Public Health, is amended by adding a new Code section to read as follows:

12 "31-2A-20.

13 (a) As used in this Code section, the term:

14 (1) 'Behavioral health care provider' or 'provider' means an individual who specializes
15 in providing treatment to clients and holds a license or a license by reciprocity in this

16 state as a psychiatrist, psychologist, professional counselor, social worker, or marriage
17 and family therapist.

18 (2) 'Client' means a youth who obtains treatment through a provider under the program.

19 (3) 'Portal' means the public website or web based application developed to facilitate the
20 program.

21 (4) 'Telehealth' has the same meaning as provided in Code Section 33-24-56.4.

22 (5) 'Temporary Youth Behavioral Health Services Program' or 'program' means the
23 program established pursuant to this Code section.

24 (6) 'Treatment' means the broad range of services and care, including diagnostic
25 evaluation, medical, psychiatric, and psychological care available to clients through
26 providers pursuant to this Code section.

27 (7) 'Youth' means:

28 (A) An individual under the age of 18 years; and

29 (B) An individual 22 years of age or younger, but older than 18 years of age, receiving
30 special education services pursuant to Code Section 20-2-152.

31 (b) There is established within the department the Temporary Youth Behavioral Health
32 Services Program. The purpose of the program shall be to facilitate access to behavioral
33 health care providers for the youth of this state. To implement the program, the department
34 shall:

35 (1) Develop a process for providers to apply for, and demonstrate eligibility to receive,
36 reimbursement from the program;

37 (2) Determine a reasonable rate of reimbursement for each session with a client under
38 the program, which rate shall be the same for telehealth and in-person sessions;

39 (3) Create and maintain a state-wide public awareness and outreach campaign about the
40 program targeted at community based organizations that interact with youth on the local
41 level, such as schools, neighborhood youth organizations, healthcare providers, and faith
42 based organizations; and

43 (4) Report to the Governor and the General Assembly no later than January 1 and June
44 30 of each year, regarding information in aggregate about the services provided to clients
45 under the program, the number of clients who received services under the program, and
46 any other relevant information regarding the program. Such report shall exclude all
47 personally identifiable information of each client.

48 (c) The department shall enter into an agreement with a vendor to create, or use an
49 existing, public website or web based application as a portal available to youth and
50 providers to facilitate the program. The portal shall:

51 (1) Serve as a platform for an initial, age-appropriate behavioral health screening by a
52 provider to determine if a youth may benefit from treatment;

53 (2) Allow providers to register and share telehealth and in-person session availability;

54 (3) When possible, connect clients with providers who accept the client's insurance or
55 payment source that may cover the costs of ongoing treatment, if the client has insurance
56 or a payment source; and

57 (4) Without regard to insurance coverage status or the availability of any other payment
58 source, provide access to the youth of this state to telehealth and, as available, in-person
59 sessions with a provider.

60 (d) The department shall reimburse providers for each session conducted pursuant to the
61 program, whether in-person or by telehealth, up to a maximum of three sessions per youth
62 client. Subject to available funding, the department may reimburse a provider for
63 additional sessions. To be eligible for reimbursement, a provider must be available to
64 provide three behavioral health sessions to each client accepted by the provider.

65 (e) This Code section shall stand repealed on June 30, 2027, unless reauthorized by the
66 General Assembly prior to that date."

67 **SECTION 2.**

68 All laws and parts of laws in conflict with this Act are repealed.