STATE OF NEW YORK

9201

IN ASSEMBLY

February 15, 2024

Introduced by M. of A. KELLES, SIMON, HEVESI -- read once and referred to the Committee on Mental Health

AN ACT to amend the mental hygiene law, in relation to providing mental telehealth services to children, adolescents, and young adults

The People of the State of New York, represented in Senate and Assembly, do enact as follows:

Section 1. Legislative findings and intent. The Legislature affirms the finding of the U.S. Surgeon General's Advisory on Protecting Youth Mental Health that the COVID-19 pandemic has dramatically altered young peoples' experiences at home, at school, and in the community and has exacerbated the unprecedented stresses young people face. The Legislature also finds that there exists an obligation to act to assist our children and their families in this moment of need. The Legislature intends, then, to provide actionable solutions for young people and their families in support of the mental health of children, adolescents, and young adults.

§ 2. Section 5.05 of the mental hygiene law is amended by adding a new subdivision (f) to read as follows:

(f) The commissioners of the office of mental health and the office of addiction services and supports shall establish a youth mental telehealth services program to facilitate access to mental health services, including substance use disorder services, for youth to respond to identified mental health needs, including those needs that may have resulted from the COVID-19 pandemic, and for youth or families that may not have access to mental health professionals in-person. Such program shall provide up to five mental telehealth services annually at no cost to the individual, for acute crisis response, mental health assessment, or initiation of care to reduce barriers and facilitate engagement in long-term care.

As soon as practicable, but no later than August first, two thousand twenty-four, the offices shall enter into an agreement with a vendor to create, or use an existing, website or web-based application, as a portal available to youth and providers to facilitate the program. Such vendor shall be determined through a competitive bidding process.

§ 3. This act shall take effect on the one hundred twentieth day after it shall have become a law.

EXPLANATION--Matter in *italics* (underscored) is new; matter in brackets [-] is old law to be omitted.

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