

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5483

AS OF FEBRUARY 15, 1991

Brief Description: Changing provisions relating to counselors.

SPONSORS: Senators West and Niemi.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & LONG-TERM CARE

Staff: Scott Plack (786-7409)

Hearing Dates: February 19, 1991

BACKGROUND:

In 1987 the Legislature enacted the Counselor Practice Act (Chapter 18.19 RCW). The act requires that all persons who practice counseling for a fee or as part of employment at a state agency be registered with the state. In addition, no person may represent themselves as a certified social worker, certified mental health counselor or certified marriage and family counselor without being certified with the Department of Social and Health Services. Exemptions from registration or certification are provided for persons who practice counseling without a fee, in volunteer or religious settings, at colleges and in nonprofit and public settings where counseling is not primarily done for a fee.

The certified counselors must meet educational and experience requirements while the registered counselors must only provide information about their practice to the department.

State operated or authorized mental health, alcohol treatment and drug treatment programs have separate training and education requirements for persons serving as counselors. The Department of Social and Health Services defines these requirements in rule. The requirements are intended to assure professional competency for the counselors practicing in state institutions and state authorized programs. Requiring that counselors also meet educational requirements under the counselor practice act may be duplicative.

SUMMARY:

Counselors serving in public and private nonprofit organizations and charities are exempt from the Counselor Practice Act regardless of whether a fee is charged.

Appropriation: none

Revenue: none

Fiscal Note: available