

**SENATE BILL REPORT**

**SHB 1802**

**AS REPORTED BY COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES,  
MARCH 31, 1993**

**Brief Description:** Modifying marriage and family therapist certification.

**SPONSORS:** House Committee on Health Care (originally sponsored by Representatives Veloria, Dellwo, Ballasiotes, Romero, Flemming, Lisk and Thibaudeau)

**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH CARE**

**SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES**

**Majority Report:** Do pass as amended.

Signed by Senators Talmadge, Chairman; Wojahn, Vice Chairman; Deccio, Erwin, Franklin, Fraser, Hargrove, McAuliffe, Moyer, Niemi, Prentice, Quigley, Sheldon, and Winsley.

**Staff:** Scott Plack (786-7409)

**Hearing Dates:** March 26, 1993; March 31, 1993

**BACKGROUND:**

Marriage and family therapists are counselors who are certified for practice by the Department of Health. The practice of marriage and family therapy involves the assessment and treatment of impaired marriage or family relationships by the use of educational, sociological, and psychotherapeutic theories and techniques.

The minimum requirements for certification include:

1. A master's degree in marriage and family therapy, or its equivalent, from a school approved by the department that offers coursework in subjects specified in the Marriage and Family Practice Act;
2. Two years of postgraduate practice under the supervision of a qualified marriage and family therapist; and
3. Passing scores on both written and oral examinations administered by the Department.

**SUMMARY:**

Minimum educational requirements for licensure include a master's or doctoral degree in marriage and family therapy or a master's or doctoral degree in a behavioral science and completion of an equivalency training program. The Department

of Health determines in rule which equivalency training programs are acceptable, basing the decision on nationally recognized standards.

The statutory specification of subjects is repealed.

If the applicant has received a master's or doctoral degree in marriage and family therapy, he or she must also complete two years of postgraduate practice under supervision.

If the applicant has received a degree in the behavioral sciences, he or she must complete two years of postgraduate practice in marriage and family therapy under the supervision of a qualified marriage and family therapist. The supervised practice may be done concurrently with the program equivalency training.

The requirement for taking and passing an examination is repealed.

The description of the practice of marriage and family therapy is modified. Practice involves the provision, for a fee (monetary or otherwise), of professional services to individuals, couples or families directly or through public and private organizations. It includes the diagnosis and treatment of mental and emotional disorders, whether cognitive, affective or behavioral, within the context of marriage and family systems.

**SUMMARY OF PROPOSED SENATE AMENDMENT:**

A passing score on a written examination is required for certification. The examination must include a section on state statutes pertaining to marriage and family counseling.

**Appropriation:** none

**Revenue:** none

**Fiscal Note:** requested

**TESTIMONY FOR:**

The requirements for certification as a marriage and family counselor are clarified. These changes implement some of the recommendations found in the "sunset" review on the Counselor Practice Act conducted by the Department of Health. Other changes in the bill clarify what constitutes the practice of family and marriage counseling.

**TESTIMONY AGAINST:** None

**TESTIFIED:** Representative Veloria, original prime sponsor (pro); Delores Spice, Barbara Hayes, Department of Health (pro); Bonita Hickman, WA Association of Marriage and Family Therapy (pro)