

# FINAL BILL REPORT

## SSB 6550

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C 243 L 98

Synopsis as Enacted

**Brief Description:** Certifying chemical dependency professionals.

**Sponsors:** Senate Committee on Health & Long-Term Care (originally sponsored by Senators Deccio, Wojahn, Wood and Fairley).

**Senate Committee on Health & Long-Term Care**

**House Committee on Health Care**

**House Committee on Appropriations**

**Background:** Under current law, chemical dependency counselors can be registered as counselors in Washington State. They are therefore subject to the state's disciplinary process for health care practitioners under the Uniform Disciplinary Act. If they work in treatment programs certified by the Department of Social and Health Services, they are also required to meet the state's chemical dependency program requirements.

Private certification is available through two private chemical dependency counselor certification boards in the state.

Chemical dependency counselors cannot be registered, certified or licensed as chemical dependency counselors. They seek certification to consolidate regulation at the state level and obtain recognition in their area of expertise. This matter was referred to the Sunrise program with the Department of Health rendering recommendations in 1995. The recommendation was certification should not be enacted.—

**Summary:** Persons practicing chemical dependency counseling can identify themselves as certified chemical dependency professionals if they meet certain certification requirements. Certified chemical dependency professionals can only use their title in conjunction with their work in department recognized programs. Chemical dependency counseling means employing the core competencies of chemical dependency counseling to assist or attempt to assist an alcohol or drug addicted person to develop and maintain abstinence from alcohol and other mood altering drugs.

Certification can be obtained if an applicant pays a fee, passes an examination, and meets education and experience requirements established by a Chemical Dependency Certification Advisory Committee.

The Chemical Dependency Certification Advisory Committee is comprised of seven persons. Four committee persons must be certified chemical dependency professionals; one must be a registered chemical dependency treatment program director; one must be a licensed physician certified in addiction medicine or a certified mental health practitioner; and one must be a member of the public who has received chemical dependency counseling.

Applicants who have higher levels of relevant education may be certified with fewer hours of experience. Advanced registered nurse practitioners and licensed counselors may not be required to have more than 1,500 hours of experience in chemical dependency counseling, and for a two-year period from the time the act takes effect, they may not have to take the examination.

**Votes on Final Passage:**

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|--------|----|---|--------------------|
| Senate | 46 | 1 |                    |
| House  | 97 | 0 | (House amended)    |
| Senate | 44 | 4 | (Senate concurred) |

**Effective:** July 1, 1998  
July 1, 1999 (Sections 3, 9, 13 & 14)