

Health Care Committee

ESSB 5877

Brief Description: *Providing licensing standards for mental health counselors, marriage and family therapists, and social workers.*

Sponsors: *By Senate Committee on Health & Long-Term Care (originally sponsored by Senators Thibaudeau, Winsley, Costa and Kohl-Welles).*

***Brief Summary of Engrossed Substitute Bill
(Proposed striking amendment)***

- *Provides for the licensing of advanced social workers, independent social workers, mental health counselors, and marriage and family therapists by the Secretary of Health.*
- *Establishes educational, examination, supervised experience, and continuing education requirements for applicants for licensing, and provides for an advisory committee to advise and assist the Secretary in administering the licensing programs.*

Hearing Date: *3/29/01*

Staff: *John Welsh (786-7133).*

Background: *(Proposed striking amendment)*

The Omnibus Credentialing Act for Counselors requires the registration of counselors providing therapeutic counseling for a fee and provides for the professional certification of social workers, mental health counselors and marriage and family therapists.

Social workers, mental health counselors, and marriage and family therapists are certified by the Secretary of Health, and no such persons may represent themselves as certified with respect to their profession, without being certified and meeting specified education, training, and experience requirements, and passing examinations.

Applicants for certification must graduate from an accredited master's or doctoral degree

educational program relating to the profession, complete two years supervised practice, and pass an examination.

Registered counselors and certified professional counselors must provide clients with accurate disclosure information concerning the practice, including education and therapeutic orientation.

The Mental Health Quality Assurance Council advises the Secretary in the administration of the chapter.

The Uniform Disciplinary Act governs the discipline of registered counselors and certified professional counselors for unprofessional conduct, and the Secretary of Health is the disciplining authority.

Summary of Bill:

Advance social workers, independent clinical social workers, mental health counselors, and marriage and family therapists are regulated and licensed by the Secretary of Health, and no such persons may represent themselves as licensed with respect to their profession, without being licensed and meeting specified education, training, and experience requirements.

The Secretary shall appoint a nine person advisory committee to advise in administering the licensing program, including rules, unprofessional conduct cases, and consumer complaints. The committee shall be composed to two members from each licensed profession and three representatives of the public and serve three-year terms.

Applicants for licenses as advanced social workers and independent clinical social workers must graduate from a master's or doctorate social work educational program, pass an examination, complete 36 hours of continuing education, and complete 3200 or 4000 hours of supervised experience, respectively.

Applicants for licenses as mental health counselors must graduate from a master's or doctorate program in mental health counseling, pass an examination, have 36 months full time counseling or 3000 hours of supervised post graduate counseling, and complete 36 hours of continuing education.

Applicants for licenses as marriage and family therapists must graduate from a master's or doctoral education program in marriage and family therapy or allied field, pass an examination, complete two years of experience, and complete 36 hours of continuing education.

Licensed counselors must provide clients with accurate disclosure information concerning the practice, including the counselor's education and therapeutic orientation.

The Secretary is given authority to administer the chapter, including rule-making authority, and the authority to charge licensing fees for meeting the costs of the program.

The Uniform Disciplinary Act governs the discipline of licensees, and the Secretary is the disciplining authority.

Counselors certified for more than one year under current law and meeting requirements may be licensed without taking the examination.

Persons licensed in other states with substantially equivalent standards may be licensed in this state without taking the examination.

The chapter is not to be construed as permitting the administration of drugs, or practice of medicine or psychology.

Technical amendments conform definition references to existing law, including Chapter 18.19 (Registration of Counselors); Chapter 9A.44 (Sex Offenses); Chapter 18.100 (Professional Service Corporations); Chapter 18.205 (Chemical Dependency Professionals); Chapter 25.05 (Limited Liability Partnerships); Chapter 25.15 (Professional Limited Liability Company); and Chapter 48.43 (Insurance Reform);

The advisory Mental Health Quality Assurance Council, and statutes superceded by this chapter are repealed.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.