

FINAL BILL REPORT

SSB 6445

C 155 L 16
Synopsis as Enacted

Brief Description: Clarifying the role of physician assistants in the delivery of mental health services.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Health Care (originally sponsored by Senators Braun and Angel).

Senate Committee on Health Care
House Committee on Health Care & Wellness

Background: A physician assistant is a person who is licensed to practice medicine to a limited extent under the supervision of a physician and who is academically and clinically prepared to provide health care services and perform diagnostic, therapeutic, preventative, and health maintenance services.

The Department of Social and Health Services has adopted rules on the provision of behavioral health services and the provision of psychiatric medication services. The rules describe which health care professionals may have medical direction and responsibility, who may enter clinical notes, which health care professionals may be contracted with, and who may determine medication schedules. These rules do not currently specify physician assistants among the health care professionals who are able to perform such duties.

Summary: Both physician assistants and osteopathic physician assistants may provide services that they are competent to perform based on their education, training, and experience and that are consistent with their delegation agreement that is filed with the Medical Quality Assurance Commission (MQAC). Physician assistants may not practice beyond the scope of their supervising physician's own scope of expertise and practice. They may practice in mental health settings as provided in their delegation agreement.

Physician assistants are added throughout the mental health code alongside references to psychiatrists, physicians, and psychiatric advanced registered nurse practitioners. The types of health care providers who may be involved with involuntarily detaining or treating persons at evaluation and treatment facilities are listed; these health care providers include physician assistants working with mental health professionals. The definitions of "developmental disabilities professional" and "mental health professional" are modified to include physician assistants working with a supervising psychiatrist.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Votes on Final Passage:

Senate	49	0	
House	97	0	(House amended)
Senate	48	0	(Senate concurred)

Effective: June 9, 2016