

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6485

As of February 5, 2016

Title: An act relating to expediting education requirements for chemical dependency professional licensure when the candidate holds another professional license.

Brief Description: Expediting education requirements for chemical dependency professional licensure when the candidate holds another professional license.

Sponsors: Senators Parlette, Darneille and O'Ban.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Human Services, Mental Health & Housing: 1/26/16.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES, MENTAL HEALTH & HOUSING

Staff: Kevin Black (786-7747)

Background: The Department of Health (DOH) licenses chemical dependency professionals (CDPs). A CDP is a professional who employs the core competencies of chemical dependency counseling to assist a person with a substance use disorder to develop and maintain abstinence from alcohol and other mood-altering drugs. DOH has promulgated rules establishing both education and experience requirements for a person to obtain a CDP license.

The minimum educational requirements to become licensed as a CDP under the rules promulgated by DOH are:

- an associate degree in human services or a related field from an approved school, or 90 quarter- or 60 semester-credits in courses from an approved school;
- at least 45 quarter- or 30 semester-credits in courses relating to the chemical dependency profession, which must include coverage of 23 specified topics specific to persons with substance use disorders.

The number of experience hours required for an individual to be licensed as a CDP vary depending on formal education in human services or a related field. With an associate degree 2500 hours are required; 2000 hours with a baccalaureate degree; 1500 hours with a masters or doctoral degree; and 1000 hours for persons licensed as advanced social workers, independent clinical social workers, or psychologists.

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.

Summary of Bill: DOH must develop expedited education requirements for obtaining a CDP license that apply to a person who holds a license as a marriage and family therapist, mental health counselor, advanced social worker, independent social worker, or psychologist and seeks to become dually licensed as a CDP. The expedited education requirements must not be limited to college credits but must be obtainable through attendance at continuing education trainings or conferences. The minimum number of educational hours required for such a candidate must be reduced to the minimum necessary to educate an already licensed professional in topics specific to substance use disorders.

The legislation does not lessen the experience requirements necessary to obtain a CDP license.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: This bill puts into statute the rulemaking work that is being done at DOH. This is the beginning of a process to develop alternative pathways to allow other professionals to do chemical dependency work. Other states do not have the separations between professions that are present in Washington. Washington is the sixth lowest state in terms of providing chemical dependency treatment. Experience hours should be reduced to 500 for licensed professionals. Amending statutes to allow harm reduction and medical assistance strategies are important. Licensed social workers have most of the training and just need to fill in some gaps. We definitely need to increase the supply of CDPs, and we also need more mental health professionals to obtain expertise in treating substance use disorders. We would like to work with you to refine the bill to streamline credentialing where possible, but also maintain a solid base in the field of chemical dependency treatment.

CON: We feel this issue has been extensively stakeholdered at DOH over the last two-and-a-half years. Please respect the work that has already been done. There are many important components to chemical dependency treatment that may not be covered in social work programs and other programs.

OTHER: We prefer the Adult Behavioral Health System Task Force recommendation in total be included in this legislation which would call for recommendations from the State Workforce Coordinating and Education Board. Shortages in the behavioral health workforce include all disciplines.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Parlette, prime sponsor; Laura Groshong, LICSW, Washington State Society for Clinical Social Work; Bob Cooper, National Assn. of Social Workers WA Chapter; Ann Christian, WA Council for Behavioral Health.

CON: Melissa Johnson, Assoc. of Alcoholism & Addictions Programs.

OTHER: Michael Transue, Seattle Drug and Narcotic Center.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.