

SENATE BILL REPORT

HB 1349

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Behavioral Health Subcommittee to Health & Long Term Care, March 22, 2019

Title: An act relating to clarifying the definition of a geriatric behavioral health worker for individuals with a bachelor's or master's degree in social work, behavioral health, or other related areas.

Brief Description: Clarifying the definition of a geriatric behavioral health worker for individuals with a bachelor's or master's degree in social work, behavioral health, or other related areas.

Sponsors: Representatives Schmick, Cody, Jenkins, Doglio and Leavitt.

Brief History: Passed House: 3/01/19, 95-0.

Committee Activity: Behavioral Health Subcommittee to Health & Long Term Care: 3/15/19, 3/22/19 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Allows a person to fulfill the qualifications to be a geriatric behavioral health worker at a nursing home by having a bachelor's or master's degree in social work or behavioral health.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SUBCOMMITTEE TO HEALTH & LONG TERM CARE

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Dhingra, Chair; Wagoner, Ranking Member; Darneille and Frockt.

Staff: Kevin Black (786-7747)

Background: A geriatric behavioral health worker (GBHW) is a nursing home employee who must:

- have at least three years experience providing care for individuals with chronic mental health issues, dementia, or intellectual and developmental disabilities in a long-term care or behavioral health care setting; or

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- have successfully completed a facility-based behavioral health curriculum approved by the Department of Health.

A GBHW must also have advanced practice knowledge in aging, disability, mental illness, Alzheimer's disease, and developmental disabilities. Any GBHW having less than a master's degree in social work must be directly supervised by an employee who has a master's degree in social work or a registered nurse.

A GBHW may be used to help meet minimum staffing requirements in a nursing home facility as part of direct care delivery if the residents receiving care have behavioral health conditions, in proportion to the resident days of clients with behavioral health conditions identified at the nursing home facility.

Summary of Bill: A GBHW may be a person who has a bachelor's or master's degree in social work, behavioral health, or a related area. An employee who meets this requirement is not required to meet the direct experience or facility-based behavioral health training requirements under current law.

The current law requirement for a GBHW to have advanced practice knowledge in aging, disability, mental illness, Alzheimer's disease, and developmental disabilities is removed.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: This bill provides an alternative pathway to receive the geriatric behavioral health worker classification. This will help nursing facilities. Nursing homes currently have a serious workforce shortage. This bill will go a long way towards addressing this.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Representative Joe Schmick, Prime Sponsor; David Knutson, Washington Health Care Association.

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