

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 5053

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As of January 26, 2019

**Title:** An act relating to increasing behavioral health workforce participation by addressing certification and licensure requirements.

**Brief Description:** Increasing behavioral health workforce participation by addressing certification and licensure requirements.

**Sponsors:** Senators O'Ban, Sheldon, Becker, Brown, Wilson, L., Zeiger, Short, Takko and Wagoner.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Health & Long Term Care: 1/25/19.

**Brief Summary of Bill**

- Requires the Department of Health (DOH) to accept qualified licensed social workers and mental health practitioners as approved supervisors for the purposes of chemical dependency professional supervised experience requirements.
- Allows agency affiliated counselors to work while their registration application is processed.
- Requires DOH to conduct a sunrise review to evaluate the need for a bachelor's level behavioral health professional credential.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & LONG TERM CARE

**Staff:** Greg Attanasio (786-7410)

**Background:** Chemical Dependency Professionals. Chemical Dependency Professionals (CDPs) assist or attempt to assist an alcohol or drug addicted person to develop and maintain abstinence from alcohol and other mood-altering drugs. DOH certifies CDPs and requires they have, at a minimum, an associate's degree in human services or a related field. The supervised experience hours required by DOH for certification depends on the applicants educational background. Applicants with an associates degree must have 2500 supervised chemical dependency counseling experience hours, applications with a bachelor's degree

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must have 2000 hours of supervised experience, and applicants with a master's or doctoral degree must have 1500 hours of supervised experience. DOH has determined in rule that an approved supervisor is a certified CDP or a person who meets or exceeds the requirements of a certified CDP in the state of Washington, and who would be eligible to take the examination required for certification.

Certain licensed mental health and healthcare professionals may obtain certification through an alternative training pathway. This may include proof of approved alternative education requirements or proof of an approved national certification in lieu of meeting the educational and supervised experience requirements.

Agency Affiliated Counselors. Agency affiliated counselors are individuals, practitioners, therapists, or analysts employed by a state or county agency or federally recognized Indian tribe in Washington who engages in the practice of counseling to the public for a fee. An applicant who applies for registration with DOH as an agency affiliated counselor within seven days of employment by an agency may work for up to 60 days while the application is processed. The applicant must stop working on the 60th day if DOH has not granted the registration for any reason.

**Summary of Bill:** Chemical Dependency Professional Supervised Experience. DOH must set the same supervised experience requirements for all applicants in the regular or alternative training pathways. Supervised experience may be provided by a licensed social worker or licensed mental health practitioner who has at least one year of experience in the treatment of substance use disorder or who has completed the CDP alternative training requirements.

Agency Affiliated Counselors. An applicant who applies for registration with DOH as an agency affiliated counselor within seven days of employment may work while the application is processed as long as they provide the required documentation within reasonable time limits set by DOH. If the applicant fails to provide the documentation, they must stop working.

Sunrise Review. DOH must conduct a sunrise review to evaluate the need for a bachelor's level behavioral health professional credential that includes competencies related to the treatment of substance abuse and mental health disorders. The professional credential must allow for reimbursement of services in all appropriate settings and be designed to facilitate work in conjunction with a master's level clinician.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Requested on January 22, 2019.

**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: A backlog in processing applications has caused agency affiliate counselors to have to stop working after 60 days, causing harm to the agencies and patients. Removing it would better serve all parties.

OTHER: A different approach to supervised experience requirements for CDPs would better applicants and help the provider shortage.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Senator Steve O'Ban, Prime Sponsor; Gary Strannigan, Premera Blue Cross; Michael Hatchett, Policy Analyst, Washington Council for Behavioral Health.

OTHER: Bob Cooper, National Association of Social Workers Washington Chapter.

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