

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5055

As of February 5, 2019

Title: An act relating to increasing availability of peer services for persons with behavioral health disorders.

Brief Description: Increasing availability of peer services for persons with behavioral health disorders.

Sponsors: Senators O'Ban, Hasegawa, Zeiger, Van De Wege and Wagoner.

Brief History:

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

Brief Summary of Bill

- Directs the Health Care Authority to continue the development of a peer support program for individuals with substance use disorder.
- Directs the Department of Health to conduct a sunrise review to evaluate the need for the creation of an advanced peer support specialist credential.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & LONG TERM CARE

Staff: LeighBeth Merrick (786-7445)

Background: In Washington, peer support service is an approved Medicaid service that pairs individuals in recovery with certified peer counselors (CPCs) who share similar life experiences related to behavioral health needs. Since 2005, the Department of Behavioral Health and Recovery and now, the Health Care Authority (HCA) have conducted a peer counseling training and certification program for individuals who have received mental health services. To become a CPC, individuals must apply and be accepted into the state's training; successfully complete the 40-hour approved training; and pass the state exam.

CPCs work under the supervision of mental health professionals in a variety of settings which include community clinics, hospitals and crisis teams. CPCs assist their peers and the parents of children receiving mental health services throughout the recovery process.

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.

The 2018 supplemental budget included a proviso that directed HCA to develop a peer support program for individuals with substance use disorder (SUD). The proviso also directed HCA to submit a state plan amendment which allows for these services to be included in behavioral health capitation rates beginning in fiscal year 2020, and to be federally matched.

The Department of Health makes recommendations to the Legislature on health profession credentialing proposals through a process called a sunrise review.

Summary of Bill: By July 1, 2019, HCA must incorporate education and training for SUD peers into its CPC program, and include reimbursement for SUD peer support services.

HCA must also approve qualified third party entities to conduct the peer support training for CPCs using the state's curriculum.

The Department of Health (DOH) must conduct a sunrise review to evaluate the need for the creation of an advanced peer support specialist credential for peer support services provided in the areas of mental health, SUD, and forensic behavioral health. The requirements for the credential must:

- be accessible to individuals in recovery;
- integrate with HCA's CPC program;
- provide requirements that are more stringent than HCA's CPC program, but are less stringent than DOH's existing behavioral health credentials;
- provide oversight, structure, discipline and continuing education requirements typical for other professional licenses and certifications;
- allow advanced peer support specialists to maximize the scope of practice suitable to their skills, lived experience, education and training;
- allow advanced peer support specialists to practice and receive reimbursement in behavioral health capitation rates in the full range of settings in which clients receive behavioral health services;
- provide a path for career progression to more advanced credentials; and
- incorporate consideration related to criminal history and recovery from behavioral health disorders.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 15, 2019.

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

Effective Date: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: The role peers play are a vital component to mental health services and this should be expanded to individuals with substance use disorder. There is limited access to peer services, especially in rural areas, and this bill would help create more access.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Steve O'Ban, Prime Sponsor; Meg Jones, Association of Washington Healthcare Plans; Gary Strannigan, Premera Blue Cross; Michael Hatchett, Policy Analyst, Washington Council for Behavioral Health; Andrea Davis, Coordinated Care.

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