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**SUBSTITUTE SENATE BILL 5638**

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**State of Washington 67th Legislature 2022 Regular Session**

**By** Senate Behavioral Health Subcommittee to Health & Long Term Care (originally sponsored by Senators Wagoner and Dhingra)

AN ACT Relating to expediting approval for applicants for an associate license as a social worker, mental health counselor, or marriage and family therapist; and amending RCW 18.225.145.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

**Sec.**  RCW 18.225.145 and 2021 c 57 s 2 are each amended to read as follows:

(1) The secretary shall issue an associate license to any applicant who demonstrates to the satisfaction of the secretary that the applicant meets the following requirements for the applicant's practice area and submits a declaration that the applicant is working toward full licensure in that category:

(a) Licensed social worker associate—advanced or licensed social worker associate—independent clinical: Graduation from a master's degree or doctoral degree educational program in social work accredited by the council on social work education and approved by the secretary based upon nationally recognized standards.

(b) Licensed mental health counselor associate: Graduation from a master's degree or doctoral degree educational program in mental health counseling or a related discipline from a college or university approved by the secretary based upon nationally recognized standards.

(c) Licensed marriage and family therapist associate: Graduation from a master's degree or doctoral degree educational program in marriage and family therapy or graduation from an educational program in an allied field equivalent to a master's degree or doctoral degree in marriage and family therapy approved by the secretary based upon nationally recognized standards.

(2) Associates may not provide independent social work, mental health counseling, or marriage and family therapy for a fee, monetary or otherwise. Associates must work under the supervision of an approved supervisor.

(3)(a) An applicant for associate licensure under this section may work as a social worker associate, mental health counselor associate, or marriage and family therapist associate while the application is being processed. The applicant must provide required documentation within reasonable time limits established by the department, which may be extended if the applicant provides evidence of a good faith effort to obtain the documentation. If the applicant does not provide documentation or evidence of good faith efforts to obtain documentation, the applicant must stop working.

(b) Prior to the completion of a criminal background check performed by the secretary, the applicant's approved supervisor must be physically present on-site when the applicant is performing clinical counseling.

(4) Associates shall provide each client or patient, during the first professional contact, with a disclosure form according to RCW 18.225.100, disclosing that he or she is an associate under the supervision of an approved supervisor.

((~~(4)~~)) (5) The department shall adopt by rule what constitutes adequate proof of compliance with the requirements of this section.

((~~(5)~~)) (6) Applicants are subject to the denial of a license or issuance of a conditional license for the reasons set forth in chapter 18.130 RCW.

((~~(6)~~)) (7)(a) Except as provided in (b) of this subsection, an associate license may be renewed no more than six times, provided that the applicant for renewal has successfully completed eighteen hours of continuing education in the preceding year. Beginning with the second renewal, at least six of the continuing education hours in the preceding two years must be in professional ethics.

(b) If the secretary finds that a waiver to allow additional renewals is justified due to barriers to testing or training resulting from a governor-declared emergency, additional renewals may be approved.

(8) For the purpose of this section, "approved supervisor" includes licensed marriage and family therapists, licensed mental health counselors, licensed clinical social workers, licensed psychologists, licensed physicians practicing as psychiatrists, or licensed psychiatric nurse practitioners. If the supervisor's license does not match the discipline for which the applicant has applied to be an associate, the secretary may establish additional requirements by rule.

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