

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## EHB 1311

---

---

As of March 12, 2021

**Title:** An act relating to authorizing the issuance of substance use disorder professional certifications to persons participating in apprenticeship programs.

**Brief Description:** Authorizing the issuance of substance use disorder professional certifications to persons participating in apprenticeship programs.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Bronoske, Ryu, Simmons, Leavitt, Sells, Berry, Cody, Ortiz-Self, Chopp, Davis, Bateman, Lovick, Callan, Pollet, Macri and Peterson.

**Brief History:** Passed House: 2/12/21, 85-11.

**Committee Activity:** Health & Long Term Care: 3/10/21 [w/oRec-BH].  
Behavioral Health Subcommittee to Health & Long Term Care: 3/12/21.

### Brief Summary of Bill

- Allows the Department of Health (DOH) to issue a substance use disorder professional trainee credential to a person participating in an approved apprenticeship program.
- Requires DOH to establish educational requirements for substance use disorder professional trainee apprenticeships.

---

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

**Staff:** Kevin Black (786-7747)

**Background:** Apprenticeships Under the Department of Labor and Industries. The Department of Labor and Industries (L&I) is responsible for appointing a regulatory apprenticeship council, which authorizes apprenticeship programs, sets program standards, and other requirements, through agency rulemaking. Approved apprenticeship programs in

---

*This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.*

Washington range from positions in aerospace, construction, and energy efficiency services.

Substance Use Disorder Professionals and Trainees. A substance use disorder professional (SUDP) is a person certified by the Department of Health (DOH) in substance use disorder counseling who assists others with substance use disorder in their recovery. DOH certifies SUDPs who complete an approved educational program or complete alternate training that meets established criteria; successfully complete an approved examination, based on core competencies of substance use disorder counseling; and successfully complete the experience requirements, which vary depending upon the education level of the applicant. An SUDP trainee certification allows certificate holders to work towards the education and experience requirements for certification as a substance use disorder professional under the supervision of a certified professional. A trainee may provide substance use disorder assessments, counseling, clinical services, and case management to patients consistent with their training under supervision of an approved professional.

**Summary of Bill:** DOH may issue an SUDP trainee certificate to a person participating in an approved apprenticeship program, instead of an approved education program. DOH must establish educational requirements for an SUDP trainee apprenticeship, which must be registered and approved by L&I and approved by DOH.

**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 is important because there is a critical workforce shortage in this profession. The apprenticeship model has been used to great success in many other professions. Apprenticeships will help diversify the SUDP workforce so it is more reflective of the community. The more people who get trained, the more effective we can be. Far too many people can not access the care they need, due to inability to recruit and retain a diverse workforce. Education is valuable but not accessible for all. Many individuals have had to leave the field because of student loans. I have supervised many SUDPs. This project is incredibly meaningful. The current pathway is good, but it is not accessible enough. The earn while you learn premise is promising. Recruitment is a constant challenge for safety net agencies. The pandemic creates additional pressure. Life circumstances, finances, and time make college inaccessible for some people. Apprentices honor life experiences by building an experience-based education. The workforce is at crisis level, especially in the rural areas and around the state. We can not afford to worry about professionalism when there is such a crisis. Substance use among youth and young adults has increased, and creates a barrier to advancement through college. This bill opens equitable pathways for people with lived

experience who do not have means or support. Persons with lived experience build trust with our clients and will create successful recovery. Workforce diversity improves health outcomes. Apprenticeships provide low-barrier access to careers. If the existing system was working, we would not be facing this shortage. Registered apprenticeships will be strictly regulated and offered in partnership with colleges. The standards are not lowered for apprenticeships. We want good-paying health care jobs for BIPOC and immigrant workers. This is what equity looks like. The Children and Youth Behavioral Health Work Group Workforce Subcommittee reviewed this issue and endorses the creation of apprenticeships. This measure is a top recommendation of the State Workforce Board assessment on behavioral health workforce needs. It will address gaps in racial and socioeconomic representation.

CON: SUDPs are a profession, not a trade. Apprenticeships are not appropriate for professions. There are existing accessible points into the field for internships and college certificate programs. There are existing career pathways. An apprenticeship creates a dead end with no progress possible with no degree and no prerequisites for advancement. Apprenticeships degrade professionalism. We should not suggest that people of color are incapable of entering college. This bill diminishes the standing of the SUDP profession. The problem is low wages in the SUDP field, and this bill does nothing to increase pay. Creating a trade does not advance integration. We should instead create a bachelor's level credential. Funding grants and financial aid have historically proven to be more effective in bringing people into the field.

OTHER: As an employer I appreciate the need to grow the workforce and also to keep a focus on quality. We are concerned about inadequate stakeholder input into this bill. The college experience is relevant to our profession. Please amend the bill to create stakeholder input as this moves forward. We need to make sure we get this right. College administrators have not had a chance to weigh in on the impact on their programs. We do not want to harm existing educational programs that train our clinicians. Low wages is the sole reason why we have shortages. This is a hard job that does not pay well. A better way to create a career ladder and attract newcomers would be to create a bachelor's level credential.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Representative Dan Bronoske, Prime Sponsor; Melody McKee, Behavioral Health Institute; Kim Zacher, Comprehensive Life Resources; Mike Yestramski, WFSE Council 28; L.T. Townsend, SEIU 1199NW; Benjamin Feldbush, Comprehensive Life Resources; Laura Hopkins, Multi-Employer Training and Education Fund; Jane Hopkins, SEIU 1199NW; Julia O'Connor, Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board; Laurie Lippold, Partners for Our Children; Laurel Lemke.

CON: Marcia Roi, WACASE; Donna Wells, Catholic Community Services, Recovery Centers Northwest.

OTHER: Ron Tussey; Carl Kester, Lakeside Milam; Scott Munson, Sundown M Ranch.

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