
Health Care & Wellness Committee

HB 1348

Brief Description: Establishing behavioral health support specialists.

Sponsors: Representatives Callan, Macri, Berry, Leavitt, Morgan, Taylor, Ramel, Senn, Kloba, Chopp, Bateman, Reed, Lekanoff, Gregerson, Doglio, Tharinger, Paul, Eslick, Pollet and Stonier.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Establishes the profession of behavioral health support specialist.
- Requires the Health Care Authority to ensure that behavioral health support specialist services are covered by the state Medicaid program by January 1, 2025.
- Requires the Office of the Insurance Commissioner to integrate behavioral health support specialists into the network access standards by July 1, 2025.

Hearing Date: 1/27/23

Staff: Ingrid Lewis (786-7293).

Background:

The Department of Health (DOH) licenses and certifies health care professionals. Licensure or certification may entail the adoption of rules, verification of educational attainment and completion of supervised training, completion of a background check and verification of good character requirements, administration of a knowledge or practical skills examination, and collection of license or certification fees. The Uniform Disciplinary Act provides laws governing the conduct and discipline of license and certification holders, with the DOH acting as the disciplinary authority.

There are two certificate programs in Washington that offer training to become a behavioral health support specialist. Programs prepare behavioral health support specialists to provide low-

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intensity interventions to individuals with mild to moderate mental health or substance use disorders while under the supervision of a qualified health care professional.

Summary of Bill:

"Behavioral health support specialist" is defined as a person certified to deliver brief, evidence-based interventions under the supervision of a state credentialed provider who can assess, diagnose, and treat mental and behavioral health conditions within their scope of practice. A behavioral health support specialist is not permitted to make diagnoses within their scope of practice but are able to track and monitor treatment response and outcomes using measurement-based care.

An applicant for certification must have a bachelor's degree, completed an accredited behavioral health support specialist educational program, and passed an exam. An accredited program may be integrated into a bachelor's degree program or structured as a continuing education program. The program must include a supervised clinical practicum with demonstrated clinical skills in core competencies.

The Department of Health (DOH), in partnership with the University of Washington Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences and consultation with stakeholders, must develop rules consistent with program guidelines by January 1, 2025, for the certification of behavioral health support specialists and accreditation standards of behavioral health support specialist educational programs. The DOH may establish certification and examination fees for behavioral health support specialists. Behavioral Health Support Specialists are subject to professional discipline under the Uniform Disciplinary Act.

The Health Care Authority must ensure that behavioral health support specialist services are covered by the state Medicaid program by January 1, 2025. By July 1, 2025, the Office of the Insurance Commissioner must integrate behavioral health support specialists into the network access standards.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 16, 2023.

Effective Date: The bill contains multiple effective dates. Please see the bill.