
HOUSE BILL 1780

State of Washington

69th Legislature

2025 Regular Session

By Representatives Marshall, Schmidt, and Eslick

Read first time 02/03/25. Referred to Committee on Health Care & Wellness.

1 AN ACT Relating to promoting accurate communications between
2 patients and health care providers; amending RCW 18.79.030,
3 18.79.030, and 18.71A.030; creating a new section; providing an
4 effective date; and providing an expiration date.

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

6 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** (1) The legislature finds that:

7 (a) The terms and titles used by health care professionals in
8 clinical settings play a critical role in ensuring transparency and
9 trust between patients and their providers. Misunderstandings about a
10 health care provider's credentials can lead to patient confusion,
11 erode trust, and impact the quality of care;

12 (b) While physician assistants and advanced registered nurse
13 practitioners are highly trained professionals who provide essential
14 care, they are not licensed physicians or osteopathic physicians. The
15 use of the title "doctor" in clinical settings, without clear
16 clarification, may inadvertently lead patients to believe that these
17 providers have attained a doctor of medicine or doctor of osteopathic
18 medicine degree, which require different training and scope of
19 practice;

20 (c) Many patients may not fully understand the distinctions
21 between different health care credentials. Studies have shown that

1 clarity in provider titles improves patient satisfaction and ensures
2 that individuals are better informed about the qualifications of the
3 professionals treating them; and

4 (d) Protecting patients from potential misrepresentation is
5 critical to maintaining the integrity of the health care system.
6 Transparency in provider titles allows patients to make informed
7 decisions and understand the roles of each member of their care team.

8 (2) The legislature intends to prohibit physician assistants and
9 advanced registered nurse practitioners from referring to themselves
10 as "doctor" in clinical settings. This policy is designed to preserve
11 trust, ensure transparency, and protect patients from unnecessary
12 confusion about the qualifications of their health care providers.

13 **Sec. 2.** RCW 18.79.030 and 2023 c 123 s 19 are each amended to
14 read as follows:

15 (1) It is unlawful for a person to practice or to offer to
16 practice as a registered nurse in this state unless that person has
17 been licensed under this chapter or holds a valid multistate license
18 under chapter 18.80 RCW. A person who holds a license to practice as
19 a registered nurse in this state may use the titles "registered
20 nurse" and "nurse" and the abbreviation "R.N." No other person may
21 assume those titles or use the abbreviation or any other words,
22 letters, signs, or figures to indicate that the person using them is
23 a registered nurse.

24 (2) (a) It is unlawful for a person to practice or to offer to
25 practice as an advanced registered nurse practitioner or as a nurse
26 practitioner in this state unless that person has been licensed under
27 this chapter. A person who holds a license to practice as an advanced
28 registered nurse practitioner in this state may use the titles
29 "advanced registered nurse practitioner," "nurse practitioner," and
30 "nurse" and the abbreviations "A.R.N.P." and "N.P." No other person
31 may assume those titles or use those abbreviations or any other
32 words, letters, signs, or figures to indicate that the person using
33 them is an advanced registered nurse practitioner or nurse
34 practitioner.

35 (b) It shall be unprofessional conduct under chapter 18.130 RCW
36 for an advanced registered nurse practitioner to refer to themselves
37 as a "doctor" when providing care to a patient in a clinical setting.

38 (3) It is unlawful for a person to practice or to offer to
39 practice as a licensed practical nurse in this state unless that

1 person has been licensed under this chapter or holds a valid
2 multistate license under chapter 18.80 RCW. A person who holds a
3 license to practice as a licensed practical nurse in this state may
4 use the titles "licensed practical nurse" and "nurse" and the
5 abbreviation "L.P.N." No other person may assume those titles or use
6 that abbreviation or any other words, letters, signs, or figures to
7 indicate that the person using them is a licensed practical nurse.

8 (4) Nothing in this section shall prohibit a person listed as a
9 Christian Science nurse in the Christian Science Journal published by
10 the Christian Science Publishing Society, Boston, Massachusetts, from
11 using the title "Christian Science nurse," so long as such person
12 does not hold himself or herself out as a registered nurse, advanced
13 registered nurse practitioner, nurse practitioner, or licensed
14 practical nurse, unless otherwise authorized by law to do so.

15 **Sec. 3.** RCW 18.79.030 and 2024 c 239 s 1 are each amended to
16 read as follows:

17 (1) It is unlawful for a person to practice or to offer to
18 practice as a registered nurse in this state unless that person has
19 been licensed under this chapter or holds a valid multistate license
20 under chapter 18.80 RCW. A person who holds a license to practice as
21 a registered nurse in this state may use the titles "registered
22 nurse" and "nurse" and the abbreviation "R.N." No other person may
23 assume those titles or use the abbreviation or any other words,
24 letters, signs, or figures to indicate that the person using them is
25 a registered nurse.

26 (2) (a) It is unlawful for a person to practice or to offer to
27 practice as an advanced practice registered nurse or as a nurse
28 practitioner in this state unless that person has been licensed under
29 this chapter. A person who holds a license to practice as an advanced
30 practice registered nurse in this state may use the titles "advanced
31 practice registered nurse," "nurse practitioner," and "nurse" and the
32 abbreviations "A.P.R.N." and "N.P." No other person may assume those
33 titles or use those abbreviations or any other words, letters, signs,
34 or figures to indicate that the person using them is an advanced
35 practice registered nurse or nurse practitioner.

36 (b) It shall be unprofessional conduct under chapter 18.130 RCW
37 for an advanced practice registered nurse to refer to themselves as a
38 "doctor" when providing care to a patient in a clinical setting.

1 (3) It is unlawful for a person to practice or to offer to
2 practice as a licensed practical nurse in this state unless that
3 person has been licensed under this chapter or holds a valid
4 multistate license under chapter 18.80 RCW. A person who holds a
5 license to practice as a licensed practical nurse in this state may
6 use the titles "licensed practical nurse" and "nurse" and the
7 abbreviation "L.P.N." No other person may assume those titles or use
8 that abbreviation or any other words, letters, signs, or figures to
9 indicate that the person using them is a licensed practical nurse.

10 (4) Nothing in this section shall prohibit a person listed as a
11 Christian Science nurse in the Christian Science Journal published by
12 the Christian Science Publishing Society, Boston, Massachusetts, from
13 using the title "Christian Science nurse," so long as such person
14 does not hold himself or herself out as a registered nurse, advanced
15 practice registered nurse, nurse practitioner, or licensed practical
16 nurse, unless otherwise authorized by law to do so.

17 **Sec. 4.** RCW 18.71A.030 and 2024 c 62 s 5 are each amended to
18 read as follows:

19 (1) A physician assistant may practice medicine in this state to
20 the extent permitted by the collaboration agreement. A physician
21 assistant shall be subject to discipline under chapter 18.130 RCW.

22 (2)(a) A physician assistant who has completed fewer than 4,000
23 hours of postgraduate clinical practice must work under the
24 supervision of a participating physician, as described in the
25 collaboration agreement and determined at the practice site. A
26 physician assistant with 4,000 or more hours of postgraduate clinical
27 practice may work in collaboration with a participating physician, if
28 the physician assistant has completed 2,000 or more supervised hours
29 in the physician assistant's chosen specialty.

30 (b) If a physician assistant chooses to change specialties after
31 the completion of 4,000 hours of postgraduate clinical practice, the
32 first 2,000 hours of postgraduate clinical practice in the new
33 specialty must be completed under the supervision of a participating
34 physician, as described in the collaboration agreement and determined
35 at the practice site.

36 (c) Supervision shall not be construed to necessarily require the
37 personal presence of the participating physician or physicians at the
38 place where services are rendered.

1 (3) (a) Physician assistants may provide services that they are
2 competent to perform based on their education, training, and
3 experience and that are consistent with their collaboration
4 agreement. The participating physician or physicians, or the
5 physician assistant's employer, and the physician assistant shall
6 determine which procedures may be performed and the degree of
7 autonomy under which the procedure is performed.

8 (b) Physician assistants may practice in any area of medicine or
9 surgery as long as the practice is not beyond the scope of expertise
10 and clinical practice of the participating physician or physicians or
11 the group of physicians within the department or specialty areas in
12 which the physician assistant practices.

13 (c) A physician assistant who has at least 10 years or 20,000
14 hours of postgraduate clinical experience in a specialty may continue
15 to provide those specialty services if the physician assistant is
16 employed in a practice setting where those services are outside the
17 specialty of the physician assistant's participating physician or
18 physicians, as outlined in the collaboration agreement, if the
19 practice is located in a rural area as identified by the department
20 under RCW 70.180.011 or in an underserved area as designated by the
21 health resources and services administration as a medically
22 underserved area or having a medically underserved population. The
23 physician assistant must complete continuing education related to
24 that specialty while performing services outside the specialty of the
25 physician assistant's participating physician or physicians.

26 (4) A physician assistant working with an anesthesiologist who is
27 acting as a participating physician as defined in RCW 18.71A.010 to
28 deliver general anesthesia or intrathecal anesthesia pursuant to a
29 collaboration agreement shall show evidence of adequate education and
30 training in the delivery of the type of anesthesia being delivered on
31 the physician assistant's collaboration agreement as stipulated by
32 the commission.

33 (5) It shall be unprofessional conduct under chapter 18.130 RCW
34 for a physician assistant to refer to themselves as a "doctor" when
35 providing care to a patient in a clinical setting.

36 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 5.** Section 2 of this act expires June 30,
37 2027.

1 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 6.** Section 3 of this act takes effect June
2 30, 2027.

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