

**RCW 18.130.170 Capacity of license holder to practice—Hearing—
Mental or physical examination—Implied consent.**

(1) If the disciplining authority believes a license holder may be unable to practice with reasonable skill and safety to consumers by reason of any mental or physical condition, a statement of charges in the name of the disciplining authority shall be served on the license holder and notice shall also be issued providing an opportunity for a hearing. The hearing shall be limited to the sole issue of the capacity of the license holder to practice with reasonable skill and safety. If the disciplining authority determines that the license holder is unable to practice with reasonable skill and safety for one of the reasons stated in this subsection, the disciplining authority shall impose such sanctions under RCW 18.130.160 as is deemed necessary to protect the public.

(2)(a) In investigating or adjudicating a complaint or report that a license holder may be unable to practice with reasonable skill or safety by reason of any mental or physical condition, the disciplining authority may require a license holder to submit to a mental or physical examination by one or more licensed or certified health professionals designated by the disciplining authority. The license holder shall be provided written notice of the disciplining authority's intent to order a mental or physical examination, which notice shall include: (i) A statement of the specific conduct, event, or circumstances justifying an examination; (ii) a summary of the evidence supporting the disciplining authority's concern that the license holder may be unable to practice with reasonable skill and safety by reason of a mental or physical condition, and the grounds for believing such evidence to be credible and reliable; (iii) a statement of the nature, purpose, scope, and content of the intended examination; (iv) a statement that the license holder has the right to respond in writing within twenty days to challenge the disciplining authority's grounds for ordering an examination or to challenge the manner or form of the examination; and (v) a statement that if the license holder timely responds to the notice of intent, then the license holder will not be required to submit to the examination while the response is under consideration.

(b) Upon submission of a timely response to the notice of intent to order a mental or physical examination, the license holder shall have an opportunity to respond to or refute such an order by submission of evidence or written argument or both. The evidence and written argument supporting and opposing the mental or physical examination shall be reviewed by either a panel of the disciplining authority members who have not been involved with the allegations against the license holder or a neutral decision maker approved by the disciplining authority. The reviewing panel of the disciplining authority or the approved neutral decision maker may, in its discretion, ask for oral argument from the parties. The reviewing panel of the disciplining authority or the approved neutral decision maker shall prepare a written decision as to whether: There is reasonable cause to believe that the license holder may be unable to practice with reasonable skill and safety by reason of a mental or physical condition, or the manner or form of the mental or physical examination is appropriate, or both.

(c) Upon receipt by the disciplining authority of the written decision, or upon the failure of the license holder to timely respond to the notice of intent, the disciplining authority may issue an order

requiring the license holder to undergo a mental or physical examination. All such mental or physical examinations shall be narrowly tailored to address only the alleged mental or physical condition and the ability of the license holder to practice with reasonable skill and safety. An order of the disciplining authority requiring the license holder to undergo a mental or physical examination is not a final order for purposes of appeal. The cost of the examinations ordered by the disciplining authority shall be paid out of the health professions account. In addition to any examinations ordered by the disciplining authority, the license holder may submit physical or mental examination reports from licensed or certified health professionals of the license holder's choosing and expense.

(d) If the disciplining authority finds that a license holder has failed to submit to a properly ordered mental or physical examination, then the disciplining authority may order appropriate action or discipline under RCW 18.130.180(9), unless the failure was due to circumstances beyond the person's control. However, no such action or discipline may be imposed unless the license holder has had the notice and opportunity to challenge the disciplining authority's grounds for ordering the examination, to challenge the manner and form, to assert any other defenses, and to have such challenges or defenses considered by either a panel of the disciplining authority members who have not been involved with the allegations against the license holder or a neutral decision maker approved by the disciplining authority, as previously set forth in this section. Further, the action or discipline ordered by the disciplining authority shall not be more severe than a suspension of the license, certification, registration, or application until such time as the license holder complies with the properly ordered mental or physical examination.

(e) Nothing in this section shall restrict the power of a disciplining authority to act in an emergency under RCW 34.05.422(4), 34.05.479, and 18.130.050(8).

(f) A determination by a court of competent jurisdiction that a license holder is mentally incompetent or an individual with mental illness is presumptive evidence of the license holder's inability to practice with reasonable skill and safety. An individual affected under this section shall at reasonable intervals be afforded an opportunity, at his or her expense, to demonstrate that the individual can resume competent practice with reasonable skill and safety to the consumer.

(3) For the purpose of subsection (2) of this section, a license holder governed by this chapter, by making application, practicing, or filing a license renewal, is deemed to have given consent to submit to a mental, physical, or psychological examination when directed in writing by the disciplining authority and further to have waived all objections to the admissibility or use of the examining health professional's testimony or examination reports by the disciplining authority on the ground that the testimony or reports constitute privileged communications. [2008 c 134 s 11; 1995 c 336 s 8; 1987 c 150 s 6; 1986 c 259 s 9; 1984 c 279 s 17.]

Finding—Intent—Severability—2008 c 134: See notes following RCW 18.130.020.

Severability—1987 c 150: See RCW 18.122.901.

Severability—1986 c 259: See note following RCW 18.130.010.