

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## HB 2474

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**As Reported by House Committee On:**  
Health Care & Wellness

**Title:** An act relating to supervised experience requirements for social worker licenses.

**Brief Description:** Modifying supervised experience requirements for social worker licenses.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Cody, Wood, Morrell, Barlow and Green.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:**

Health Care & Wellness: 1/14/08, 1/21/08 [DPS].

**Brief Summary of Substitute Bill**

- Modifies the supervised experience requirement for licensed social workers, including standardizing the years of licensure required for supervisors to two years, and allowing supervision to be provided by an equally qualified mental health practitioner.
- Applies retroactively to July 22, 2001.

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### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH CARE & WELLNESS

**Majority Report:** The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 13 members: Representatives Cody, Chair; Morrell, Vice Chair; Hinkle, Ranking Minority Member; Alexander, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Barlow, Campbell, Condotta, DeBolt, Green, Moeller, Pedersen, Schual-Berke and Seaquist.

**Staff:** Chris Cordes (786-7103).

**Background:**

Until 2001, counselors, including social workers and mental health counselors, were registered under the same law. In 2001 licensed social workers, licensed mental health counselors, and licensed marriage and family therapists became regulated by the Department of Health (DOH)

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under a separate law. Licensing requirements for all three professions include specific education, examination, and supervised experience requirements.

Licensed social workers may qualify for licensure in one of two categories: licensed advanced social workers or licensed independent clinical social workers. Each category requires an applicant to meet specified supervised experience requirements.

The supervised experience requirement for licensed social workers is specified in statute. For licensed advanced social workers, the experience requirements include, among other things:

- a minimum of 3,200 hours of experience;
- ninety hours supervised by a licensed independent clinical social worker or a licensed advanced social worker who has been licensed at least two years;
- of those hours, 50 hours of direct supervision by a licensed independent clinical social worker or a licensed advanced social worker; the other 40 hours may be with an equally qualified licensed mental health practitioner; and
- at least 800 hours in direct client contact.

The supervised experience requirement for licensed independent clinical social workers, include, among other things:

- a minimum of 4,000 hours of experience, with 1,000 hours of direct client contact supervised by a licensed independent clinical social worker who has been licensed at least five years and has had at least one year of clinical practice supervision experience;
- at least 130 hours supervised by a licensed mental health practitioner; and
- of the total supervision, 70 hours with an independent clinical social worker meeting the statutory experience requirements; the other 60 hours may be with an equally qualified licensed mental health practitioner.

Under DOH rules, the required experience for licensed social workers is supervised by an approved supervisor. An approved supervisor may be a licensed independent clinical social worker, a licensed advanced social worker (for licensed advanced social workers only), or an equally qualified licensed mental health practitioner. An "equally qualified licensed mental health practitioner" means a licensed mental health counselor, a licensed marriage and family therapist, a licensed psychologist, a licensed physician practicing as a psychiatrist, or a licensed psychiatric nurse practitioner.

Approved supervisors must meet certain requirements in the rules, including holding an unrestricted license for at least two years, completing certain supervisor training, and having, for licensed advanced social workers only, two years of clinical experience postlicensure or, for licensed independent clinical social workers only, five years of clinical experience postlicensure.

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### **Summary of Substitute Bill:**

For both categories of licensed social workers, some of the required supervised experience may be provided by an equally qualified licensed mental health practitioner. All of the

licensed supervisors must be approved supervisors. For both categories, an approved supervisor must be licensed for at least two years (which reduces the five-year licensure requirement to two years when licensed independent clinical social worker applicants are supervised).

Additional changes are made to clarify the supervised experience requirements for licensed social workers and to organize these requirements in a more consistent format.

These changes apply retroactively to July 22, 2003.

**Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:**

The substitute bill adds a provision making the bill apply retroactively to July 22, 2001.

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**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.

**Effective Date of Substitute Bill:** The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:**

(In support) The law made an error in requiring five years of postlicensure experience for a licensed independent clinical social worker to be a qualified supervisor. The intent was to require two years of experience after licensure and three years of experience during the licensure process. Now, it takes eight years to qualify as a supervisor. It is hard to find qualified supervisors. There needs to be a pool of qualified supervisors to draw from. Mental health agencies cannot fill the counselor ranks. Retention is also a problem, which results in lower levels of service. The bill needs to be made retroactive back to July 22, 2001, so that it will apply to previous supervisors, and current applicants will be able to satisfy the supervised experience requirements.

(Opposed) None.

**Persons Testifying:** Representative Cody, prime sponsor; Laura Groshong, Washington State Society for Clinical Social Work; Graydon Andrus; Hoyt Suppes, National Association of Social Workers; and Sandra Johnson, Swedish Cancer Institute.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** None.