
HOUSE BILL 2112

State of Washington

60th Legislature

2007 Regular Session

By Representative Pettigrew

Read first time 02/08/2007. Referred to Committee on Early Learning & Children's Services.

1 AN ACT Relating to protecting consumers and agency clients by
2 clarifying the definition of social worker; amending RCW 18.225.010 and
3 70.124.020; adding a new section to chapter 18.225 RCW; and creating a
4 new section.

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

6 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** The legislature finds that the public's
7 interest is best served by receiving social and clinical services from
8 a professional social worker who abides by a professional code of
9 ethics, is educated in the field of social work, and is deemed by the
10 completion of requirements of the social work education and/or
11 licensing requirements to be a social worker.

12 Social work education provides a unique combination of knowledge,
13 values, skills, and professional ethics that cannot be obtained through
14 other educational programs, equipping professional social workers with
15 the specialized knowledge base necessary for an effective social
16 services delivery system that cannot be approximated through other
17 degree programs or on-the-job training.

18 In addition, many professional social workers practice in settings
19 that do not require licensure and the professional title of social

1 worker is misunderstood or undervalued due to use of the title "social
2 worker" by persons neither trained nor licensed as a professional
3 social worker.

4 It is therefore the intent of the legislature to ensure that the
5 title of "social worker" is defined clearly for mental health consumers
6 and the clients of public and private agencies.

7 **Sec. 2.** RCW 18.225.010 and 2001 c 251 s 1 are each amended to read
8 as follows:

9 Unless the context clearly requires otherwise, the definitions in
10 this section apply throughout this chapter.

11 (1) "Advanced social work" means the application of social work
12 theory and methods including emotional and biopsychosocial assessment,
13 psychotherapy under the supervision of a licensed independent clinical
14 social worker, case management, consultation, advocacy, counseling, and
15 community organization.

16 (2) "Applicant" means a person who completes the required
17 application, pays the required fee, is at least eighteen years of age,
18 and meets any background check requirements and uniform disciplinary
19 act requirements.

20 (3) "Committee" means the Washington state mental health
21 counselors, marriage and family therapists, and social workers advisory
22 committee.

23 (4) "Department" means the department of health.

24 (5) "Disciplining authority" means the department.

25 (6) "Independent clinical social work" means the diagnosis and
26 treatment of emotional and mental disorders based on knowledge of human
27 development, the causation and treatment of psychopathology,
28 psychotherapeutic treatment practices, and social work practice as
29 defined in advanced social work. Treatment modalities include but are
30 not limited to diagnosis and treatment of individuals, couples,
31 families, groups, or organizations.

32 (7) "Marriage and family therapy" means the diagnosis and treatment
33 of mental and emotional disorders, whether cognitive, affective, or
34 behavioral, within the context of relationships, including marriage and
35 family systems. Marriage and family therapy involves the professional
36 application of psychotherapeutic and family systems theories and
37 techniques in the delivery of services to individuals, couples, and

1 families for the purpose of treating such diagnosed nervous and mental
2 disorders. The practice of marriage and family therapy means the
3 rendering of professional marriage and family therapy services to
4 individuals, couples, and families, singly or in groups, whether such
5 services are offered directly to the general public or through
6 organizations, either public or private, for a fee, monetary or
7 otherwise.

8 (8) "Mental health counseling" means the application of principles
9 of human development, learning theory, psychotherapy, group dynamics,
10 and etiology of mental illness and dysfunctional behavior to
11 individuals, couples, families, groups, and organizations, for the
12 purpose of treatment of mental disorders and promoting optimal mental
13 health and functionality. Mental health counseling also includes, but
14 is not limited to, the assessment, diagnosis, and treatment of mental
15 and emotional disorders, as well as the application of a wellness model
16 of mental health.

17 (9) "Secretary" means the secretary of health or the secretary's
18 designee.

19 (10) "Social worker" means a person who has met one or more of the
20 following requirements:

21 (a) Graduation from a bachelor's, master's, or doctorate social
22 work educational program accredited by the council on social work
23 education and approved by the secretary based upon nationally
24 recognized standards; or

25 (b) Is licensed under RCW 18.225.090 as a licensed advanced social
26 worker or licensed independent clinical social worker.

27 **Sec. 3.** RCW 70.124.020 and 1999 c 176 s 21 are each amended to
28 read as follows:

29 Unless the context requires otherwise, the definitions in this
30 section apply throughout this chapter.

31 (1) "Court" means the superior court of the state of Washington.

32 (2) "Law enforcement agency" means the police department, the
33 director of public safety, or the office of the sheriff.

34 (3) "Practitioner of the healing arts" or "practitioner" means a
35 person licensed by this state to practice podiatric medicine and
36 surgery, optometry, pharmacy, physical therapy, chiropractic, nursing,

1 dentistry, osteopathic medicine and surgery, or medicine and surgery.
2 The term "practitioner" includes a nurse's aide and a duly accredited
3 Christian Science practitioner.

4 (4) "Department" means the state department of social and health
5 services.

6 (5) "Social worker" means ~~((anyone engaged in a professional
7 capacity during the regular course of employment in encouraging or
8 promoting the health, welfare, support, or education of patients, or
9 providing social services to patients, whether in an individual
10 capacity or as an employee or agent of any public or private
11 organization or institution))~~ a person who has met one or more of the
12 following requirements:

13 (a) Graduation from a bachelor's, master's, or doctorate social
14 work educational program accredited by the council on social work
15 education and approved by the secretary based upon nationally
16 recognized standards; or

17 (b) Is licensed under RCW 18.225.090 as a licensed advanced social
18 worker or licensed independent clinical social worker.

19 (6) "Psychologist" means any person licensed to practice psychology
20 under chapter 18.83 RCW, whether acting in an individual capacity or as
21 an employee or agent of any public or private organization or
22 institution.

23 (7) "Pharmacist" means any registered pharmacist under chapter
24 18.64 RCW, whether acting in an individual capacity or as an employee
25 or agent of any public or private organization or institution.

26 (8) "Abuse or neglect" or "patient abuse or neglect" means the
27 nonaccidental physical injury or condition, sexual abuse, or negligent
28 treatment of a state hospital patient under circumstances which
29 indicate that the patient's health, welfare, or safety is harmed
30 thereby.

31 (9) "Negligent treatment" means an act or omission which evinces a
32 serious disregard of consequences of such magnitude as to constitute a
33 clear and present danger to the patient's health, welfare, or safety.

34 (10) "State hospital" means any hospital operated and maintained by
35 the state for the care of the mentally ill under chapter 72.23 RCW.

36 NEW SECTION. Sec. 4. A new section is added to chapter 18.225 RCW
37 to read as follows:

1 (1) To safeguard the people of the state of Washington from the
2 dangers of unqualified, unethical, and improper practice of social
3 work, a person must not represent himself or herself as a social worker
4 without being qualified as a social worker as defined in this chapter.

5 (2) No public or private agencies or organizations in the state of
6 Washington shall use the title "social worker" or any form of the title
7 for volunteer or employment positions or within contracts for services,
8 documents, manuals, or reference material, effective January 1, 2008,
9 unless all volunteers or employees in those positions meet the
10 qualifications of a social worker as defined in this chapter, or were
11 employed with the title "social worker" on or before the effective date
12 of this act.

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