
Health Care & Wellness Committee

HB 1213

Brief Description: Concerning social worker licensing.

Sponsors: Representatives Orwall, Pettigrew, Kagi, Morrell and Ryu.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Expands the types of health professions that may supervise advanced social workers when performing psychotherapy.
- Extends the number of times that an associate-level license for social workers, marriage and family therapists, and mental health counselors may be renewed from four to six.
- Requires associate-level social workers to comply with suicide assessment, treatment, and management training requirements.

Hearing Date: 2/1/13

Staff: Chris Blake (786-7392).

Background:

The Department of Health (Department) licenses two types of social workers: independent clinical social workers and advanced social workers. Advanced social workers apply social work theory and methods including emotional assessment, supervised psychotherapy, case management, consultation, advocacy, counseling, or community organization. Independent clinical social workers diagnose and treat emotional and mental disorders based on knowledge of human development, cause and treatment of psychopathology, psychotherapy treatment, and social work practice. Both categories of social workers must have graduated from a master's or doctorate level program in social work education, passed an examination, completed a supervised experience requirement, and completed continuing education requirements.

In addition to fully licensed professionals, the Department licenses associate-level social workers, marriage and family therapists, and mental health counselors. These individuals must

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have graduated from an educational program in their field and declare that they are working toward a full license. Associates must work under the supervision of an approved supervisor. The associate license may be renewed up to four times.

Summary of Bill:

Legislative findings are made that advanced social workers and independent clinical social workers both represent the highest level of practice within the social work profession.

The categories of health professions that may supervise an advanced social worker when performing psychotherapy is expanded from only independent clinical social workers, to also include psychiatrists, psychologists, psychiatric advanced registered nurse practitioners, psychiatric nurses, and other mental health professionals as established in rule by the Secretary of Health (Secretary).

The requirement that applicants for an independent clinical social worker license complete 4,000 hours of supervised experience over a three year period is extended to allow the hours to be completed over a period of not less than three years.

Applications for a license as a social worker, marriage and family therapist, or mental health counselor must be considered under the applicable regulations in effect at the time that a completed application is submitted to the Department of Health. Subsequently adopted regulations may not be the basis for denying an application.

The number of times that an associate level license for social workers, marriage and family therapists, or mental health counselors may be renewed is increased from four times to six. The renewal of an associate-level license is contingent upon the applicant having completed 18 hours of continuing education in the prior year. From 2014 until 2020, the Secretary must annually report to the appropriate committees of the Legislature regarding the number of associate licenses that have been renewed either four, five, or six times.

Associate-level social workers must comply with suicide assessment, treatment, and management training requirements.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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