
SECOND SUBSTITUTE SENATE BILL 6544

State of Washington

64th Legislature

2016 Regular Session

By Senate Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators O'Ban and Darneille)

READ FIRST TIME 02/09/16.

1 AN ACT Relating to simplifying behavioral health regulations and
2 aligning them with other health regulations to support clinical
3 integration; adding a new section to chapter 71.24 RCW; and creating
4 a new section.

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

6 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** A new section is added to chapter 71.24
7 RCW to read as follows:

8 (1) The department and the Washington state health care authority
9 shall convene a task force including participation by a
10 representative cross-section of behavioral health organizations and
11 behavioral health providers to align regulations between behavioral
12 health and primary health care settings and simplify regulations for
13 behavioral health providers. The alignment must support clinical
14 integration from the standpoint of standardizing practices and
15 culture in a manner that to the extent practicable reduces barriers
16 to access, including reducing the paperwork burden for patients and
17 providers. Brief integrated behavioral health services must not, in
18 general, take longer to document than to provide. Regulations should
19 emphasize the desired outcome rather than how they should be
20 achieved. The task force may also make recommendations to the
21 department concerning subsections (2) and (3) of this section.

1 (2) The department shall collaborate with the department of
2 health, the Washington state health care authority, and other
3 appropriate government partners to reduce unneeded costs and burdens
4 to health plans and providers associated with excessive audits, the
5 licensing process, and contracting. In pursuit of this goal, the
6 department shall consider steps such as cooperating across divisions
7 and agencies to combine audit functions when multiple audits of an
8 agency or site are scheduled, sharing audit information across
9 divisions and agencies to reduce redundancy of audits, and treating
10 organizations with multiple sites and programs as single entities
11 instead of as multiple agencies.

12 (3) The department shall review its practices under RCW
13 71.24.035(5)(c)(i) to determine whether its practices comply with the
14 statutory mandate to deem accreditation by recognized behavioral
15 health accrediting bodies as equivalent to meeting licensure
16 requirements, comport with standard practices used by other state
17 divisions or agencies, and properly incentivize voluntary
18 accreditation to the highest industry standards.

19 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** The department of social and health
20 services and the Washington state health care authority shall report
21 their progress under section 1 of this act to the relevant committees
22 of the legislature by December 15, 2016.

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