

WSR 24-10-012
PREPROPOSAL STATEMENT OF INQUIRY
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

[Filed April 18, 2024, 1:00 p.m.]

Subject of Possible Rule Making: Mental health counselor, marriage and family therapist, and social worker professions; reducing barriers to licensure and streamlining the credentialing process in chapter 246-809 WAC.

The department of health (department) is considering rule amendments to implement legislation, including 2SHB 1724 (chapter 425, Laws of 2023); SHB 1069 (chapter 58, Laws of 2023); SHB 1939 (chapter 176, Laws of 2024); and E2SHB 2247 (chapter 371, Laws of 2024). To implement this legislation, the department will consider: (1) Reducing or removing barriers to entering and remaining in the behavioral health care workforce; (2) measures to streamline and shorten the credentialing process; (3) implementing interstate licensing compacts; (4) removing renewal limits for associate level credentials; and (5) other amendments to the chapter as appropriate. This may include amending or reducing continuing education requirements, allowing professional experience to substitute for clinical practicum experience, or addressing other issues raised by the department, partners, or interested parties. Existing rules may be amended or repealed, and new sections of rule may be adopted.

Statutes Authorizing the Agency to Adopt Rules on this Subject: RCW 18.225.040 and 18.225.090; 2SHB 1724 (chapter 425, Laws of 2023); SHB 1069 (chapter 58, Laws of 2023); SHB 1939 (chapter 176, Laws of 2024); E2SHB 2247 (chapter 371, Laws of 2024).

Reasons Why Rules on this Subject may be Needed and What They Might Accomplish: Rule making is necessary to fully implement recent legislation. During the 2023 legislative session, 2SHB 1724 specifically directed the department to complete rule making to implement changes to licensure requirements to remove barriers to entering and remaining in the health care workforce and to streamline and shorten the credentialing process. Additionally, 2024 legislation directed the department to complete rule making to implement E2SHB 2247, which removes the limitation on how many times an associate may renew their license and will allow an applicant for an associate license to practice under an approved supervisor for up to 120 days while their application is being processed.

The department is also considering rule making to enact the counseling and social work licensure compacts under SHB 1069 and 1939.

Rule making is necessary to set clear, enforceable standards that support patient safety.

Other Federal and State Agencies that Regulate this Subject and the Process Coordinating the Rule with These Agencies: None.

Process for Developing New Rule: Collaborative rule making.

Interested parties can participate in the decision to adopt the new rule and formulation of the proposed rule before publication by contacting Lana Crawford, P.O. Box 47852, Olympia, WA 98504-7852, phone 564-669-1455, TTY 711, email Lana.Crawford@doh.wa.gov, website www.doh.wa.gov.

Additional comments: Interested parties can participate in drafting the proposed rules. The department will be conducting rules workshops with interested parties and subject matter experts. The department will use the GovDelivery list for licensed mental health counselor, marriage and family therapist, and social worker to inform inter-

ested parties of opportunities to provide input on proposed rule language.

To subscribe to GovDelivery, please go to <https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/WADOH/subscriber/new>. After signing in, please click open the box labeled "Health Systems Quality Assurance." Next, click open the box labeled "Health Professions," and then click on "licensed mental health counselor, marriage and family therapist, and social worker." You may also check the box next to one or more of the other professions listed to receive information related to that specific profession.

April 18, 2024
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Secretary