

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SHB 2209

As Passed House:

March 10, 2007

Title: An act relating to allowing advanced registered nurse practitioners to examine and obtain copies of autopsy reports and records.

Brief Description: Allowing advanced registered nurse practitioners to examine and obtain copies of autopsy reports.

Sponsors: By House Committee on Health Care & Wellness (originally sponsored by Representatives Seaquist, Morrell, Curtis, Green, Moeller and Ormsby).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Health Care & Wellness: 2/22/07, 2/26/07 [DPS].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 3/10/07, 97-0.

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Specifies that confidential autopsy records may be released to a decedent's attending advanced registered nurse practitioner (ARNP) and that the ARNP will meet, on request, to discuss the autopsy findings with the decedent's family.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH CARE & WELLNESS

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Cody, Chair; Morrell, Vice Chair; Barlow, Campbell, Green, Moeller, Pedersen, Schual-Berke and Seaquist.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 4 members: Representatives Hinkle, Ranking Minority Member; Alexander, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Condotta and Curtis.

Staff: Chris Cordes (786-7103).

Background:

Advanced Registered Nurse Practitioners

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

By statute, advanced registered nurse practice is the performance, by a registered nurse, of an expanded role in providing health care as recognized by the medical and nursing professions and defined by the Department of Health (DOH).

The DOH rules provide that an advanced registered nurse practitioner (ARNP) is a registered nurse prepared to assume primary responsibility for management of a broad range of patient care. The ARNP's function within the specialty scopes of practice and standards of care developed by national professional organizations and reviewed and approved by the State Nursing Care Quality Commission.

According to the rules, an ARNP's practice incorporates the use of independent judgment as well as collaborative interaction with other health care professionals when indicated in the assessment and management of conditions appropriate to the ARNP's area of specialization.

Records of Autopsies

The bodies of individuals who die suddenly, under unnatural or unlawful circumstances, or from violence, among other specified causes, are under the jurisdiction of the county coroner. Autopsies may be performed as required by the coroner, as authorized by family members, guardians, or agencies authorized to dispose of the decedent's remains, or upon court order.

Records of autopsies are confidential. They may be released only to specified parties, including the decedent's family, the attending physician, and certain agencies with relevant official business. On request, the attending physician or the coroner must meet with the decedent's family members to discuss the autopsy findings.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

Confidential records of autopsies may be released to a decedent's ARNP, as well as a decedent's attending physician. The attending ARNP, like the attending physician, is one of the parties that will meet with the family, on request, to discuss the autopsy findings.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) Psychiatric mental health nurse practitioners often have patients with no medical home. They are urged to get medical attention, which frequently occurs at community clinics where the provider will often be an advanced registered nurse practitioner (ARNP). If the patient dies unexpectedly, it would be very useful to know why in order to help prevent future

deaths. The information needed is in the autopsy report. But the autopsy report, by statute, may only be released to the attending physician. Even the chief medical officer at the clinic cannot receive autopsy reports unless he or she was the attending physician. The ARNPs have a scope of practice that covers these patients.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Mary Montgomery, Association of Advanced Practice Psychiatric Nurses.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.