

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6144

As of January 18, 2024

Title: An act relating to establishing a prescribing psychologist certification in Washington state.

Brief Description: Establishing a prescribing psychologist certification in Washington state.

Sponsors: Senators Randall, Rivers, Muzzall, Dhingra, Robinson, Van De Wege, Conway, Frame, Lovick, Nguyen, Nobles, Saldaña and Wilson, C..

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Health & Long Term Care: 1/19/24.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Directs the Department of Health to certify psychologists who have completed special education, training, and supervised experience as prescribing psychologists.
- Restricts the prescribing authority of prescribing psychologists to prescribing psychotropic medications and ordering related tests.
- Adds an expert in psychiatric prescribing to the Examining Board of Psychology.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON LAW & JUSTICE

Staff:

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & LONG TERM CARE

Staff: Kevin Black (786-7747)

Background: Practice of Psychology. The practice of psychology is the observation,

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evaluation, interpretation, and modification of human behavior by the application of psychological principles, methods, and procedures. Psychologists diagnose and treat behavioral health disorders and may engage in measurement, assessment, and evaluation. To be licensed in Washington, a psychologist must have a doctorate from an accredited institution, no fewer than two years of supervised experience, and pass a moral character review and examination.

The Examining Board of Psychology. The Examining Board of Psychology consists of nine psychologists and two public members, and is responsible for the development of rules, policies, and procedures related to the qualifications, licensing, discipline, education, and training of psychologists in Washington.

Professionals With Prescriptive Authority in Washington. Professionals in Washington which have prescriptive authority include allopathic and osteopathic physicians, allopathic and osteopathic physician assistants, advanced registered nurse practitioners, dentists, naturopaths, optometrists, and podiatric physicians.

Prescribing Psychologists. Several states, including Louisiana, New Mexico, Indiana, Illinois, Idaho, and Colorado; the federal government; and Indian Health Service allow psychologists who have undergone special education and training to prescribe psychoactive drugs. The Department of Health published a sunrise review on the topic of prescribing psychologists in Washington in December 2020.

Summary of Bill: A psychologist may apply for certification as a prescribing psychologist if the psychologist:

- holds a current license as a psychologist;
- has completed a master's degree program in psychopharmacology;
- has completed at least 80 hours of supervised experience in physical assessment;
- has completed a supervised clinical prescribing fellowship comprised of at least 500 hours and 100 individual patients; and
- passes an examination in prescribing competence developed by a nationally recognized organization and approved by the Examining Board of Psychology.

The required master's degree program in psychopharmacology must be substantially equivalent to the training required of advanced practice psychiatric nurses and include two years of instructions, at least 400 contact hours, and sufficient biomedical education to ensure the necessary knowledge and skills to prescribe psychotropic medications.

The prescribing authority of a prescribing psychologist is limited to prescription of psychotropic medications recognized or customarily used in the treatment of behavioral health disorders. A prescribing psychologist may order and obtain laboratory tests, procedures, and diagnostic exams necessary to exercise this prescriptive authority. A prescribing psychologist must maintain an ongoing collaborative relationship with a health care practitioner who oversees the patient's general medical care to ensure necessary

medical examinations are conducted and that any psychotropic medication is appropriate for the patient's medical condition.

A prescribing psychologist may not prescribe opioid medications except for medications appropriate for treatment of an opioid use disorder which are prescribed for the purpose of treatment of such a disorder. All prescriptions written must be identified as being written by a prescribing psychologist.

An expert in psychiatric prescribing is added to the Examining Board of Psychology (Board). The Board must adopt rules relating to prescribing psychologists.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 9, 2024.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.