

**Chapter 18.233 RCW  
MUSIC THERAPISTS**

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**RCW 18.233.005 Intent.** The legislature intends to:

- (1) Recognize that music therapy affects public health, safety, and welfare and that the practice of music therapy should be subject to regulation;
- (2) Assure the highest degree of professional conduct on the part of music therapists;
- (3) Guarantee the availability of music therapy services provided by a qualified professional to persons in need of those services; and
- (4) Protect the public from the practice of music therapy by unqualified individuals. [2023 c 175 § 1.]

**RCW 18.233.010 Definitions.** The definitions in this section apply throughout this chapter unless the context clearly requires otherwise.

- (1) "Advisory committee" means the music therapy advisory committee.
- (2) "Commission" means the Washington medical commission.
- (3) "Department" means the department of health.
- (4) "Music therapist" means a person licensed to practice music therapy pursuant to this chapter.
- (5)(a) "Music therapy" means the clinical and evidence-based use of music interventions to accomplish individualized goals of music therapy clients by employing strategies and tools that include but are not limited to:
  - (i) Accepting referrals for music therapy services from health care or educational professionals, family members, or caregivers;
  - (ii) Conducting music therapy assessments of a client to determine appropriate music therapy services;
  - (iii) Developing and implementing individualized music therapy treatment plans that identify goals, objectives, and strategies of music therapy that are appropriate for clients;
  - (iv) Using music therapy techniques such as improvisation, performance, receptive music listening, song writing, lyric discussion, guided imagery with music, learning through music, and movement to music;
  - (v) During the provision of music therapy services to a client, collaborating, as applicable, with the client's treatment team, including physicians, psychologists, occupational therapists, licensed clinical social workers, or other mental health professionals. During the provision of music therapy services to a client with a communication disorder, the licensed professional music therapist

shall collaborate and discuss the music therapy treatment plan with the client's audiologist, occupational therapist, or speech-language pathologist. When providing educational or health care services, a music therapist may not replace the services provided by an audiologist, occupational therapist, or speech-language pathologist;

(vi) Evaluating a client's response to music therapy techniques and the individualized music therapy treatment plan;

(vii) Any necessary modification of the client's individualized music therapy treatment plan;

(viii) Any necessary collaboration with other health care professionals treating a client;

(ix) Minimizing barriers that may restrict a client's ability to receive or fully benefit from music therapy services; and

(x) Developing a plan for determining when the provision of music therapy services is no longer needed.

(b) "Music therapy" does not include the screening, diagnosis, or assessment of any physical, mental, or communication disorder.

(6) "Secretary" means the secretary of health or his or her designee. [2023 c 175 § 2.]

**RCW 18.233.020 Music therapy advisory committee.** (1) A music therapy advisory committee is created within the department. The committee consists of five members as follows: Three who practice as music therapists in Washington state, one member who is a licensed health care provider but not a music therapist, and one member who is a consumer.

(2) The secretary shall appoint all members of the advisory committee. All members must be familiar with the practice of music therapy and able to provide the department with expertise and assistance in carrying out the following duties pursuant to this chapter:

(a) Developing regulations; and

(b) Establishing standards of practice and professional responsibility for music therapists.

(3) Members shall serve a term of four years without compensation.

(4) Members may serve consecutive terms at the direction of the department. Any vacancy shall be filled in the same manner as regular appointments.

(5) The advisory committee shall meet at least once per year or as otherwise called by the department.

(6) The department shall consult with the advisory committee for issues related to music therapy licensure and renewal. The department shall provide analysis of disciplinary actions taken, appeals, denials, or revocations of licenses at least once per year. [2023 c 175 § 3.]

**RCW 18.233.030 Issuance of license requirements.** The department shall issue a license to practice music therapy to an applicant who meets the following requirements:

(1) Is at least 18 years of age;

(2) Is in good standing in any other states [state] where the applicant is licensed or certified to practice music therapy;

(3) Submits sufficient documentation as determined by the department in rule and includes the following requirements:

(a) Completion of an academic and clinical training program for music therapy approved by the secretary, following consultation with the advisory committee and consideration of standards adopted by national certification boards for music therapy; and

(b) Successful completion of an examination administered or approved by the secretary, following consultation with the advisory committee and consideration of standards adopted by national certification boards for music therapy;

(4) Pays a fee determined by the secretary as provided in RCW 18.233.060.

(5) Meets any other qualifications as determined by the department in rule. [2023 c 175 § 4.]

**RCW 18.233.040 License renewal.** Every license issued under this chapter must be renewed biennially. Each licensee is responsible for timely renewal of the licensee's license. To renew a license, a licensee must follow the rules adopted under RCW 43.70.280. [2023 c 175 § 5.]

**RCW 18.233.050 License required—Exemptions—Restrictions.** (1) Beginning January 1, 2025, a person may not practice music therapy or use any title or designation of "music therapist" that indicates that the person is authorized to practice music therapy unless the person is licensed under chapter 175, Laws of 2023.

(2) Nothing in this chapter may be construed to prohibit or restrict the practices, services, or activities of the following:

(a) Any person licensed, certified, or regulated under the laws of Washington state in another profession or occupation or personnel supervised by a licensed professional in this state performing work, including the use of music, incidental to the practice of the licensed, certified, or regulated profession or occupation, if the person does not represent that the person is a music therapist;

(b) Any person whose training and national certification attests to the individual's preparation and ability to practice the certified profession or occupation, if the person does not represent that the person is a music therapist; and

(c) Any use and practice of music therapy as an integral part of a program of study for students enrolled in a music therapy education program.

(3) Unless authorized to practice speech-language pathology, music therapists may not evaluate, examine, instruct, or counsel on speech, language, communication, or swallowing disorders or conditions. An individual licensed as a professional music therapist may not represent to the public that the individual is authorized to treat a communication disorder. This does not prohibit an individual licensed as a professional music therapist from representing to the public that the individual may work with clients who have a communication disorder and address communication skills.

(4) Before providing music therapy services to a client for an identified clinical or developmental need, it is recommended that the licensee review the client's diagnosis, treatment needs, and treatment.

(5) Before providing music therapy services to a student for an identified educational need, the licensee shall review the student's

diagnosis, treatment needs, and treatment plan with the individualized family service plan's team or the individualized education program's team. [2023 c 175 § 6.]

**RCW 18.233.060 Secretary's authority.** In addition to any other authority provided by law, the secretary has the authority to:

(1) Adopt rules under chapter 34.05 RCW necessary to implement this chapter. Any rules adopted shall be in consultation with the committee;

(2) Establish all licensing, examination, and renewal fees in accordance with RCW 43.70.250 and 43.70.280;

(3) Establish forms and procedures necessary to administer this chapter;

(4) Issue licenses to applicants who have met the education, training, and examination requirements for licensure and to deny a license to applicants who do not meet the requirements;

(5) Hire clerical, administrative, investigative, and other staff as needed to implement this chapter, and hire individuals licensed under this chapter to serve as examiners for any practical examinations;

(6) Administer and supervise the grading and taking of examinations for applicants for licensure;

(7) Determine which states have credentialing requirements substantially equivalent to those of this state, and issue licenses to individuals credentialed in those states without examinations;

(8) Implement and administer a program for consumer education in consultation with the committee;

(9) Adopt rules implementing a continuing education program in consultation with the committee;

(10) Maintain the official record of all applicants and licensees; and

(11) Establish by rule the procedures for an appeal of an examination failure. [2023 c 175 § 7.]

**RCW 18.233.070 Rule making—Application of uniform disciplinary act.** (1) The department shall establish and adopt rules governing the administration of this chapter in accordance with chapter 34.05 RCW.

(2) The uniform disciplinary act, chapter 18.130 RCW, governs unlicensed practice, the issuance and denial of a license, and the discipline of persons licensed under this chapter. The secretary is the disciplining authority under this chapter. [2023 c 175 § 8.]