
Health Care Committee

HB 2850

Brief Description: Eliminating credentialing barriers for health professions.

Sponsors: Representatives Morrell, Benson, Darneille, Campbell and Bush; by request of Department of Health.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Amends initial licensing requirements for acupuncturists, dispensing opticians, registered nurses, and psychologists with regard to courses, clinical training, citizenship, examinations, temporary practice permits, and transcripts.
- Allows dental hygienists who have not passed an examination in restorations to practice dental hygiene with a limited license.

Hearing Date: 1/29/04

Staff: Chris Blake (786-7392).

Background:

In 2002 the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board convened a task force to examine the extent of the shortage of trained health care providers in Washington and to develop recommendations for increasing the number of health care workers. The task force's final report identified shortages of health care providers in numerous fields including nurses, medical aides, dental hygienists, billers and coders, laboratory personnel, pharmacists, physicians, and radiology technologists. Several of those health care providers are regulated by the Department of Health (Department).

The Department and the various health profession boards and commissions issue credentials to 57 types of health care providers in this state. General qualifications that providers in these health care fields must meet are established in statute. The Department and the boards and commissions are responsible for developing more specific minimum standards to determine entrance into a profession based upon these statutory requirements.

Summary of Bill:

Changes are made to the licensing requirements for the following categories of health care providers.

Acupuncture

The clinical training provisions requiring that applicants demonstrate the completion of a combination of quarter credits and patient contacts and treatments is eliminated and replaced with a flat 500 hours of approved clinical training.

Dental Hygiene

An applicant for a dental hygienist license may obtain a limited license if he or she has graduated from an approved dental hygiene education program; successfully completed an approved examination that includes a patient evaluation and prophylaxis and anesthesia and nitrous oxide; and has not engaged in unprofessional conduct and does not have any physical or mental impairment that prevents him or her from practicing with reasonable skill and safety. A limited license allows a dental hygienist to perform all dental hygiene functions except for placing restorations or carving, contouring, or adjusting contacts or the occlusion of the restoration. Dental hygiene students may practice dental hygiene when under the direction and supervision of instructors who are licensed dentists or dental hygienists.

Dispensing Opticians

The requirement that applicants for the state dispensing optician exam certify under oath that they are United States citizens or intending to become citizens is eliminated.

Nursing

The requirement that applicants for a nursing license provide evidence of a diploma from a school of nursing is changed to a transcript demonstrating an applicant's graduation and successful completion of a nursing program. Active licensed practical nurses who are enrolled in or complete an approved nontraditional registered nurse program can meet their supervised clinical experience requirement by acquiring the experience: (1) under the supervision of a registered nurse preceptor with an unrestricted license and at least two years of experience in the same type of practice setting as where the preceptorship will occur; and (2) within six months of completing the nontraditional program.

Psychology

An applicant for a license to practice psychology must pass an exam, however, the requirement that there be both a written and oral exam is eliminated. The right to discuss exam performance with the Board of Psychology is eliminated. The requirement that one of the two years of supervised experience required for a license be obtained after receiving the doctoral degree is removed. A temporary practice permit may be granted to an applicant who is a member of a professional organization and holds a certificate that the Board of Psychology finds to meet the profession's standards. A license may be granted without oral examination if the applicant is a member of a professional organization and holds a certificate that the Board of Psychology finds meets the profession's standards.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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