
Health Care & Wellness Committee

HB 1729

Brief Description: Establishing a streamlined process to increase the capacity of certain mental health providers to offer substance use disorder treatment.

Sponsors: Representatives Macri, Jinkins, Ortiz-Self, Cody, Frame, Peterson, Ryu, Stanford, Goodman, Slatter, Kloba, Ormsby and Pollet.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Establishes an alternative standard for becoming certified as a chemical dependency counselor for psychologists, independent clinical social workers, marriage and family therapists, and mental health counselors.
- Directs the Department of Health to contract with an educational program to offer the alternative certification training both in-person and online at a reduced price.
- Reduces the amount of supervised experience for an applicant for a license to become a psychologist, social worker, marriage and family therapist, or mental health counselor if the applicant has practiced as a certified chemical dependency counselor for at least three years.

Hearing Date: 2/15/19

Staff: Chris Blake (786-7392).

Background:

The Department of Health (Department) certifies applicants as chemical dependency professionals if they meet specific education, examination, and experience standards. The education standards require the applicant to have at least an associate's degree in human services or have completed a specified number of college credits. The experience standard requires the completion of:

- 2,500 hours of chemical dependency counseling for applicants with an associate degree;
- 2,000 hours of chemical dependency counseling for applicants with a baccalaureate degree; or

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- 1,500 hours of chemical dependency counseling for applicants with a masters or doctoral degree.

The Department has adopted alternative training standards for certification as a chemical dependency professional for applicants who are licensed as either an advanced registered nurse practitioner, marriage and family therapist, mental health counselor, advanced social worker, independent clinical social worker, psychologist, osteopathic physician, osteopathic physician assistant, physician, or physician assistant. Under the alternative training standards, the education requirements may be met by completing coursework on survey of addiction, treatment of addiction, pharmacology, physiology of addiction, American Society of Addiction Management criteria, individual group counseling, and substance use disorder law and ethics. Applicants using the alternative training standards must complete a supervised experience requirement of 1,000 hours of chemical dependency counseling. If an applicant using the alternative training standards is certified by an approved certification body, the educational and experience requirements shall be deemed to have been met.

In their practice, chemical dependency professionals use the core competencies of chemical dependency counseling which include the assessment and diagnosis of chemical dependency, chemical dependency treatment planning and referral, patient and family education, individual and group counseling, relapse prevention counseling, and case management. These activities are to be performed with the stated goal of assisting patients in achieving and maintaining abstinence from alcohol and drugs and developing independent support systems.

Summary of Bill:

Alternative standards for becoming certified as a chemical dependency counselor are established for those who are licensed as either a psychologist, independent clinical social worker, marriage and family therapist, or mental health counselor. An applicant may become certified as a chemical dependency counselor if the applicant is licensed in one of those professions, completes a training program approved by the Department of Health (Department), passes an examination, and completes a supervised experience requirement. The supervised experience requirement is 80 hours for applicants who have held their licenses in one of the applicable professions for less than five years and 40 hours for those who have held their licenses for five years or more.

The Department must develop standards for training programs for the alternative certification standard. The training must consist of no more than 35 hours of instruction and include the topics of understanding addiction; pharmacological action of alcohol and other drugs; understanding addiction placement, continuing care, and discharge criteria; treatment planning specific to substance abuse; relapse prevention; and confidentiality issues related to substance use disorder treatment. In developing the training standards, the Department must consult with the Examining Board of Psychology and the Mental Health Counselors, Marriage and Family Therapists, and Social Workers Advisory Committee, as well as educational institutions relevant to those professions.

From July 1, 2020, until July 1, 2025, the Department must:

- contract with an educational program to offer the training for the alternative certification standard at a reduced cost at least four times per year in person, as well as online;

- contract with an entity to provide a telephonic consultation service to assist chemical dependency professionals with the diagnosis and treatment of patients with co-occurring behavioral health disorders; and
- identify supervisors who are trained and available to supervise those seeking supervised experience to become certified under the alternative certification standard.

The total number of supervised experience hours for an applicant for a license to become a psychologist who has practiced as a certified chemical dependency counselor for at least three years in the previous 10 years shall be reduced by three months. The total number of supervised experience hours for an applicant for a license to become a social worker, marriage and family therapist, or mental health counselor who has practiced as a certified chemical dependency counselor for at least three years in the previous 10 years shall be reduced by 10 percent.

References to assisting clients with the achievement and maintenance of abstinence from alcohol and drug use as the purpose of chemical dependency counseling are removed.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 6, 2019.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after the adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed, except for sections 1 through 3, relating to the creation of the alternative certification method, which take effect July 1, 2020.