

WSR 25-07-070

EMERGENCY RULES

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

[Filed March 14, 2025, 11:30 a.m., effective March 14, 2025, 11:30 a.m.]

Effective Date of Rule: Immediately upon filing.

Purpose: Creating certified agency affiliated counselor (AAC) and licensed AAC credentials. Amending WAC 246-810-010, 246-810-015, and 246-810-990 in chapter 246-810 WAC, Counselors.

2SHB 1724 (chapter 425, Laws of 2023) made several immediate changes impacting behavioral health agencies, including amending the definition of "mental health professional" (MHP) and creating two new AAC credentials. Because 2SHB 1724's amendments to the MHP definition and AAC credentials went into effect immediately and were designated as necessary for the immediate preservation of the public health, safety, or general welfare, the department of health (department) implemented these changes by emergency rule under WSR 23-16-031, filed on July 21, 2023, and continued them under WSR 23-23-136, filed November 17, 2023; WSR 24-07-062, filed March 15, 2024; WSR 24-07-100, filed March 20, 2024; WSR 24-15-077, filed July 18, 2024; and WSR 24-23-051, filed November 15, 2024.

This emergency rule continues without changes the previous emergency rule package's amendments to chapter 246-810 WAC, which expand existing language to establish two new credentials, the certified AAC and the licensed AAC. The amendments align rule language with statute and revise the registered AAC fees to apply to all AAC types. These emergency rules will be in effect until the permanent rules adopted on February 20, 2025, under WSR 25-06-010 become effective on July 1, 2025, which will permanently create the new AAC credentials.

Citation of Rules Affected by this Order: Amending WAC 246-810-010, 246-810-015, and 246-810-990.

Statutory Authority for Adoption: RCW 18.19.050.

Other Authority: 2SHB 1724 (chapter 425, Laws of 2023).

Under RCW 34.05.350 the agency for good cause finds that immediate adoption, amendment, or repeal of a rule is necessary for the preservation of the public health, safety, or general welfare, and that observing the time requirements of notice and opportunity to comment upon adoption of a permanent rule would be contrary to the public interest.

Reasons for this Finding: The legislature established in 2SHB 1724, section 33 that many sections of the bill are "necessary for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health, or support of the state government and its existing public institutions and take effect immediately." Sections 13 through 20, which create the new AAC credentials and amend the definition of MHP, are among the sections that became effective immediately.

Under 2SHB 1724, RCW 71.05.020 was amended to define an MHP as an individual practicing within their credential's scope of practice. Qualifying credentials include the certified and licensed AAC credentials, but not the AAC registration. Prior to the passage of 2SHB 1724, many MHPs performed assessments and made diagnoses with only a registration. After 2SHB 1724 became effective, however, they were required to obtain an AAC certification, AAC license, or other qualifying credential in order to continue providing these services. Establishing the new AAC credentials immediately by emergency rule and continuing these emergency rules allows MHPs to transition into the new

credentials and continue providing essential behavioral health services while permanent rules are in progress.

If the department had waited to make these amendments through standard rule making, MHPs with an AAC registration would be both unable to continue assessing and diagnosing due to the changed MHP definition and unable to obtain a higher AAC credential that would allow them to continue that work. Continuing these emergency rules will allow MHPs who are AACs to continue serving Washington residents with behavioral health needs until the permanent rules become effective.

Number of Sections Adopted in Order to Comply with Federal Statute: New 0, Amended 0, Repealed 0; Federal Rules or Standards: New 0, Amended 0, Repealed 0; or Recently Enacted State Statutes: New 0, Amended 3, Repealed 0.

Number of Sections Adopted at the Request of a Nongovernmental Entity: New 0, Amended 0, Repealed 0.

Number of Sections Adopted on the Agency's own Initiative: New 0, Amended 0, Repealed 0.

Number of Sections Adopted in Order to Clarify, Streamline, or Reform Agency Procedures: New 0, Amended 0, Repealed 0.

Number of Sections Adopted using Negotiated Rule Making: New 0, Amended 0, Repealed 0; Pilot Rule Making: New 0, Amended 0, Repealed 0; or Other Alternative Rule Making: New 0, Amended 3, Repealed 0.

Date Adopted: March 14, 2025.

Kristin Peterson, JD
Chief of Policy
for Jessica Todorovich, MS
Acting Secretary of Health

OTS-4679.2

AMENDATORY SECTION (Amending WSR 11-22-087, filed 11/1/11, effective 12/2/11)

WAC 246-810-010 Definitions. The definitions in this section apply throughout this chapter unless the content clearly requires otherwise.

(1) "Agency" means:

(a) An agency or facility operated, licensed, or certified by the state of Washington to provide a specific counseling service or services;

(b) A federally recognized Indian tribe located within the state;
or

(c) A county as listed in chapter 36.04 RCW.

(2) "Agency affiliated counselor" means a person registered, certified, or licensed under chapter 18.19 RCW, and this chapter, who is engaged in counseling and employed by an agency listed in WAC 246-810-016 or an agency recognized under WAC 246-810-017 to provide a specific counseling service or services.

(3) "Certified adviser" means a person certified under chapter 18.19 RCW, and this chapter, who is engaged in private practice counseling to the extent authorized in WAC 246-810-021.

(4) "Certified counselor" means a person certified under chapter 18.19 RCW, and this chapter, who is engaged in private practice counseling to the extent authorized in WAC 246-810-0201.

(5) "Client" means an individual who receives or participates in counseling or group counseling.

(6) "Consultation" means the professional assistance and practice guidance that a certified counselor receives from a counseling-related professional credentialed under chapter 18.130 RCW. This may include:

(a) Helping the certified counselor focus on counseling practice objectives;

(b) Refining counseling modalities;

(c) Providing support to progress in difficult or sensitive cases;

(d) Expanding the available decision-making resources; and

(e) Assisting in discovering alternative approaches.

(7) "Counseling" means employing any therapeutic techniques including, but not limited to, social work, mental health counseling, marriage and family therapy, and hypnotherapy, for a fee that offer, assist, or attempt to assist, an individual or individuals in the amelioration or adjustment of mental, emotional, or behavioral problems, and includes therapeutic techniques to achieve sensitivity and awareness of self and others and the development of human potential. For the purpose of this chapter, nothing may be construed to imply that the practice of hypnotherapy is necessarily limited to counseling.

(8) "Counselor" means an individual who engages in the practice of counseling to the public for a fee, including for the purposes of this chapter, agency affiliated counselors, certified counselors, certified advisers, hypnotherapists, and until July 1, 2010, registered counselors.

(9) "Department" means the Washington state department of health.

(10) "Fee" as referred to in RCW 18.19.030 means compensation received by the counselor for counseling services provided, regardless of the source.

(11) "Hypnotherapist" means a person registered under chapter 18.19 RCW, and this chapter, who is practicing hypnosis as a modality.

(12) "Licensed health care practitioner" means a licensed practitioner under the following chapters:

(a) Physician licensed under chapter 18.71 RCW.

(b) Osteopathic physician licensed under chapter 18.57 RCW.

(c) Psychiatric registered nurse practitioner licensed under chapter 18.79 RCW.

(d) Naturopathic physician licensed under chapter 18.36A RCW.

(e) Psychologist licensed under chapter 18.83 RCW.

(f) Independent clinical social worker, marriage and family therapist, or advanced social worker licensed under chapter 18.225 RCW.

(13) "Private practice counseling" means the practice of counseling by a certified counselor or certified adviser as specified in WAC 246-810-0201 or 246-810-021.

(14) "Psychotherapy" means the practice of counseling using diagnosis of mental disorders according to the fourth edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, and the development of treatment plans for counseling based on diagnosis of mental disorders in accordance with established practice standards.

(15) "Recognized" means acknowledged or formally accepted by the secretary.

(16) "Recognized agency or facility" means an agency or facility that has requested and been recognized under WAC 246-810-017 to employ agency affiliated counselors to perform a specific counseling service, or services for those purposes only.

(17) "Secretary" means the secretary of the department of health or the secretary's designee.

(18) "Supervision" means the oversight that a counseling-related professional credentialed under chapter 18.130 RCW provides.

(19) "Unprofessional conduct" means the conduct described in RCW 18.130.180.

AMENDATORY SECTION (Amending WSR 20-12-074, filed 6/1/20, effective 7/2/20)

WAC 246-810-015 Agency affiliated counselor: Scope of practice and credentialing requirements. (1) ~~((An))~~ (a) A registered agency affiliated counselor may only provide counseling services as part of ~~((his or her))~~ their employment ~~((as an agency affiliated counselor))~~ for a recognized agency.

(b) A certified agency affiliated counselor may provide counseling services and may provide provisional mental health assessment and diagnosis services under supervision as required by chapter 18.19 RCW, and as part of their employment for a recognized agency.

(c) A licensed agency affiliated counselor may provide counseling services, independently conduct mental health assessments, and make mental health diagnoses as part of their employment for a recognized agency.

(2) An applicant for ~~((an))~~ any agency affiliated counselor credential must be employed by, or have an offer of employment from, an agency or facility identified in WAC 246-810-016.

(3) (a) An applicant for a certified agency affiliated counselor credential must meet the education and experience requirements of RCW 18.19.090(3).

(b) An applicant for a licensed agency affiliated counselor credential must meet the education and experience requirements of RCW 18.19.090(4).

(4) (a) Applicants must submit an application to the department within the first ~~((thirty))~~ 30 days of employment at an agency in order to continue working while the application is processed.

(b) Applicants must complete any outstanding deficiencies within ~~((ninety))~~ 90 days of the date the department issues a deficiency letter. If the applicant does not satisfy the outstanding licensure requirements within ~~((ninety))~~ 90 days, the applicant must stop working.

AMENDATORY SECTION (Amending WSR 23-07-057, filed 3/9/23, effective 6/1/23)

WAC 246-810-990 Counselors fees and renewal cycle. (1) Under chapter 246-12 WAC, a counselor must renew their credential every year on the practitioner's birthday.

(2) Examination and reexamination fees are the responsibility of the applicant and are paid directly to the testing company.

(3) The following nonrefundable fees will be charged:

Title	Fee
Registered hypnotherapist:	
Application and registration	\$155.00
Renewal	\$80.00
Late renewal penalty	\$75.00
Expired registration reissuance	\$75.00
Duplicate registration	\$10.00
Verification of registration	\$25.00
Certified counselor:	
Application and certification	\$680.00
Examination or reexamination	\$85.00
Renewal	\$800.00
Late renewal penalty	\$300.00
Expired credential reissuance	\$100.00
Duplicate credential	\$10.00
Verification of credential	\$25.00
Certified adviser:	
Application and certification	\$620.00
Examination or reexamination	\$85.00
Renewal	\$745.00
Late renewal penalty	\$300.00
Expired credential reissuance	\$100.00
Duplicate credential	\$10.00
Verification of credential	\$25.00
((Registered)) <u>Agency affiliated counselor:</u>	
Application and ((registration)) <u>credentialing</u>	\$175.00
Renewal	\$185.00
Late renewal penalty	\$95.00
Expired ((registration)) <u>credential</u> reissuance	\$50.00
Duplicate ((registration)) <u>credential</u>	\$10.00
Verification of ((registration)) <u>credential</u>	\$25.00