

RCW 43.70.903 Licensure requirements review—Report and recommendations on removing barriers. (1) The department, in consultation with the workforce training and education coordinating board and the examining board of psychology, shall examine licensure requirements for the following professions to identify changes to statutes and rules that would remove barriers to entering and remaining in the health care workforce and to streamline and shorten the credentialing process:

(a) Advanced social workers and independent clinical social workers licensed under chapter 18.225 RCW;

(b) Marriage and family therapists licensed under chapter 18.225 RCW;

(c) Mental health counselors licensed under chapter 18.225 RCW;

(d) Substance use disorder professionals certified under chapter 18.205 RCW; and

(e) Psychologists licensed under chapter 18.83 RCW.

(2) The licensure requirements to be examined by the department shall include examinations, continuing education requirements, administrative requirements for license application and renewal, English language proficiency requirements, and supervised experience requirements, including supervisor requirements and costs associated with completing supervised experience requirements.

(3) When conducting the review required in subsection (1) of this section, the department shall at a minimum consider the following:

(a) The availability of peer-reviewed research and other evidence, including requirements in other states, indicating the necessity of specific licensure requirements for ensuring that behavioral health professionals are prepared to practice with reasonable skill and safety;

(b) Changes that would facilitate licensure of qualified, out-of-state and international applicants to promote reciprocity, including the adoption of applicable interstate compacts;

(c) Changes that would promote greater consistency across licensure requirements for professions licensed under chapter 18.225 RCW and allow for applicants' prior professional experience within relevant fields to be counted towards supervised experience requirements established under chapter 18.225 RCW, including the extent to which an applicant may use prior professional experience gained before graduation from a master's or doctoral level educational program to satisfy the applicant's supervised experience requirement;

(d) Technical assistance programs, such as navigators or dedicated customer service lines, to facilitate the completion of licensing applications;

(e) In consultation with the examining board of psychology and a statewide organization representing licensed psychologists, the creation of an associate-level license for psychologists;

(f) Whether agency affiliated counselors should be allowed to practice in federally qualified health centers; and

(g) Any rules that pose excessive administrative requirements for application or renewal or that place a disproportionate burden on applicants from disadvantaged communities.

(4) By November 1, 2023, the department shall provide a progress report and initial findings to the appropriate committees of the legislature on actions and recommendations to remove licensing barriers and improve credentialing time frames.

(5) By November 1, 2024, the department shall provide a final report to the appropriate committees of the legislature on actions and recommendations to remove licensing barriers and improve credentialing time frames. [2023 c 425 s 5.]

Effective date—2023 c 425 ss 1-7, 13-20, and 22-26: See note following RCW 18.83.170.