

WAC 246-821-810 Approval process for educational programs. (1)

Program application process. A behavioral health support specialist educational program must be approved by the department and, if applicable, registered with the department of labor and industries before its graduates are eligible for BHSS certification.

(a) To apply for approval, a college, university, technical school, apprenticeship program, or other entity shall submit on forms provided by the department:

(i) Documentation of how its curriculum meets the requirements of WAC 246-821-100, 246-821-110, and 246-821-800, along with any supporting documentation;

(ii) Attestation by an educational program representative that the educational program has confirmed any clinical or counseling environment approved as a practicum site meets the requirements of WAC 246-821-200 through 246-821-215; and

(iii) Additional information as requested by the department.

(b) After the receipt of the completed application, the department shall consider the application, determine whether the educational program fulfills the requirements of this subsection, and notify the applicant of the department's decision. The department's decision may result in the educational program being fully approved, provisionally approved, legacy approved, or denied.

(c) If the department decides the educational program cannot be approved, the notice shall include the reasons for denial.

(2) Provisional approval.

(a) The department provisionally approves an educational program if:

(i) The educational program has BHSS curriculum categorized as "most aligned" with 29 out of 34 competencies listed in WAC 246-821-110, using the current gap analysis tool provided by the department and the University of Washington, made available on the department website for the BHSS profession; and

(ii) Submits an attestation under subsection (1)(a)(ii) of this section.

(b) During the three-year provisional approval period:

(i) The educational program must continue working to achieve full compliance with these requirements; and

(ii) Graduates from the program will be considered eligible for certification as a BHSS.

(c) The educational program must apply for, and be granted, full program approval under subsection (1)(a) of this section before the expiration of the provisional approval in order to ensure graduates from the program remain eligible for certification as a BHSS beyond the provisional approval period.

(3) Full approval. When an educational program complies with the requirements of WAC 246-821-100, 246-821-110, and 246-821-800, the department fully approves the educational program. A fully approved educational program must:

(a) Continue to comply with the standards of this chapter; and

(b) Reapply for approval every seven years after initial approval following the application process in subsection (1)(a) of this section.

(4) Required updates. An educational program approved under subsection (2) or (3) of this section shall report to the department within 60 days substantial changes to the educational program's curriculum, practicum sites, accreditation status if applicable, and financial solvency.

(5) Program audits. The department may conduct audits to ensure an educational program continues to meet educational standards in this chapter.

(6) Enforcement. If the department receives evidence the educational program is not meeting the criteria for approval under chapter 18.225 RCW and this chapter, then the department will provide the program with a written statement of deficiencies that will include instructions and time frames for submission of a plan of correction. The educational program shall submit a plan of correction within the stated time frame. The department may accept or reject the proposed plan of correction. If the plan of correction is rejected, the program will be provided an opportunity to submit a revised plan of correction within a time period identified by the department. The department may accept or reject the revised proposed plan of correction.

(a) The educational program shall correct the deficiencies listed on the plan of correction:

(i) By the time frame agreed upon by the educational program and the department representative; or

(ii) Immediately if the department determines health and safety concerns require immediate corrective action.

(b) Should the program not make required changes, or should further deficiencies develop after the statement of deficiencies is issued, then the department may revoke the approval of the educational institution. The program's students are ineligible for BHSS certification from the date that the program's approval is revoked.

(7) Appeal. An educational program whose approval is denied or revoked may request a brief adjudicative proceeding under chapter 34.05 RCW and chapter 246-10 WAC. A request for a brief adjudicative proceeding must be filed with the department within 28 days of receipt of the department's notice.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 18.227.020, chapter 18.227 RCW, and 2023 c 270. WSR 24-21-083, s 246-821-810, filed 10/16/24, effective 1/1/25.]