

Chapter 18.227 RCW
BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SUPPORT SPECIALISTS

Sections

18.227.005	Finding.
18.227.010	Definitions.
18.227.020	Department rule-making authority.
18.227.030	Certification required.
18.227.040	Practices not limited by chapter.
18.227.050	Authority of secretary.
18.227.060	Uniform disciplinary act—Application.
18.227.070	Certification requirements.
18.227.080	Examination.
18.227.090	Application for certification—Fee.
18.227.100	State medicaid program—Coverage.

RCW 18.227.005 Finding. The legislature finds that a behavioral health support specialist is a new member of the workforce in Washington state trained in the competencies developed by the University of Washington behavioral health support specialist clinical training program. The behavioral health support specialist clinical training program is characterized by brief, evidence-based interventions delivered to the intensity and expected duration of the behavioral health problem. The approach features routine outcome monitoring and regular, outcome-focused supervision. Use of behavioral health support specialists in Washington is expected to improve access to behavioral health services and ease workforce shortages while helping behavioral health professionals work at the top of their scope of practice. [2023 c 270 s 1.]

RCW 18.227.010 Definitions. The definitions in this section apply throughout this chapter unless the context clearly requires otherwise.

(1) "Adult" means a person 18 years of age or older.

(2) "Applicant" means a person who completes the required application, pays the required fee, is at least 18 years of age, and meets any background check requirements and uniform disciplinary act requirements.

(3) "Behavioral health" is a term that encompasses mental health, substance use, and co-occurring disorders.

(4) "Behavioral health support specialist" means a person certified to deliver brief, evidence-based interventions with a scope of practice that includes behavioral health under the supervision of a Washington state credentialed provider who has the ability to assess, diagnose, and treat identifiable mental and behavioral health conditions as part of their scope of practice. A behavioral health support specialist does not have within their scope of practice the ability to make diagnoses but does track and monitor treatment response and outcomes using measurement-based care.

(5) "Department" means the department of health.

(6) "Registered apprenticeship" means an apprenticeship program approved by the Washington state apprenticeship and training council according to chapter 49.04 RCW.

(7) "Secretary" means the secretary of health or the secretary's designee. [2023 c 270 s 2.]

RCW 18.227.020 Department rule-making authority. The department shall collaborate with the University of Washington department of psychiatry and behavioral sciences and consult with other stakeholders to develop rules to implement this chapter by January 1, 2025, which shall be consistent with the University of Washington behavioral health support specialist clinical training program guidelines, and shall include appropriate standards for approval of educational programs for behavioral health support specialists, which shall include a practicum component and may be integrated into a bachelor's degree program or structured as a postbaccalaureate continuing education program or registered apprenticeship in combination with an approved bachelor's degree or postbaccalaureate certificate. [2023 c 270 s 3.]

RCW 18.227.030 Certification required. A person may not represent themselves as a behavioral health support specialist without being certified by the department. [2023 c 270 s 4.]

RCW 18.227.040 Practices not limited by chapter. Nothing in this chapter shall be construed to prohibit or restrict delivery of behavioral health interventions by an individual otherwise regulated under this title and performing services within their authorized scope of practice. [2023 c 270 s 5.]

RCW 18.227.050 Authority of secretary. In addition to any other authority provided by law, the secretary has the authority to:

- (1) Adopt rules under chapter 34.05 RCW necessary to implement this chapter. Any rules adopted shall be in consultation with the University of Washington;
- (2) Establish all certification, examination, and renewal fees in accordance with RCW 43.70.250;
- (3) Establish forms and procedures necessary to administer this chapter;
- (4) Issue certifications to applicants who have met the education, which may include registered apprenticeships, practicum, and examination requirements for certification and to deny a certification to applicants who do not meet the requirements;
- (5) Develop, administer, and supervise the grading and taking of an examination for applicants for certification;
- (6) Adopt rules requiring completion of 20 hours of continuing education every two years after initial certification for certification renewal;
- (7) Maintain the official record of all applicants and certification holders; and
- (8) Establish by rule the procedures for an appeal of an examination failure. [2023 c 270 s 6.]

RCW 18.227.060 Uniform disciplinary act—Application. The uniform disciplinary act, chapter 18.130 RCW, governs uncertified practice, the issuance and denial of certification, and the discipline of persons certified under this chapter. The secretary shall be the disciplinary authority under this chapter. [2023 c 270 s 7.]

RCW 18.227.070 Certification requirements. The secretary shall issue a certification to any applicant who demonstrates to the satisfaction of the secretary that the applicant meets the following requirements:

- (1) Graduation from a bachelor's degree program;
- (2) Successful completion of a behavioral health support specialist program that is approved to meet standards consistent with the University of Washington behavioral health support specialist clinical training program guidelines, including a supervised clinical practicum with demonstrated clinical skills in core competencies; and
- (3) Successful completion of an approved jurisprudential examination. [2023 c 270 s 8.]

RCW 18.227.080 Examination. (1) The date and location of examinations shall be established by the secretary. Applicants who have been found by the secretary to meet the other requirements for certification shall be scheduled for the next examination following the filing of the application. The secretary shall establish by rule the examination application deadline.

(2) The secretary or the secretary's designee shall examine each applicant, by means determined to be most effective, on subjects appropriate to the scope of practice, as applicable. Such examinations shall be limited to the purpose of determining whether the applicant possesses the minimum skill and knowledge necessary to practice competently.

(3) The examination papers, all grading of the papers, and the grading of any practical work shall be preserved for a period of not less than one year after the secretary has made and published the decisions. All examinations shall be conducted using fair and wholly impartial methods.

(4) The secretary may approve an examination prepared or administered by a private testing agency or association of licensing agencies for use by an applicant in meeting the certification requirements. [2023 c 270 s 9.]

RCW 18.227.090 Application for certification—Fee. Applications for certification shall be submitted on forms provided by the secretary. The secretary may require any information and documentation which reasonably relates to the need to determine whether the applicant meets the criteria for certification provided for in this chapter and chapter 18.130 RCW. Each applicant shall pay a fee determined by the secretary under RCW 43.70.250. The fee shall accompany the application. [2023 c 270 s 10.]

RCW 18.227.100 State medicaid program—Coverage. The health care authority shall take any steps which are necessary and proper to

ensure that the services of behavioral health support specialists are covered under the state medicaid program by January 1, 2025. [2023 c 270 s 11.]