



STATE OF WASHINGTON
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Olympia, Washington 98504

October 21, 2014

The Honorable Eileen Cody, Chair
House Health Care and Wellness Committee
Post Office Box 40600
Olympia, Washington 98504-0600

Dear Representative Cody,

House Bill 1213, Chapter 73, Laws of 2013 directs the Department of Health (department) to report to the legislature on the number of licensed mental health associate providers¹ renewing their credential four, five, and six times. The information will be reported annually for six years starting in October 2014.

The purpose of the report is to “assess whether limitations on associate license renewals may be limiting the number of people able to complete the licensing process within statutory deadlines.”

Prior to the legislation, there were concerns that the economy was preventing licensure candidates, particularly social workers, from securing adequate supervision to meet the hours of supervised postgraduate experience within five years as previously required by RCW 18.225.090 (initial licensure plus a maximum of four renewals). Pursuant to HB 1213, the number of allowed renewals was expanded to six.

The department began issuing associate mental health credentials on July 1, 2009. The table below is cumulative data from the first issuance of associate credentials in July 2009 through August 21, 2014. The tables show the number of individuals that have renewed their associate credential four or five times without becoming fully licensed. (No associates have been licensed long enough to have renewed six times and few long enough to have renewed five times.) The table also shows the number of associates who have achieved full licensure since 2009. Given the nature of the credentialing process the data is not static and changes rapidly.

	Licensed as Associates			Obtained Full Licensure	
	Current Associate Licensees as of 8/21/14 ²	Renewed license four times	Renewed license five times	After four or more renewals	Before fourth renewal
Mental Health Associates	1,674	250	5	11	427
Mental Health Counselor Associates	449	216	0	2	196
Marriage and Family Therapist Associates	210	238	1	3	25
Advance Social Worker Associates	1,179	193	7	13	200

¹ “Associate” means a candidate who has a graduate degree in a mental health field under RCW 18.225.090 and is gaining the supervised experience necessary to become an independent clinical social worker, advanced social worker, a mental health counselor, or a marriage and family therapist.

² Includes new associates and those who have renewed up to five times.

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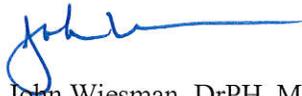
The numbers of associate licensees renewing their license within each category will not equal the total number of current license holders as some licensees may transitioned into other license statuses not addressed in the report.

Since the implementation of the associate license, 877 associates have become fully licensed after various renewals ranging from one renewal up to five renewals. There are a variety of reasons licensees become fully licensed at a quicker rate than others, including personal circumstances and accumulating hours while holding the registered counselor credential which was abolished in 2008.

The data to-date does not provide clear trends to indicate whether limitations on associate license renewals may be limiting the number of people able to complete the process of obtaining full licensure. Given that these credentials have been in existence for less than six years, the department will continue to monitor the number of associates renewing their credential greater than four times to identify any barriers to licensure.

Please feel free to contact if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



John Wiesman, DrPH, MPH
Secretary of Health

Enclosure

cc: Senator Randi Becker, Senate Health Care Committee
Members, House Health Care and Wellness Committee
Miguel Perez-Gibson, Governor's Office
Martin Mueller, Department of Health

Enclosure:

The current requirements for each licensure type can be found in WAC 246-809 and provide greater detail of the licensure requirements than expressed in this report.

Licensure Requirements**Licensed Mental Health Counselor:**

Graduate with a master's or doctoral counseling degree from an accredited and recognized institution of higher learning, pass the national exam administered by the National Board of Certified Counselors (NBCC), and complete 3,000 hours of supervised postgraduate experience or 36 months of full time supervised counseling.

Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist:

Graduate with master's or doctoral degree in marriage and family therapy or a related behavioral science degree from an accredited and recognized institution of higher learning, pass the national exam administered by the Association of Marital and Family Therapy Regulatory Boards (AMFTRB), and complete 3,000 hour of supervised postgraduate experience over a minimum of two years.

Licensed Advance Social Worker:

Graduate with a master's or doctoral social work degree from an accredited and recognized institution of higher learning, pass the national exam administered by the American Association of State Social Work Board (AASWB), and complete 3,200 hours of supervised postgraduate experience over a minimum of two years.

Licensed Independent Clinical Social Worker:

Graduate with a master's or doctoral social work degree from an accredited and recognized institution of higher learning, pass the national exam administered by the American Association of State Social Work Board (AASWB), and complete 4,000 hours of supervised postgraduate experience over a minimum of three years.