

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2920

As Reported By House Committee On:

Health Care

Title: An act relating to counselors.

Brief Description: Clarifying continuing education requirements for counselors.

Sponsors: Representatives Skinner, Cody, Dyer and Wood.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Health Care: 2/3/98 [DP].

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH CARE

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 10 members: Representatives Dyer, Chairman; Backlund, Vice Chairman; Skinner, Vice Chairman; Cody, Ranking Minority Member; Murray, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Anderson; Conway; Parlette; Wood and Zellinsky.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 1 member: Representative Sherstad.

Staff: John Welsh (786-7133).

Background: Currently social workers, mental health counselors and marriage and family therapists are certified for practice by the Department of Social and Health Services under the Omnibus Credentialing Act for Counselors. The Secretary of Health is authorized, but not required, to establish continuing competence requirements for these professions.

Summary of Bill: The Secretary of Health is required to establish continuing competence requirements for certified counselors by rule. They must include at least 36 hours of continuing education during the two-year reporting period preceding the renewal of certification. Six hours must be in professional ethics and law.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: Continuing education is effective in assuring current competency of practice.

Testimony Against: The literature does not support the conclusion that continuing education is at all effective. The Department of Health will do a study this year to assess the methods which best serve the effectiveness of continuing competency.

Testified: Keith Myers, Washington State Society Clinical Social Work (pro); Ann Simonds, Washington Association for Marriage & Family Therapy (pro); and Ron Weaver, Department of Health (con).