RCW 10.77.615 Competency evaluation—Forensic navigator. (1) Subject to the limitations described in subsection (2) of this section, a court may appoint an impartial forensic navigator employed by or contracted by the department to assist individuals who have been referred for competency evaluation and shall appoint a forensic navigator in circumstances described under RCW 10.77.610.

(2) A forensic navigator must assist the individual to access services related to diversion and community outpatient competency restoration. The forensic navigator must assist the individual, prosecuting attorney, defense attorney, and the court to understand the options available to the individual and be accountable as an officer of the court for faithful execution of the responsibilities outlined in this section.

(3) The duties of the forensic navigator include, but are not limited to, the following:

(a) To collect relevant information about the individual, including behavioral health services and supports available to the individual that might support placement in outpatient restoration, diversion, or some combination of these;

(b) To meet with, interview, and observe the individual;

(c) To assess the individual for appropriateness for assisted outpatient treatment under chapter 71.05 RCW;

(d) To present information to the court in order to assist the court in understanding the treatment options available to the individual to support the entry of orders for diversion from the forensic mental health system or for community outpatient competency restoration, to facilitate that transition;

(e) To provide regular updates to the court and parties of the status of the individual's participation in diversion or outpatient services and be responsive to inquiries by the parties about treatment status;

(f) When the individual is ordered to receive community outpatient restoration, to provide services to the individual including:

(i) Assisting the individual with attending appointments and classes relating to outpatient competency restoration;

(ii) Coordinating access to housing for the individual;

(iii) Meeting with the individual on a regular basis;

(iv) Providing information to the court concerning the individual's progress and compliance with court-ordered conditions of release, which may include appearing at court hearings to provide information to the court;

(v) Coordinating the individual's access to community case management services and mental health services;

(vi) Assisting the individual with obtaining prescribed medication and encouraging adherence with prescribed medication;

(vii) Assessing the individual for appropriateness for assisted outpatient treatment under chapter 71.05 RCW and coordinating the initiation of an assisted outpatient treatment order if appropriate;

(viii) Planning for a coordinated transition of the individual to a case manager in the community behavioral health system;

(ix) Attempting to follow-up with the individual to check whether the meeting with a community-based case manager took place;

(x) When the individual is a high utilizer, attempting to connect the individual with high utilizer services; and

(xi) Attempting to check up on the individual at least once per month for up to sixty days after coordinated transition to community behavioral health services, without duplicating the services of the community-based case manager;

(g) If the individual is an American Indian or Alaska Native who receives medical, behavioral health, housing, or other supportive services from a tribe within this state, to notify and coordinate with the tribe and Indian health care provider. Notification shall be made in person or by telephonic or electronic communication to the tribal contact listed in the authority's tribal crisis coordination plan as soon as possible.

(4) Forensic navigators may submit recommendations to the court regarding treatment and restoration options for the individual, which the court may consider and weigh in conjunction with the recommendations of all of the parties.

(5) Forensic navigators shall be deemed officers of the court for the purpose of immunity from civil liability.

(6) The signed order for competency evaluation from the court shall serve as authority for the forensic navigator to be given access to all records held by a behavioral health, educational, or law enforcement agency or a correctional facility that relates to an individual. Information that is protected by state or federal law, including health information, shall not be entered into the court record without the consent of the individual or their defense attorney.

(7) Admissions made by the individual in the course of receiving services from the forensic navigator may not be used against the individual in the prosecution's case in chief.

(8) A court may not issue an order appointing a forensic navigator unless the department certifies that there is adequate forensic navigator capacity to provide these services at the time the order is issued. [2023 c 453 s 5; 2019 c 326 s 2. Formerly RCW 10.77.074.]

Findings—2023 c 453: See note following RCW 10.77.400.

Intent—2019 c 326: "The legislature recognizes that there has been a nationwide increase in the number of individuals with behavioral health disorders in the criminal justice system. The legislature also recognizes that reforms must be made to our own behavioral health systems and services to meet the increasing demands in our state, to provide timely competency evaluations and restoration services, and to comply with federal court orders issued in *A.B., by and through Trueblood, et al., v. DSHS, et al.*, No. 15-35462 ("Trueblood"). The legislature acknowledges that these reforms will require the support of a broad range of stakeholders, including local law enforcement, prosecuting attorneys, defense attorneys, community members, and health care providers. The legislature further acknowledges the significant efforts of the parties to the Trueblood litigation to establish a road map and framework within their settlement agreement for proposed systemic reforms to the forensic mental health care system. It is the intent of the legislature to enact appropriate reforms consistent with the goals agreed to in the Trueblood settlement agreement, to continue to engage with stakeholders and community partners to address the needs of this

vulnerable population, and to ensure that the public safety needs of our communities are met." [2019 c 326 s 1.]