

From: Cooper, Kelly (DOH) <Kelly.Cooper@DOH.WA.GOV>
Sent: Thursday, April 23, 2020 2:57 PM
To: Khan Zakir <Zakir.Khan@oregonlegislature.gov>
Cc: Spice, Christie L (DOH) <Christie.Spice@DOH.WA.GOV>
Subject: RE: BHA Policy Advisor

Dear Zakir,

Thank you for contacting the Department of Health (department) with your inquiry on the regulation of counselors. Washington has different types of professions that may offer counseling services. The profession which adheres closest to your description is the Mental Health Counselor profession. Please see our responses to your questions below.

- 1) Was the direct hourly requirement always 1,200 hours or was it adjusted to do that from another number? [The Mental Health Counselor profession has not changed the supervisory hours requirement since the profession was established.](#)
 - a. If it was adjusted, what was the original basis for the adjustment? And was the original number? [N/A](#)
 - b. Have you seen an increase in counselors of color as a result? [The department does not collect data on the race/ethnicity of licensees. In our discussion with academic institutions, they reported seeing an increase in persons of color who are pursuing careers in counseling professions.](#)
 - c. What has retention and recruitment been like for counselors of color? [In communicating with local mental health counselor associations, we were informed that the retention rate was positive. There remains a challenge in accessing approved supervisors. As a result, people of color are more likely to work within non-profits, within their communities, or within federal agencies to obtain supervised hours. Most of them will continue this type of employment upon licensure.](#)
- 2) What is the rate of misconduct? [Washington issues a medical disciplinary report every two years, known as the Uniform Disciplinary Act \(UDA\) Report. Based on the 2017-2019 data, there were 525 complaints filed against mental health counselors and mental health counselor associates. Of these, 32 cases resulted in discipline. The 525 complaints reflects 5% of 9,660 mental health counselor/associate licensees and the 32 practitioners disciplined represents 0.3% of licensees.](#)

[What percent of all practitioners have a finding of misconduct against them? In 2017-19, of the 497,525 licensees, 1,676 licenses were disciplined – a total of 0.3%. Please note, disciplined means a case resulted in findings against the defendant and an order was filed. These do not include unlicensed practice which are addressed in Washington by a cease and desist order.](#)

- 3) What are the positives and negatives of having a direct hourly requirement of 1,200 hours? [In a recent discussion among mental health counselor associates \(those who are actively pursuing the 1,200 hours to obtain the license\), the universal reaction was positive. The downside was](#)

that the 1,200 hour requirement does not take into account additional internship hours required by their education program.

If you would like any further assistance, we encourage you to contact us. We would be happy to help out any way we can.

Sincerely,

Kelly Cooper, Director

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