



STATE OF WASHINGTON  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH  
HEALTH SYSTEMS QUALITY ASSURANCE  
*PO Box 47850, Olympia, WA 98504-7850*

Date: July 31, 2023

Dear Tribal Leader:

I am writing today to provide information about the Department of Health's (department) rulemaking to establish a new behavioral health profession.

In 2023 the legislature passed [SSB 5189](#) to create the new Behavioral Health Support Specialist (BHSS) profession. The BHSS credential, which requires a bachelor's degree and a training program, will allow credential-holders to provide low-level behavioral health services under the supervision of another provider. The department will be collaborating with the University of Washington and other interested parties to establish standards, rules, and other requirements for the profession. The BHSS credential is expected to be available by January 1, 2025.

For additional information and to provide written feedback, contact Brandon Williams, Program Manager, at [brandon.williams@doh.wa.gov](mailto:brandon.williams@doh.wa.gov) or (360) 236-4611.

For tribal relations issues, please contact the department's Tribal Relations Director at [DOHTribalRelations@doh.wa.gov](mailto:DOHTribalRelations@doh.wa.gov).

Sincerely,

Harold Wright, Jr., Executive Director  
Health Systems Quality Assurance

cc: Umair A. Shah, Secretary, Department of Health  
Jessica Todorovich, Chief of Staff, Department of Health  
Kristopher Holiday, Chief, Office of Strategic Partnerships, Department of Health  
Lacy Fehrenbach, Chief, Office of Prevention, Safety and Health, Department of Health  
Kristin Peterson, Chief, Office of Policy, Planning and Evaluation, Department of Health  
Candice Wilson – Quatz'tenaut (Lummi), Tribal Policy Director, Department of Health  
Sasha De Leon, Assistant Secretary, Health Systems Quality Assurance, Department of Health  
Shawna Fox, Director, Office of Health Professions, Department of Health  
Brandon Williams, Program Manager, Health Systems Quality Assurance, Department of Health



# PREPROPOSAL STATEMENT OF INQUIRY

## CR-101 (October 2017) (Implements RCW 34.05.310)

Do NOT use for expedited rule making

CODE REVISER USE ONLY

OFFICE OF THE CODE REVISER  
STATE OF WASHINGTON  
FILED

DATE: July 05, 2023

TIME: 9:10 AM

WSR 23-14-113

**Agency:** Department of Health

**Subject of possible rule making:** Establishing licensing standards for the new Behavioral Health Support Specialist (BHSS) profession in Title 246 WAC. The Department of Health (department) is considering establishing rules for the new BHSS profession created by Substitute Senate Bill (SSB) 5189 (Chapter 270, Laws of 2023). The department will consider establishing requirements for application, education, curriculum, experience, continuing education, and fees. In collaboration with partners, the University of Washington, and other interested parties, the department may also consider any other rules appropriate to establish and regulate the BHSS profession.

**Statutes authorizing the agency to adopt rules on this subject:** SSB 5189 (Chapter 270, Laws of 2023)

**Reasons why rules on this subject may be needed and what they might accomplish:**

During the 2023 legislative session the legislature passed SSB 5189 to create the new BHSS profession, establish its scope of practice, and direct the department to collaborate with the University of Washington on rules implementing the new profession by January 1, 2025. SSB 5189 also authorizes the Secretary of Health to adopt any rules necessary to implement the new profession, fees, forms and procedures, certifications, examinations, continuing education, and appeal procedures. In addition, to fulfilling the intent of SSB 5189, creating rules for this profession will allow the department to consistently uphold standards that protect patient safety.

**Identify other federal and state agencies that regulate this subject and the process coordinating the rule with these agencies:**

The department will collaborate with the University of Washington as required by SSB 5189.

Additionally, SSB 5189 directs the Health Care Authority and Office of the Insurance Commissioner to ensure that the services of the BHSS profession are covered by the state Medicaid plan and other insurance carriers. The department will coordinate with both agencies throughout rulemaking.

There are also multiple professions that may supervise or interact with a BHSS, potentially including physicians under the Washington Medical Commission and the Board of Osteopathic Medicine and Surgery, psychologists under the Examining Board of Psychology, and other professions. The department will invite potentially impacted professions to learn about the new BHSS credential and participate in rulemaking.

**Process for developing new rule (check all that apply):**

- Negotiated rule making
- Pilot rule making
- Agency study
- Other (describe)

Collaborative

**Interested parties can participate in the decision to adopt the new rule and formulation of the proposed rule before publication by contacting:**

Name: Brandon Williams	(If necessary) Name:
Address: PO Box 47850, Olympia WA, 98504-7850	Address:
Phone: (360) 236-4611	Phone:

Fax: N/A  
TTY: 711  
Email: brandon.williams@doh.wa.gov  
Web site: www.doh.wa.gov  
Other:

Fax:  
TTY:  
Email:  
Web site:  
Other:

Additional comments: Interested parties can participate in the drafting of the proposed rules. The department will be conducting rules workshops with interested parties and subject matter experts. The department will use the GovDelivery Behavioral Health Support Specialist list to inform interested parties of opportunities to provide input on proposed rule language.

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**Date:** 07/05/2023

**Name:** Kristin Peterson, JD for Umair A. Shah, MD, MPH

**Title:** Chief of Policy for Secretary of Health

**Signature:**

