



STATE OF WASHINGTON  
**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH**  
Olympia, Washington 98504-7890

**NOTICE OF ADOPTION OF A POLICY STATEMENT**

**Title of Interpretive or Policy Statement:** Co-Occurring Disorder Specialist working in Behavioral Health Agencies licensed under chapter 246-341 WAC. Policy Number: CHS 07-01-20

**Issuing Entity:** Department of Health

**Subject Matter:** Allowing for substance use disorder services to be delivered by a person with a Co-Occurring Disorder Specialist enhancement working in a Behavioral Health Agency in certain circumstances.

**Effective Date:** July 1, 2020

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STATE OF WASHINGTON  
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Department of Health  
Health Systems Quality Assurance

# Policy Statement

Revised – 10/18/11

<i>Title:</i>	Co-Occurring Disorder Specialist working in Behavioral Health Agencies licensed under chapter 246-341 WAC	<i>Number:</i> CHS 07-01-20
<i>References:</i>	RCW 18.205.105; RCW 18.205.160; WAC 246-341-0515	
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<i>Effective Date:</i>	July 1, 2020	
<i>Supersedes:</i>	n/a	
<i>Approved By:</i>		

This policy statement confirms that Department of Health (department) allows a person with a co-occurring disorder specialist enhancement to practice in a behavioral health agency as specified in chapter 18.205 RCW.

RCW 18.205.105, created the new co-occurring disorder specialist enhancement. This allows professionals with certain mental health credentials to conduct and complete a substance use disorder assessment and provide substance use disorder treatment for persons who have both a mental health disorder and a substance use disorder. RCW 18.205.160 directs the department to amend behavioral health agency licensing rules, specifically WAC 246-341-0515, to allow a person with a co-occurring disorder specialist enhancement to provide these services in a behavioral health agency. Until the department completes this rulemaking project, this policy statement affirms the department's intent to allow a person with a co-occurring disorder specialist enhancement to practice in a behavioral health agency as soon as this new credential becomes available.

New RCW 18.205.105 states:

(7) A person who has obtained a co-occurring disorder specialist enhancement **may provide substance use disorder counseling services which are equal in scope with those provided by substance use disorder professionals** under this chapter, subject to the following limitations:  
(a) A co-occurring disorder specialist may only provide substance use disorder counseling services if the co-occurring disorder specialist is employed by:

- (i) An **agency** that provides counseling services;
- (ii) A federally qualified health center; or
- (iii) A hospital;
- (b) **Following an initial intake or assessment, a co-occurring disorder specialist may provide substance use disorder treatment only to clients diagnosed with a substance use disorder and a mental health disorder;**
- (c) Prior to providing substance use disorder treatment to a client assessed to be in need of 2.1 or higher level of care according to American society of addiction medicine criteria, a co-occurring disorder specialist must make a reasonable effort to refer and connect the client to the appropriate care setting, as indicated by the client's American society of addiction medicine level of care; and
- (d) A co-occurring disorder specialist must comply with rules promulgated by the department under subsection (11) of this section.

The department has a rule-making process underway to amend chapter 246-341 WAC, including WAC 246-341-0515 specifically, to allow persons with a co-occurring disorder specialist enhancement under chapter 18.205 RCW to provide substance use disorder counseling services that are equal in scope with the scope and practice of a substance use disorder professional under chapter 18.205 RCW, subject to the practice limitations under RCW 18.205.105.

Until the department completes the rule-making process to make these changes, the department:

1. Considers an individual with a co-occurring disorder specialist enhancement credential under chapter 18.205 RCW to be allowed to provide substance use disorder counseling services to individuals with both a mental health and substance used disorder that are equal in scope with the scope and practice of a substance use disorder professional under chapter 18.205 RCW, subject to the practice limitations under RCW 18.205.105.
2. Considers WAC 246-341-0515 (2) (a) to include that a person with a co-occurring specialist enhancement may conduct and complete a substance use disorder assessment and, following an initial intake or assessment, a co-occurring disorder specialist may provide substance use disorder treatment only to clients diagnosed with a substance use disorder and a mental health disorder, subject to any limitations in RCW 18.205.105.