

Certified Counselors & Advisers in Washington

What to Know Before You Go



Determining the type of services and provider that best meets your needs

There are many certified counselors and certified advisers in the state of Washington. They provide counseling services dealing with issues related but not limited to:

- Gaining awareness and achieving sensitivity of self and others
- Discovering and building on strengths/abilities
- Gaining a stronger sense of self-confidence
- Gaining a stronger sense of resiliency in dealing with life's challenges and changes
- Coping with grief and loss

What you should expect from a certified counselor or certified adviser

Your certified counselor or certified adviser is required by law to provide you with a disclosure statement, which should contain the following information:

- Name and business contact information.
- Washington State credential number.
- Education, training, and experience.
- Description of the types of counseling or therapeutic orientation.

Your certified counselor or adviser should also:

- Inform you of the costs of your treatment, billing practices, and how your records are maintained.
- Give you the opportunity to discuss matters of confidentiality, privacy, and release of information.

- Assist you in referrals to other professionals, if necessary or requested.
- Treat you with respect and dignity.

Maintaining a professional relationship

Your relationship with your certified counselor or certified adviser should be professional in nature. Counseling may include discussing the most private aspects of your life and relationships. It is your therapist's or counselor's responsibility to provide an atmosphere of trust and respect.

Counseling often deals with difficult and emotional issues. There may be a time when you feel confused or troubled by something that occurs during counseling.

You are encouraged to talk about this with your counselor or adviser so that you may gain more clarity. If you don't feel the issue has been resolved, you may wish to get a second opinion.

You may also review the section of the law that describes forms of unprofessional conduct covered in RCW 18.130.180. Unprofessional conduct includes, but is not limited to:

- Misrepresentations or false advertising
- Incompetence, negligence, or malpractice
- Violation of any state or federal code
- Willful betrayal of confidentiality
- Sexual misconduct

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As with all counseling services, we encourage you to:

- Determine the best fit for you, your children, or your family.
- Review the personal disclosure statement of the counselor or adviser you are considering.
- Ask questions about your particular situation.

Certified counselors must:

- Hold a bachelor's or advance degree from a program accredited by nationally recognized standards.
- Pass a state-approved exam.
- Have a written consultation/supervisory agreement.
- Complete 36 hours of continuing education every two years, with six hours being in law and ethics, and three hours of suicide assessment, screening, and referral every six years.

Certified advisers must:

- Hold an associate's degree from a program accredited by nationally recognized standards
- Pass a state-approved exam.
- Have a written supervisory agreement.
- 36 hours of continuing education every two years, with six hours of law and ethics, and three hours of suicide assessment, screening, and referral.

Confidentiality and health care information access and disclosure

Your certified counselor or certified adviser will create records about your counseling sessions. Your counselor or adviser should have a clear procedure to maintain confidentiality of your records. You have the right to expect that anything you tell your counselor or adviser will be held in confidence with a few specific exceptions:

- If you are involved in a civil or criminal lawsuit, a judge can order your file be turned over to the court.
- If you make statements that a child, elderly, or disabled person has been abused or neglected, law requires your counselor or adviser to report that information to the appropriate authorities.
- If you make statements that indicate you intend to harm yourself or others, your counselor or adviser may report that information to the appropriate authorities.

Other circumstances may include inquiries or consultation with other healthcare providers. You will be asked to sign an authorization for release of information about your sessions. You should be informed of the reason for such disclosures and are encouraged to ask questions about anything that is unclear to you, prior to signing this authorization.

Once signed and dated by you and your certified counselor or certified adviser, the disclosure statement is kept as part of your counseling record.

The Certified Counselors and Hypnotherapists Advisory Committee

An advisory committee, made up of two certified counselors, two registered hypnotherapists, and three public members, meets quarterly to provide advice to the Department of Health.

The committee welcomes the public to attend meetings. Contact the Department of Health for meeting information or refer to the certified counselors or certified advisers website.

The Health Systems Quality Assurance Division within the Department of Health has information on all health care professionals in the state. This information includes credential status and current restrictions or disciplinary actions since July of 1998. If you have a question about a provider, contact the Department of Health.

Remember: Your involvement in developing goals, requesting a change in approach to services, or in decisions about termination of services is encouraged.

If for any reason you are unable to resolve such a concern with your counselor or adviser, you may choose to file a complaint with the Department of Health. Contact the Customer Service Center for assistance:

Customer Service Center

(360) 236-4700
www.doh.wa.gov/hsqa

Fax: (360) 236-4818
hsqa.csc@doh.wa.gov

Provider Credential Search Website

<https://fortress.wa.gov/doh/providercredentialsearch/>

For additional information on certified counselors and certified advisers go to:

<https://www.doh.wa.gov/Certified-Counselors>



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To request this document in another format, call 1-800-525-0127. Deaf or hard of hearing customers, please call 711 (Washington Relay) or email civil.rights@doh.wa.gov.