

 <p><b>SPOKANE COUNTY</b> Regional Support Network Prepaid Inpatient Health Plan</p>	Policy Title: <b>Staff Qualifications and Mental Health  Professional Exception Request</b>		Policy # <b>AD 14</b>
	Signature:  Signature on file	Revised:	
	Christine Barada, Director Community Services, Housing and Community Development	Reviewed: 9/4/07	
	Signature Date: 9/4/07	Signing by authority of Res. No. 2007-0038	

Applies to:

Internal  External

**References**

[WAC 388-865-0150](#)

[WAC 388-865-0260](#)

[WAC 388-865-0265](#)

[WAC 388-865-0405](#)

**Scope**

SCRSN/PIHP and its contracted providers.

**Policy**

SCRSN/PIHP subcontracts shall affirm the value of experienced and appropriately educated staff in the direct treatment of persons with mental illnesses. Provider agencies must ensure that staff are qualified for the position they hold and have the education, experience or skills to perform the job requirements. Providers must maintain documentation on staff consistent with WAC 388-865-0405. Contractors shall assure all clinical services are provided by a mental health professional (MHP) or under the supervision of a MHP as defined in WAC 388-865-0150.

SCRSN provides a mechanism for persons who do not meet the criteria for MHP, but is otherwise qualified and can become a MHP under the exception process.

SCRSN provides a mechanism for individuals to obtain status as a mental health specialist as defined in WAC 388-865-0150.

SCRSN and providers will develop in-service training or outside resources to assist staff to acquire the necessary skills and experience to serve the needs of the consumer population.

## Procedures/Mechanisms

### Staff Qualifications

#### **1. Mental Health Professional** as defined in WAC 388-865-0150

1.1 A psychiatrist, psychologist, psychiatric nurse or social worker as defined in chapters [71.05](#) and [71.34](#) RCW;

1.2 A person with a masters degree or further advanced degree in counseling or one of the social sciences from an accredited college or university. Such person shall have, in addition, at least two years of experience in direct treatment of persons with mental illness or emotional disturbance, such experience gained under the supervision of a mental health professional

1.3 A person who meets the waiver criteria of RCW [71.24.260](#), which was granted prior to 1986;

1.4 A person who had an approved waiver to perform the duties of a mental health profession that was requested by the regional support network and granted by the mental health division prior to July 1, 2001; or

1.5 A person who has been granted a time-limited exception of the minimum requirements of a mental health professional by the mental health division consistent with WAC [388-865-0265](#).

#### **2. Mental Health Professional Exception**

Persons who do not meet the criteria for MHP, but is otherwise qualified and can become a MHP under the exception process.

#### **3. Mental Health Specialist** is defined in WAC 388-865-0150

A "child mental health specialist" is defined as a mental health professional with the following education and experience:

A minimum of one hundred actual hours (not quarter or semester hours) of special training in child development and the treatment of children and youth with serious emotional disturbance and their families; and

The equivalent of one year of full-time experience in the treatment of seriously emotionally disturbed children and youth and their families under the supervision of a child mental health specialist.

A "geriatric mental health specialist" is defined as a mental health professional who has the following education and experience:

A minimum of one hundred actual hours (not quarter or semester hours) of specialized training devoted to the mental health problems and treatment of persons sixty years of age or older; and

The equivalent of one year of full-time experience in the treatment of persons sixty years of age or older, under the supervision of a geriatric mental health specialist.

An "ethnic minority mental health specialist" is defined as a mental health professional who has demonstrated cultural competence attained through major commitment, ongoing training, experience and/or specialization in serving ethnic minorities, including evidence of one year of

service specializing in serving the ethnic minority group under the supervision of an ethnic minority mental health specialist; and

Evidence of support from the ethnic minority community attesting to the person's commitment to that community; or

A minimum of one hundred actual hours (not quarter or semester hours) of specialized training devoted to ethnic minority issues and treatment of ethnic minority consumers.

A "disability mental health specialist" is defined as a mental health professional with special expertise in working with an identified disability group. For purposes of this chapter only, "disabled" means an individual with a disability other than a mental illness, including a developmental disability, serious physical handicap, or sensory impairment.

If the consumer is deaf, the specialist must be a mental health professional with:

3.4.1.1 Knowledge about the deaf culture and psychosocial problems faced by people who are deaf; and

3.4.1.2 Ability to communicate fluently in the preferred language system of the consumer.

3.4.1.3 The specialist for consumers with developmental disabilities must be a mental health professional who:

3.4.1.4 Has at least one year's experience working with people with developmental disabilities; or

3.4.1.5 Is a developmental disabilities professional as defined in RCW [71.05.020](#).

#### **4. Designated Mental Health Professional**

A Designated Mental Health Professional (DMHP) is a person who has a master's degree or further advanced degree in counseling or one of the social sciences from an accredited college or university and who upon meeting appropriate criteria is appointed by the Spokane County Regional Support Network to be a DMHP. In addition, a DMHP must also have at least two years of experience in the direct treatment of persons with mental illness or emotional disturbance under the supervision of a mental health professional. The role of the DMHP is to provide evaluation and assistance to individuals according to involuntary mental health treatment laws, Chapters 71.05 and 71.34 RCWs. DMHPs also respond to requests for evaluation via Chapters 10.77 and 9.41 RCWs.

### **Processes**

#### **Mental Health Professional**

5. Contractors will ensure all clinical services are provided by MHPs or under the supervision of a MHP.

6. Personnel files on all persons functioning as MHP's shall contain documentation that the WAC standards have been met.

#### **Mental Health Professional Exception**

7. The SCRSN and contracted providers may request from MHD and exception of the requirements of a mental health professional for a person with less than a master degree level of training. MHD may grant an exception of the minimum requirements on a time limited basis and only with a demonstrated need for an exception under the following conditions:

7.1 The SCRSN will submit a written request to MHD requesting an exception which includes the following:

- 7.1.1 Demonstration of the need for an exception
- 7.1.2 The name of the person for whom an exception is requested
- 7.1.3 The functions the person will be performing
- 7.1.4 A written statement from the SCRSN/PIHP that the person is qualified to perform the required function on verification of the required education and training including:
  - 7.1.4.1 Bachelor of Arts or Sciences degree from an accredited college or university;
  - 7.1.4.2 Course work or training in making diagnoses, assessments and developing treatment plans; and
  - 7.1.4.3 Documentation of at least five years of direct treatment of persons with mental illness under the supervision of a MHP
  - 7.1.4.4 Washington state patrol background checks are conducted for employees in contact with consumers consistent with RCW [43.43.830](#);

### **Mental Health Specialist**

8. The network provider submits to the SCRSN Administrator (or designee) a written request asking for a specific staff member be designated as a mental health specialist. The correspondence shall include the following information:

8.1 Verification of the staff member's status as a MHP

Verification of training, and/or work experience, and/or supervision and/or support of the specific minority community as required by the WAC

9. The SCRSN Administrator (or designee) reviews and authenticates the information submitted.

10. The SCRSN Administrator (or designee) writes a letter the agency indicating that the staff member meets the standard and qualifies as the requested mental health specialist; or specified the areas where the standard of the requested mental health professional was not met and decline to qualify the staff as a mental health specialist.

### **Designated Mental Health Professional**

11. The network provider submits to the SCRSN Administrator (or designee) a written request asking for a specific staff member be designated as a mental health specialist. The correspondence shall include the following information:

11.1 Verification of the staff member's status as a MHP

11.2 Verification of training, and/or work experience, and/or supervision as required by the WAC

12. The SCRSN Administrator (or designee) reviews and authenticates the information submitted.

13. The SCRSN Administrator (or designee) recommends to the Board of County Commissioners designate the individual as a DMHP or specifies the areas where the standard of the DMHP was not met and decline to qualify the staff as a DMHP.

14. SCRSN Administrator or (designee) notifies the network provider of the decision to recommend or deny the designation.

### **Training**

15. SCRSN and providers will maintain documentation of training to staff.

**Monitoring**

This policy will be monitored through the annual contracted provider monitoring, with the appropriate recommendations, findings and/or corrective actions required in performance improvement projects.