

Report to the Legislature

Transferring Veteran Skills and Education for State Licensure

December 2008



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Executive Summary

In the 2008 Supplemental Budget, the Washington State Legislature directed the Department of Health, the Department of Licensing and the Higher Education Coordinating Board to jointly review and report on barriers and opportunities for veterans separating from duty. The recommendations and report were due to the Legislature by Dec. 1, 2008. This report presents those recommendations.

The Department of Health contacted the Department of Licensing and the Higher Education Coordinating Board. The agencies researched current policies and processes on issuing licenses or certifications to applicants. The agencies found that current and prior military personnel who apply for licensure or certification must meet the same requirements as civilian applicants. The Department of Licensing provided information to the Department of Health for this report.

Note: Work is in progress on the Higher Education Coordinating Board component. That work is subject to board review prior to submission. It is not available for this report and will be submitted separately.

Current Processes

Department of Health

The division within the agency responsible for regulating health professions is Health Systems Quality Assurance, which regulates more than 300,000 health care practitioners in 70 health care professions. The department issues credentials by profession and maintains data by profession type, but doesn't maintain data for specialties or previous occupation.

Health Systems Quality Assurance supports 12 boards, four commissions and eight advisory committees. The boards, commissions and advisory committees work with the department to determine the education, training and experience necessary for each health care profession. Each profession has specific requirements in statute or rule to become a registered, certified or licensed health care practitioner.

While in the military, physicians, podiatrists and dentists must hold a current license to practice from any state. When these practitioners separate from active duty, they are eligible to apply for state licensure through reciprocity because they are licensed in another state. Military mid-level practitioners such as nurse practitioners and physician assistants must pass the national certification examination and retain national certification.

In 1996, the Air Force, Army and Navy merged their three individual physician assistant programs into one interservice program. The University of Nebraska awards a master's degree in physician assistant studies to these graduates. This accredited program's

graduates are eligible to sit for the national certification exam. This same test is required by all states for state licensure.

Opportunities

The Department of Health evaluates each application individually to determine if the education, training and experience qualify the applicant for a state-issued credential. Veteran applications receive the same review. Many health professions credentialed in Washington require successful completion of a national examination, in addition to specific criteria for education, training and experience. Some professions also require that the applicant maintain national certification in addition to passing the national examination.

The Department of Health recognizes the following military training as meeting the state's requirements:

- Licensed practical nurse -- The Army has a licensed practical nurse program (Army 68WM-M6) that is approved for Washington state LPN licensing.
- Health Care Assistant Certification
 - **Air Force** (Medical Service Specialist) – approved for health care assistant certification categories A, B, C and E. Additional requirements may be needed for health care assistant certification categories D and F. Any other Air Force education must be reviewed for determination on qualification.
 - **Army** – approved for health care assistant certification categories A, B, C and E. Additional requirements may be needed for health care assistant certification categories D and F. Any other Army education must be reviewed for determination on qualification.
 - **Navy** – approved for health care assistant certification categories A, B, C and E. Additional requirements may be needed for health care assistant certification categories D and F. Any other Army education must be reviewed for determination on qualification.

Barriers

Some military mid-level health occupations train personnel for combat-related injuries and trauma only and do not include clinical time or civilian care in their training programs. Some military health care programs include training for traditional clinical health care. Not all military health care programs are nationally accredited and the personnel in those occupations are not eligible to sit for a national examination.

Some military health care personnel must retain national certification, but this requirement doesn't apply to all health professions and the requirement may differ between the different armed forces branches. Many states require successful completion of accredited programs and passing a national examination to obtain a license in a particular profession.

Some military training may be applied toward licensure. Applicants may need additional training by an accredited program, as well as successful completion of a national

examination, for state licensure.

In 2004, a study group under the Department of Health and the Nursing Care Quality Assurance Commission evaluated the medical training military personnel receive against the standards for licensed practical nurses in Washington. The group found that the Naval corpsmen program differs from traditional practical nursing programs. Military schools provide less time to complete the initial preparation needed for the student to begin working in Navy health care. The Naval program's goal is to prepare corpsmen to provide emergency medical and nursing procedures, so the curriculum is procedure (skill) oriented.

The nursing commission determined that while the military programs are needed for wartime casualty skills, they do not transfer equally for civilian LPN knowledge and competencies. Veterans from these programs would need to acquire additional education and training to qualify for examination and licensure in Washington. The Navy and the Air Force are aware of the practical nursing program requirements in Washington.

Department of Licensing

The Business and Professions Division regulates professional licensing programs. Of the professions, only three require a specialized degree. Those are funeral director, real estate appraisers and geologist licenses. All others require experience or education, a business license, or have no minimum requirements.

Individuals leaving military service may have obtained training and experience in a vocational trade. This experience and training may convert hour-for-hour to college credit. To the extent these credits help individuals obtain their degrees, they assist them in meeting their licensing requirements.

The military vocational training programs align with several of the division's professional licensing programs and create many opportunities for professional employment.

Military programs* include:

- Corrections
- Mortician affairs
- Engineering
- Land surveyors
- Specialist in waste-water management
- Criminal investigators

*Source of military vocations and training data: SFC Banta (360) 953-3732.

Additionally, all military individuals have security and firearms-weapon training, which aligns with several more of the division's licensing programs.

Chapter 18.185 RCW, Bail Bond Agents, exempts persons with military police training from the required 32 hours of field operations training required for all bail enforcement agents.

Chapter 18.43 RCW Engineer and Land Surveyors, defines military engineering experience as meeting requirements similar to non-military experience. Experience must be verified.

Division programs include:

Appraisers
Architects
Auctioneers
Bail Bond Agents
Collection Agencies
Cosmetologists
Court Reporters
Engineers
Funeral Directors
Geologists
Home Inspectors
Land Surveyors
Landscape Architects
Notaries
On-site Wastewater-treatment
Private Investigators
Real Estate
Security Guards

Higher Education Coordinating Board

Information from the Higher Education Coordinating Board is not available at this time and will be submitted separately.

Findings

Department of Health

The agency found that veterans receive the same considerations and opportunities available to other non-military applicants. Training, education and experience are evaluated individually for each applicant. Military personnel may apply their training and experience to a health profession credential to the extent that they meet the requirements in statute or rule.

If a military program becomes nationally accredited, the department can approve or recognize this program. The Department of Health provides Web sites for each credentialed profession that detail the information required to obtain a credential. This information is easily accessed and military personnel may determine any additional training, education and experience that may be needed to obtain a health profession credential in Washington.

The Department of Health continues to work to remove barriers to qualified health care practitioners in Washington. There is great interest in enabling military personnel to become credentialed. The department will continue to evaluate veteran applications for a Washington health profession credential on a case-by-case basis. We will also provide technical assistance or information to military programs to better align their training with state requirements.

Department of Licensing

A review of the professional licensing programs within the Business and Professions Division found no known barriers exist toward military personnel, who may apply their training and experience to the professions Licensing regulates. However, some professions require specialized degrees.

The Licensing Web site provides the entry-level requirements for all our professions and is easily accessed. In conclusion, the agency found that licensing programs provide the same opportunities to all veterans separated from duty that are present for non-military personnel.

Higher Education Coordinating Board

Recommendations from the Higher Education Coordinating Board are not available at this time and will be submitted separately.

APPENDIX A

Engrossed Substitute House Bill 2687
Operating Budget – Supplemental Appropriation
Sec. 222, Department of Health, Section 45

CERTIFICATION OF ENROLLMENT
ENGROSSED SUBSTITUTE HOUSE BILL 2687
Chapter 329, Laws of 2008
(partial veto)
60th Legislature
2008 Regular Session
OPERATING BUDGET--SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATIONS
EFFECTIVE DATE: 04/01/08

***Sec. 222.** 2007 c 522 s 222 (uncodified) is amended to read as follows:

FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Section 45:

45) The higher education coordinating board, the department of licensing, and the department of health shall jointly review and report to appropriate policy committees of the legislature by December 1, 2008, on barriers and opportunities for increasing the extent to which veterans separating from duty are able to apply skills sets and education required while in service to certification, licensure, and degree requirements.