STATE OF WASHINGTON
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL AND HEALTH SERVICES
Home and Community Living Administration
PO Box 45600 Olympia, WA 98504-5600

December 10, 2025

HCLA: ESF #2025-034
Social Workers as Mental Health Providers in Enhanced Services Facilities

Dear Administrators:

The Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) has received several questions about if an individual with a social work degree, without professional license through the Department of Health (DOH), can fulfill the requirements of a Mental Health Provider (MHP) in an Enhanced Services Facility (ESF)

The ESF WAC 388-107-0001 defines a MHP as a licensed independent clinical social worker, licensed independent clinical social worker-associate, licensed advanced social worker, or licensed advanced social worker-associate and such other mental health professionals as may be defined by rules adopted by the secretary under the authority of chapter 71.05 RCW. The WAC also defines a social worker as a person with a master's or further advanced degree from a social work educational program accredited and approved as provided in RCW 18.320.010.

Within RCW 71.05 Behavioral Health Disorders defines a MHP as an individual practicing within the mental health professionals ***statutory scope of practice*** who is a psychiatrist, psychologist, physician assistant working with a psychiatrist who is acting as a participating physician as defined in RCW 18.71A.010, psychiatric advanced registered nurse practitioner, psychiatric nurse, or ***social worker***, as defined by this chapter and 71.34 RCW.

In the ESF setting an individual with a social work degree may meet the MHP requirement based on education instead of a professional license as treatment is not provided by the MHP in the ESF setting. This means an individual with a master's degree in social work, without a DOH professional license, can fulfil the MHP position. The social worker, without a professional license ***must not*** provide services to ESF residents that would be within the scope of practice of a licensed advanced or independent clinical social worker would provide as referenced in RCW 18.225.010

For questions related to social workers as MHPs in an ESF please contact Tamara Tredo, ESF and ALF Policy Program Manager, (360)-999-0237 or RCSPolicy@dshs.wa.gov

Sincerely,

Amy Abbott, Director
Residential Care Services

DSHS: *"Partnering with People"*