



Behavioral Health Support Specialist Fee Narrative

The Department of Health (department) works to protect and improve the health of all people in Washington state. We accomplish this work, in part, through regulation of health care providers and facilities ([Chapter 18.130 RCW](#)).

Substitute Senate Bill (SSB) 5189 establishes the Behavioral Health Support Specialist credential under RCW 18.227, creating a bachelor level profession that provides brief, evidence-based interventions under the supervision of a qualified provider.

This bill places this new credential under the Uniform Disciplinary Act (chapter 18.130 RCW) and requires the department to adopt rules to establish competency-based certification requirements, continuing education, and certification and renewal fees to regulate this new profession.

To implement SSB 5189, the department is establishing a fee that would fund the certification and regulation of the profession in the state of Washington.

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Revenue

State law, [RCW 43.70.250](#) (License fees for professions, occupations, and businesses), requires fees to fully fund the work of licensing and regulating health care professions. Annual fees charged at initial application and renewal will generate revenue for this program. To assist with the implementation of the program, the legislature appropriated GF-S in FY 2024 and FY 2025, to total \$332,000. This is in addition to fee generated revenue and is included in the fee analysis calculations.

For new professions, the initial fiscal assumptions made by the department are taken from the fiscal note written during legislative session. During the implementation and rulemaking process, the fiscal team meets with the program to update assumptions, as needed.

The assumptions presented in this document vary from the narrative set forward in the fiscal note for 5189 SSB. The department had estimated at that time that this profession would receive the following revenue, applicants, and renewals:

- FY 2025: \$227,000 (700 applications, 172 renewals)
- FY 2026: \$183,000 (14 applications, 690 renewals)
- FY 2027: \$183,000 (14 applications, 693 renewals).

During the fee study, the department found that these initial projections were inflated and based on assumptions of an established licensee base prepared to enter the profession upon implementation. Upon further review, this assumption was inaccurate. Behavioral Health Support Specialists are new members of the workforce in Washington state and the program will need to build a new licensee base. For the fee study, the department adjusted the anticipated revenue and licensees entering the program, projecting a slow building licensee base that stabilizes around 429 licensees, with 110 ongoing applications and 319 renewals by FY 2029:

- FY 2025: \$18,000 (50 applications, 12 renewals)
- FY 2026: \$43,000 (73 applications, 78 renewals)
- FY 2027: \$79,000 (105 applications, 173 renewals).
- FY 2028: \$121,000 (152 applications, 272 renewals)
- FY 2029: \$122,000 (110 applications, 319 renewals)
- FY 2030 and ongoing: \$123,000 (110 applications, 321 renewals)

This reduced number of licensees in the program leads to lower estimated expenditures and revenue than identified in the fiscal note, which estimated revenue to range from \$227,000 to \$192,000.

Expenditures

The department estimates program costs to total \$125,000 in FY24, \$134,000 in FY25 and \$95,000+ in subsequent years. During the implementation stage (FY24-FY25), costs are heightened to reflect the additional staffing hours involved in initial rulemaking and IT configuration. The table below shows projected expenditures for each cost category over the next three years. Indirect costs are incorporated within the totals listed for each category.

Program Spending by Category			
	2024	2025	2026+
Rulemaking	\$53,000	\$29,000	\$0
Technology	\$0	\$30,000	\$3,000
Program Administration	\$70,000	\$41,000	\$41,000
Licensing	\$2,000	\$11,000	\$18,000
Discipline	\$0	\$23,000	\$33,000
Total	\$125,000	\$134,000	\$95,000

Cost Drivers

Costs for all programs are classified into four primary categories: program administration, licensing, discipline, and indirect costs. For new professions, additional costs surrounding rulemaking and technology are also calculated.

Rulemaking costs include the work completed by the department to implement and establish the profession. The department develops and adopts rules to establish the licensure requirements and fees, using a team of subject matter experts alongside the program manager and a rules project coordinator. This process included at least six meetings with interested parties as well as one formal rules hearing, all held virtually, and will take approximately 18 months to complete. Costs include staff, associated expenses (including goods and services, travel, intra-agency, and indirect charges), the development and publication of a fee narrative, and Office of Attorney General support in the amount of \$9,000.

FY 2024 costs will be 0.4 FTE and \$53,000.

FY 2025 costs will be 0.2 FTE and \$29,000. These costs are consistent with the fiscal note estimates.

Expenditures

Technology costs include staff, associated expenses (including goods and services, intra-agency, and indirect charges), and vendor charges for the program's initial configuration in the department's Healthcare Enforcement and Licensing Modernization System. After configuration, ongoing work includes agency staff time and expenses for maintenance and support of the credential. Due to the reduction in licensees, the department has reduced Office of Information & Technology (OI) (formerly HTS) estimated costs from the amounts detailed in the fiscal note. There will be no costs in FY 2024. FY 2025 costs are estimated at \$30,000 and FY 2026 and ongoing costs will approximate \$3,000.

Program administration costs include personnel to manage the program. This includes administrative oversight and program management, development and implementation of legislation and rules, communication and outreach, and relations with interested parties. The department maintains the need for \$70,000 in FY 2024, with reduced ongoing costs of \$41,000 in FY 2025 and subsequent years.

Licensing activities cover the costs of credentialing, renewals, call center, online licensing (OLIC), background checks, and revenue processing. Tasks also include the development of new paper and online application forms, configuration, testing, implementation, and training. With the reduction in anticipated licensees from 700 to 50 in FY 2025, the department estimates lowered costs for these activities. Costs are estimated to scale with the growth in licensees, starting at \$2,000 in 2024, \$11,000 in FY 2025 and stabilizing at \$18,000 in FY 2026 and subsequent years.

Discipline costs include the costs of legal services, legal compliance, complaint intake, investigations, discipline case management, adjudicative services, and Attorney General costs. These costs are variable from year-to-year and are charged to the program based on the number of credentials and usage rates for the various services. The department assumes a discipline rate of 5.0 percent, which is similar to certified counselors. Based on the lowered licensee base, the department reduced its estimates to 3 complaints per year, costing \$23,000 in FY 2025 and \$33,000 in FY 2026 and subsequent years.

Indirect costs are agency-wide, general management costs necessary for any program to exist and consist of administrative activities for the general operation of the agency. Examples of indirect costs include financial services, human resources, and information resource management. The indirect rate is a standardized method of charging individual programs for their share of indirect costs and is reviewed and approved annually by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Fee Proposal

Based on the assumptions detailed in this document, the department has determined that a fee of \$285 is what is necessary to cover the anticipated costs of establishing and regulating the behavioral health support specialist program. This proposal does not exceed the estimated range for the fee as submitted by the department in the fiscal note.

In addition to these fees, the department will set auxiliary fees in line with current policy. These include fees for late renewals, expired license reissuances, duplicate licenses, and license certifications.

Proposed Fees		
Profession	Title of Fee	Proposed Fee
Behavioral Health Support Specialist	Application	\$285.00
	Renewal	\$285.00
	Late Renewal Penalty	\$145.00
	Expired License Reissuance	\$145.00
	Duplicate License	\$10.00
	Verification of License	\$25.00

The department will continue to monitor the financial health of the program and propose fee adjustments as needed to comply with statutory requirements.

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