

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

State Representative Bob Herron

Official Business



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HOUSE BILL 110

"Psychologists' Licensing and Practice"

Questions and Answers

What does HB 110 do?

Two things. Section 1 is a simple efficiency measure, to ease the licensing process. When current statute was written, the Board of Psychologists and Psychological Associates Examiners offered the qualifying exam only once every six months. It is now offered every three months. This change to AS 08.86.162 will allow applicants who need to re-take the exam to do so in a more timely manner.

Section 2 clarifies who is subject to regulation by the Board, and who is not. It takes away very vague language (a person employed "by a governmental unit, educational institution or private agency who may be required to engage in some phase of work of a psychological nature in the course of the person's employment"), and replaces it with more specific groups:

- 1) School psychologists under the supervision of their employing districts. These professionals do not fall under the purview of the Board of Psychologists and Psychological Associate Examiners. School psychology is a unique field of study, separate from general psychology. In Alaska, school psychologists are licensed and regulated by the state's Department of Education and Early Development.
- 2) Federal officers and employees, *while performing official job duties*. The State does not have the authority to regulate the official work of the Federal government. It is important to note this exemption applies only while the individual in question is performing official duties.

Other exemptions to Board regulation currently in statute will remain untouched for:

- Properly supervised psychology students, interns, and residents in a board-approved course of study.
- Other mental health professionals whose work is also of a psychological nature, as long as they do not publicly claim to be a psychologist. – Examples: Licensed Professional Counselors (regulated by the Board of Professional Counselors), Marital and Family Therapists (regulated by the Board of Marital and Family Therapy), and Licensed Clinical Social Workers (regulated by the Board of Social Work Examiners). For further information on the qualifications these professions require in Alaska, please see the attached Mental Health Provider Comparison chart.

Who does HB 110 affect?

HB 110 affects only individuals seeking licensure by the Board of Psychologist and Psychological Associate Examiners, and people who may publicly claim to be psychologists but do not have the required board-issued license.

Other licensed mental health professionals doing work within their scope of practice and in accordance with their own profession's ethics code (including various State of Alaska employees) are *not* impacted by the HB 110. Volunteers serving in either secular or faith-based peer support programs are *not* impacted by HB 110.

What differentiates a psychologist's work from the work of other types of licensed professionals whose work may also be of a "psychological nature"?

Psychologists are the only professionals who can purchase, perform, evaluate, and interpret psychological tests. Counseling (or "psychotherapy") is a specialty area for psychologists, but it is not necessarily an area of expertise for all psychologists in the way it is for Licensed Professional Counselors or Marital and Family Therapists.

Is there a difference between a "psychologist" and a "school psychologist"?

Yes. School psychology is its own unique field of study. Educational programs in school psychology are accredited by different organizations than are educational programs in "psychology". In Alaska, as in many other states, school psychologists are also licensed and regulated by the state's Department of Education and Early Development. They are not licensed to practice independently, but rather to perform work under supervision of the employing school districts, within district facilities. School psychologists are not subject to the authority of AS 08.86 or the Board of Psychologist and Psychological Associate Examiners, and therefore will not be impacted by passage of HB110.