Increase in registered counselors

Since Washington created the registered-counselor credential nearly 20 years ago, thousands of people have flooded into health care’s least-guarded profession.

What it takes to be a counselor

Registered counselors outnumber all other types of counselors in this state by more than 2-to-1. While it takes years of education and training to become a licensed mental-health counselor, for instance, almost anybody can become a registered counselor.

Number of active counselors as of January 2006

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Registered counselor</th>
<th>Licensed mental-health counselor</th>
<th>Chemical-dependency professional</th>
<th>Licensed marriage and family therapist</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17,016</td>
<td>4,154</td>
<td>2,519</td>
<td>919</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Licensing requirements

- No education needed
- 4-hour course in AIDS awareness
- No exam needed
- No continuing education needed
- Master’s degree or Ph.D.
- 3,000 hours of supervised experience
- Qualifying exam
- 36 hours of continuing education every two years
- Associate’s degree or two years of college
- 1,500-2,500 hours of supervised experience
- Qualifying exam
- 28 hours of continuing education every two years
- Master’s degree or Ph.D.
- 3,000 hours of supervised experience
- Qualifying exam
- 36 hours of continuing education every two years

Sources: Washington Department of Health

MICHELE LEE McMULLEN / THE SEATTLE TIMES