CONCISE EXPLANATORY STATEMENT
Summary of Public Comments on WAC 246-851-225
Health Equity Continuing Education Training Requirements
October 2023

Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill 5229 (ESSB 5229) (Chapter 276, Laws 2021), codified as RCW 43.70.613, directed the rule-making authority for each health profession licensed under Title 18 RCW, subject to continuing education, to adopt rules requiring a licensee to complete health equity continuing education training at least once every four years.

The statute directed the Department of Health (department) to establish model rules creating minimum standards for health equity continuing education (CE) training programs. The department model rules create four new sections, WAC 246-12-800 through WAC 246-12-830, to implement RCW 43.70.613: purpose, definitions, minimum health equity CE hours, and health equity CE training content. The department model rules require completion of two hours of health equity CE every four years for all health professionals credentialed under RCW 18.130.040 with a CE requirement. This includes the Optometrist profession. The department model rules also require that the two CE hours include implicit bias training to identify strategies to reduce bias during assessment and diagnosis. Rulemaking authorities for each profession may create standards that meet or exceed the minimum standards in the model rules.

The Board of Optometry (board) created a new section, WAC 246-851-225, to establish health equity continuing education (CE) to implement ESSB 5229. The department adopted the health equity CE model rules, WAC 246-12-800 through 246-12-830, for licensed optometrists to comply with RCW 43.70.613. The adopted rule adds two hours in health equity continuing education to the current continuing education requirement every four years without changing the existing total number of required CE hours.

The goal of health equity CE training is to equip health care workers with the skills to recognize and reduce health inequities in their daily work. The content of the health equity trainings includes instruction on skills to address structural factors, such as bias, racism, and poverty, that manifest as health inequities.

The board adopted the rules at a public rules hearing held on September 8, 2023, by webinar. The department thanks everyone who participated in this rulemaking process.

The department did not receive any comments on the rule and did not make any changes to the proposed rule language. The department adopted the language as published with the Office of the Code Reviser under WSR 23-22-066- on October 25, 2023.

Please direct any questions regarding this rule adoption to Kristina Bell at Kristina.bell@doh.wa.gov.

Thank you,

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