

2026 -- S 2859

LC005400

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2026

A N A C T

RELATING TO BUSINESSES AND PROFESSIONS -- PHYSICIAN ASSISTANTS

Introduced By: Senators DiMario, Lauria, Zurier, Murray, Valverde, Euer, Kallman,
Acosta, DiPalma, and Pearson

Date Introduced: March 04, 2026

Referred To: Senate Health & Human Services

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Chapter 5-54 of the General Laws entitled "Physician Assistants" is hereby
2 amended by adding thereto the following section:

3 **5-54-29. Physician assistant -- Behavioral health license.**

4 (a) Creation of license. There is hereby established a specialty license designation known
5 as "physician assistant - behavioral health" for physician assistants practicing in the field of
6 psychiatry or mental health.

7 (b) Eligibility. An applicant for licensure as a physician assistant - behavioral health shall:

8 (1) Hold a current and active license as a physician assistant in the State of Rhode Island
9 pursuant to this chapter; and

10 (2) Hold a current certificate of added qualifications ("CAQ") in psychiatry issued by the
11 national commission on certification of physician assistants ("NCCPA").

12 (c) Criteria. The requirements for issuance and maintenance of the physician assistant --
13 behavioral health license shall be satisfied upon proof that the applicant has met and continues to
14 meet all criteria established by the NCCPA for the psychiatry CAQ including, but not limited to:

15 (1) Possession of a current PA-C designation;

16 (2) Completion of required continuing medical education credits in psychiatry;

17 (3) Completion of required clinical experience hours in psychiatry practice;

18 (4) Attestation of competency by a collaborating or supervising physician in psychiatry;

19 and

1 (5) Successful passage of the NCCPA psychiatry specialty examination.

2 (d) Application and renewal. The department of health shall promulgate rules and
3 regulations governing the application, renewal, and documentation requirements for the physician
4 assistant - behavioral health license. Renewal of this specialty license shall require continued
5 maintenance of the psychiatry CAQ through the NCCPA.

6 (e) Scope of practice. A physician assistant - behavioral health shall practice in accordance
7 with the collaborative practice provisions of this chapter and applicable regulations. This specialty
8 license shall not expand the scope of practice otherwise authorized under Rhode Island law but
9 shall recognize advanced qualifications in psychiatry and mental health.

10 (f) Designation. A physician assistant issued a license pursuant to this section may use the
11 title "physician assistant - behavioral health" or "PA-BH" in this state.

12 (g) Purpose. The specialty license created by this section is intended to formally recognize
13 advanced psychiatric qualifications of physician assistants and to facilitate appropriate insurance
14 reimbursement for behavioral health services provided within their lawful scope of practice

15 SECTION 2. This act shall take effect upon passage.

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EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF

A N A C T

RELATING TO BUSINESSES AND PROFESSIONS -- PHYSICIAN ASSISTANTS

1 This act would create a Rhode Island specialty license for physician assistants who earn
2 the NCCPA psychiatry CAQ, formally recognizing advanced behavioral health qualifications and
3 supporting appropriate insurance reimbursement.

4 This act would take effect upon passage.

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