
SENATE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Senator Anthony Portantino, Chair
2021 - 2022 Regular Session

SB 377 (Hertzberg) - Radiologist assistants

Version: January 3, 2022

Urgency: No

Hearing Date: January 18, 2022

Policy Vote: B., P. & E.D. 8 - 2

Mandate: No

Consultant: Janelle Miyashiro

Bill Summary: SB 377 prohibits a person from using the title “Radiologist Assistant” unless the person passes a radiologist assistant examination, maintains current registration, and is certified to conduct radiologic technology in this state or possesses a radiologist assistant license from another state, as specified.

Fiscal Impact: The California Department of Public Health (CDPH) anticipates ongoing annual enforcement costs of approximately \$249,000 (Radiation Control Fund). Costs consist of staff time to address legal, medical, and scope of practice issues.

Background: The Radiologic Health Branch (RHB) within the CDPH enforces the laws and regulations addressing ionizing radiation, which include certification of medical and industrial X-ray and radioactive material users under the Radiologic Technology Act. Radiologic technologists (RTs) must meet educational, training, and experience requirements designed to prevent “excessive and improper exposure to ionizing radiation” (Health and Safety Code § 114840). RTs and technicians must have the appropriate certificate or permit to practice in California, complete an educational program approved by the RHB, and pass a California examination or a national examination, for certification. RTs who obtain California state certification may also apply for additional certificates, such as the Radiologic Technologist Fluoroscopy Permit or the Mammographic Radiologic Technology Certificate if they meet appropriate educational requirements.

Radiologist assistants are defined by the American College of Radiology, the American Society of Radiologic Technologists, and the American Registry of Radiologic Technologists as an advanced level RT. Radiologist assistants complete additional educational training and commensurate additional certification beyond that obtained as a RT.

Proposed Law:

- Prohibits a person from using the title “Radiologist Assistant” unless the person:
 - Passes a radiologist assistant examination administered by the American Registry of Radiologic Technologists, the radiology practitioner assistant examination administered by the Certification Board for Radiology Practitioner Assistants, or another examination offered by a successor or comparable entity determined by the CDPH.

- Maintains current registration with the American Registry of Radiologic Technologists, the Certification Board for Radiology Practitioner Assistants, or a successor or comparable entity.
- Is certified or permitted to conduct radiologic technology in this state or possesses a radiologist assistant license from another state.
- Requires a radiologist assistant to work under the supervision of a radiologist.
- Prohibits a radiologist assistant from working independently of a supervising radiologist, interpreting images, making diagnoses, or prescribing medications or therapies.
- Authorizes a radiologist assistant to administer prescribed drugs only as directed by a supervising radiologist or their designee.
- Authorizes a radiologist assistant to communicate and document initial clinical and imaging observations or procedures only to a radiologist for the radiologist's use. Additionally authorizes a radiologist assistant to communicate a supervising radiologist's report to an appropriate health care provider.
- Authorizes a supervising radiologist to delegate tasks and services to a radiologist assistant.

Staff Comments: While the bill does not place a mandate on CDPH to approve or authorize a radiologist assistant certification, it does amend the RT Act which CDPH is required to enforce. The CDPH states it annually conducts an average of three enforcement actions on similar scope of practice issues as presented by this bill. Each enforcement action expends approximately 625 hours of staff time at a total approximate cost of \$83,000 per investigation. If there are three enforcement actions annually as a result of this bill, costs to the CDPH would be approximately \$249,000.

Actual enforcement costs would be variable and depend on the number of enforcement actions and complexity of any subsequent investigations.

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