

RCW 18.20.390 Quality assurance committee. (1) To ensure the proper delivery of services and the maintenance and improvement in quality of care through self-review, any assisted living facility licensed under this chapter may maintain a quality assurance committee that, at a minimum, includes:

(a) A licensed registered nurse under chapter 18.79 RCW;
(b) The administrator; and
(c) Three other members from the staff of the assisted living facility.

(2) When established, the quality assurance committee shall meet at least quarterly to identify issues that may adversely affect quality of care and services to residents and to develop and implement plans of action to correct identified quality concerns or deficiencies in the quality of care provided to residents.

(3) To promote quality of care through self-review without the fear of reprisal, and to enhance the objectivity of the review process, the department shall not require, and the long-term care ombuds program shall not request, disclosure of any quality assurance committee records or reports, unless the disclosure is related to the committee's compliance with this section, if:

(a) The records or reports are not maintained pursuant to statutory or regulatory mandate; and

(b) The records or reports are created for and collected and maintained by the committee.

(4) If the assisted living facility refuses to release records or reports that would otherwise be protected under this section, the department may then request only that information that is necessary to determine whether the assisted living facility has a quality assurance committee and to determine that it is operating in compliance with this section. However, if the assisted living facility offers the department documents generated by, or for, the quality assurance committee as evidence of compliance with assisted living facility requirements, the documents are protected as quality assurance committee documents under subsections (6) and (8) of this section when in the possession of the department. The department is not liable for an inadvertent disclosure, a disclosure related to a required federal or state audit, or disclosure of documents incorrectly marked as quality assurance committee documents by the facility.

(5) Good faith attempts by the committee to identify and correct quality deficiencies shall not be used as a basis for sanctions.

(6) Information and documents, including the analysis of complaints and incident reports, created specifically for, and collected and maintained by, a quality assurance committee are not subject to discovery or introduction into evidence in any civil action, and no person who was in attendance at a meeting of such committee or who participated in the creation, collection, or maintenance of information or documents specifically for the committee shall be permitted or required to testify as to the content of such proceedings or the documents and information prepared specifically for the committee. This subsection does not preclude:

(a) In any civil action, the discovery of the identity of persons involved in the care that is the basis of the civil action whose involvement was independent of any quality improvement committee activity;

(b) In any civil action, the testimony of any person concerning the facts which form the basis for the institution of such proceedings

of which the person had personal knowledge acquired independently of their participation in the quality assurance committee activities.

(7) A quality assurance committee under subsection (1) of this section, RCW 70.41.200, 74.42.640, 4.24.250, or 43.70.510 may share information and documents, including the analysis of complaints and incident reports, created specifically for, and collected and maintained by, the committee, with one or more other quality assurance committees created under subsection (1) of this section, RCW 70.41.200, 74.42.640, 4.24.250, or 43.70.510 for the improvement of the quality of care and services rendered to assisted living facility residents. Information and documents disclosed by one quality assurance committee to another quality assurance committee and any information and documents created or maintained as a result of the sharing of information and documents shall not be subject to the discovery process and confidentiality shall be respected as required by subsections (6) and (8) of this section, RCW 43.70.510(4), 70.41.200(3), 4.24.250(1), and 74.42.640 (7) and (9). The privacy protections of chapter 70.02 RCW and the federal health insurance portability and accountability act of 1996 and its implementing regulations apply to the sharing of individually identifiable patient information held by a coordinated quality improvement program. Any rules necessary to implement this section shall meet the requirements of applicable federal and state privacy laws.

(8) Information and documents, including the analysis of complaints and incident reports, created specifically for, and collected and maintained by, a quality assurance committee are exempt from disclosure under chapter 42.56 RCW.

(9) Notwithstanding any records created for the quality assurance committee, the facility shall fully set forth in the resident's records, available to the resident, the department, and others as permitted by law, the facts concerning any incident of injury or loss to the resident, the steps taken by the facility to address the resident's needs, and the resident outcome. [2013 c 23 § 11; 2012 c 10 § 28; 2006 c 209 § 3; 2005 c 33 § 2; 2004 c 144 § 2.]

Application—2012 c 10: See note following RCW 18.20.010.

Findings—2005 c 33: "The legislature finds that facilitation of the quality assurance process in licensed boarding homes and nursing homes will promote safe patient care. The legislature also finds that communication and quality assurance efforts by boarding homes and nursing homes will achieve the goal of providing high quality of care to citizens residing in licensed boarding homes and nursing homes, and may reduce property and liability insurance premium costs for such facilities. The legislature further finds that sharing of quality assurance information between boarding homes, nursing homes, coordinated quality improvement plans, peer review organizations, and hospitals will promote safe patient care and ensure consistency of care across organizations and practices." [2005 c 33 § 1.]

Finding—2004 c 144: "The legislature finds that quality assurance efforts will promote compliance with regulations by providers and achieve the goal of providing high quality of care to citizens residing in licensed boarding homes, and may reduce property and liability insurance premium costs for such facilities." [2004 c 144 § 1.]

Effective date—2004 c 144: "This act is necessary for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health, or safety, or support of the state government and its existing public institutions, and takes effect immediately [March 26, 2004]." [2004 c 144 § 5.]