

RCW 26.51.070 Filing of new case or motion by person subject to an order restricting abusive litigation—Requirements—Procedures. (1) Except as provided in this section, a person who is subject to an order restricting abusive litigation is prohibited from filing, initiating, advancing, or continuing the litigation against the protected party for the period of time the filing restrictions are in effect.

(2) Notwithstanding subsection (1) of this section and consistent with the state Constitution, a person who is subject to an order restricting abusive litigation may seek permission to file a new case or a motion in an existing case using the procedure set out in subsection (3) of this section.

(3) (a) A person who is subject to an order restricting litigation against whom prefiling restrictions have been imposed pursuant to this chapter who wishes to initiate a new case or file a motion in an existing case during the time the person is under filing restrictions must first appear before the judicial officer who imposed the prefiling restrictions to make application for permission to institute the civil action.

(b) (i) The judicial officer may examine witnesses, court records, and any other available evidence to determine if the proposed litigation is abusive litigation or if there are reasonable and legitimate grounds upon which the litigation is based.

(ii) If the judicial officer determines the proposed litigation is abusive litigation, based on reviewing the records as well as any evidence from the person who is subject to the order, then it is not necessary for the person protected by the order to appear or participate in any way. If the judicial officer is unable to determine whether the proposed litigation is abusive without hearing from the person protected by the order, then the court shall issue an order scheduling a hearing, and notifying the protected party of the party's right to appear and/or participate in the hearing. The order should specify whether the protected party is expected to submit a written response. When possible, the protected party should be permitted to appear telephonically and provided instructions for how to appear telephonically.

(c) (i) If the judicial officer believes the litigation that the party who is subject to the prefiling order is making application to file will constitute abusive litigation, the application shall be denied, dismissed, or otherwise disposed with prejudice.

(ii) If the judicial officer reasonably believes that the litigation the party who is subject to the prefiling order is making application to file will not be abusive litigation, the judicial officer may grant the application and issue an order permitting the filing of the case, motion, or pleading. The order shall be attached to the front of the pleading to be filed with the clerk. The party who is protected by the order shall be served with a copy of the order at the same time as the underlying pleading.

(d) The findings of the judicial officer shall be reduced to writing and made a part of the record in the matter. If the party who is subject to the order disputes the finding of the judge, the party may seek review of the decision as provided by the applicable court rules.

(4) If the application for the filing of a pleading is granted pursuant to this section, the period of time commencing with the filing of the application requesting permission to file the action and

ending with the issuance of an order permitting filing of the action shall not be computed as a part of any applicable period of limitations within which the matter must be instituted.

(5) If, after a party who is subject to prefiling restrictions has made application and been granted permission to file or advance a case pursuant to this section, any judicial officer hearing or presiding over the case, or any part thereof, determines that the person is attempting to add parties, amend the complaint, or is otherwise attempting to alter the parties and issues involved in the litigation in a manner that the judicial officer reasonably believes would constitute abusive litigation, the judicial officer shall stay the proceedings and refer the case back to the judicial officer who granted the application to file, for further disposition.

(6) (a) If a party who is protected by an order restricting abusive litigation is served with a pleading filed by the person who is subject to the order, and the pleading does not have an attached order allowing the pleading, the protected party may respond to the case by filing a copy of the order restricting abusive litigation.

(b) If it is brought to the attention of the court that a person against whom prefiling restrictions have been imposed has filed a new case or is continuing an existing case without having been granted permission pursuant to this section, the court shall dismiss, deny, or otherwise dispose of the matter. This action may be taken by the court on the court's own motion or initiative. The court may take whatever action against the perpetrator of abusive litigation deemed necessary and appropriate for a violation of the order restricting abusive litigation.

(c) If a party who is protected by an order restricting abusive litigation is served with a pleading filed by the person who is subject to the order, and the pleading does not have an attached order allowing the pleading, the protected party is under no obligation or duty to respond to the summons, complaint, petition, motion, to answer interrogatories, to appear for depositions, or any other responsive action required by rule or statute in a civil action.

(7) If the judicial officer who imposed the prefiling restrictions is no longer serving in the same capacity in the same judicial district where the restrictions were placed, or is otherwise unavailable for any reason, any other judicial officer in that judicial district may perform the review required and permitted by this section. [2020 c 311 s 7.]