

**RCW 74.34.200 Abandonment, abuse, financial exploitation, or neglect of a vulnerable adult—Cause of action for damages—Legislative intent.**

(1) In addition to other remedies available under the law, a vulnerable adult who has been subjected to abandonment, abuse, financial exploitation, or neglect either while residing in a facility or in the case of a person residing at home who receives care from a home health, hospice, or home care agency, or an individual provider, shall have a cause of action for damages on account of his or her injuries, pain and suffering, and loss of property sustained thereby. This action shall be available where the defendant is or was a corporation, trust, unincorporated association, partnership, administrator, employee, agent, officer, partner, or director of a facility, or of a home health, hospice, or home care agency licensed or required to be licensed under chapter 70.127 RCW, as now or subsequently designated, or an individual provider.

(2) It is the intent of the legislature, however, that where there is a dispute about the care or treatment of a vulnerable adult, the parties should use the least formal means available to try to resolve the dispute. Where feasible, parties are encouraged but not mandated to employ direct discussion with the health care provider, use of the long-term care ombuds or other intermediaries, and, when necessary, recourse through licensing or other regulatory authorities.

(3) In an action brought under this section, a prevailing plaintiff shall be awarded his or her actual damages, together with the costs of the suit, including a reasonable attorneys' fee. The term "costs" includes, but is not limited to, the reasonable fees for a guardian, guardian ad litem, and experts, if any, that may be necessary to the litigation of a claim brought under this section. [2013 c 23 s 219; 1999 c 176 s 15; 1995 1st sp.s. c 18 s 85.]

**Findings—Purpose—Severability—Conflict with federal requirements—1999 c 176:** See notes following RCW 74.34.005.

**Conflict with federal requirements—Severability—Effective date—1995 1st sp.s. c 18:** See notes following RCW 74.39A.030.