

RCW 74.09.315 Whistleblowers—Workplace reprisal or retaliatory action. (1) For the purposes of this section:

(a) "Employer" means any person, firm, corporation, partnership, association, agency, institution, or other legal entity.

(b) "Whistleblower" means an employee of an employer that obtains or attempts to obtain benefits or payments under this chapter or other applicable law in violation of RCW 74.09.210, who in good faith reports a violation of RCW 74.09.210 to the authority.

(c) "Workplace reprisal or retaliatory action" includes, but is not limited to: Denial of adequate staff to fulfill duties; frequent staff changes; frequent and undesirable office changes; refusal to assign meaningful work; unwarranted and unsubstantiated report of misconduct under Title 18 RCW; unwarranted and unsubstantiated letters of reprimand or unsatisfactory performance evaluations; demotion; reduction in pay; denial of promotion; suspension; dismissal; denial of employment; a supervisor or superior behaving in or encouraging coworkers to behave in a hostile manner toward the whistleblower; or a change in the physical location of the employee's workplace or a change in the basic nature of the employee's job, if either are in opposition to the employee's expressed wish.

(2) A whistleblower who has been subjected to workplace reprisal or retaliatory action has the remedies provided under chapter 49.60 RCW. RCW 4.24.500 through 4.24.520, providing certain protection to persons who communicate to government agencies, apply to complaints made under this section. The identity of a whistleblower who complains, in good faith, to the authority about a suspected violation of RCW 74.09.210 may remain confidential if requested. The identity of the whistleblower must subsequently remain confidential unless the authority determines that the complaint was not made in good faith.

(3) This section does not prohibit an employer from exercising its authority to terminate, suspend, or discipline an employee who engages in workplace reprisal or retaliatory action against a whistleblower. The protections provided to whistleblowers under this chapter do not prevent an employer from: (a) Terminating, suspending, or disciplining a whistleblower for other lawful purposes; or (b) reducing the hours of employment or terminating employment as a result of the demonstrated inability to meet payroll requirements. The authority shall determine if the employer cannot meet payroll in cases where a whistleblower has been terminated or had hours of employment reduced due to the inability of a facility to meet payroll.

(4) The authority shall adopt rules to implement procedures for filing, investigation, and resolution of whistleblower complaints that are integrated with complaint procedures under this chapter. The authority shall adopt rules designed to discourage whistleblower complaints made in bad faith or for retaliatory purposes. [2018 c 201 s 7016; 2012 c 241 s 104.]

Findings—Intent—Effective date—2018 c 201: See notes following RCW 41.05.018.

Intent—Finding—2012 c 241: See note following RCW 74.66.010.