

Chapter 388-01 WAC

DSHS ORGANIZATION/DISCLOSURE OF PUBLIC RECORDS

WAC

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WAC 388-01-010 What are the purposes of this chapter? The purposes of this chapter are to:

- (1) Describe the organization of the department of social and health services (DSHS);
- (2) Ensure that DSHS complies with laws governing the disclosure (release) of public records; and
- (3) Explain how an individual or organization can obtain public records.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 42.17.250 and 34.05.220. WSR 99-15-065, § 388-01-010, filed 7/19/99, effective 8/19/99.]

WAC 388-01-015 Does any provision in this title create a right or cause of action, or compel DSHS to establish a program or entitlement? No provision in Title 388 WAC creates or is intended to create any right or cause of action, or adds to or intends to add to any existing right or cause of action, nor may anything in Title 388 WAC be relied upon to compel the establishment of any program or special entitlement.

(8/12/03)

[Statutory Authority: RCW 42.17.250 and 43.17.060. WSR 02-15-119, § 388-01-015, filed 7/18/02, effective 8/18/02.]

DSHS ORGANIZATION

WAC 388-01-020 What is DSHS and how is DSHS organized? (1) DSHS was created to unite related statewide social and health service programs within a single agency. DSHS programs are designed to protect the general public, as well as persons who are unable to fully care for themselves or meet their basic needs.

(2) It is organized into seven administrations plus the secretary's and deputy secretary's offices:

- (a) Aging and adult services,
- (b) Children's services,
- (c) Economic services,
- (d) Health and rehabilitative services,
- (e) Juvenile rehabilitation,
- (f) Management services, and
- (g) Medical assistance.

(3) To request an organizational chart, contact: DSHS, Office of the Secretary, P.O. Box 45010, Olympia, WA 98504-5010, or telephone number (360) 902-7800.

(4) DSHS has offices in the community to serve clients. Local DSHS offices have various names, such as community services office (CSO), regional offices, home and community services (HCS), division of child support (DCS), children's services, division of developmental disabilities (DDD) field service offices, and facilities.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 42.17.250 and 34.05.220. WSR 99-15-065, § 388-01-020, filed 7/19/99, effective 8/19/99.]

DISCLOSURE OF PUBLIC RECORDS

WAC 388-01-030 What DSHS records are available? (1) DSHS prepares and keeps public records that relate to the programs it administers. All records DSHS uses to conduct business are public records.

DSHS public records may include, documents, audio and video recordings, pictures, email, computer disks and electronic data.

(2) DSHS records are available to the public unless a law exempts them from disclosure. Some DSHS records contain confidential information that is not available to everyone.

(3) You, or someone authorized to act for you or by you, may have access to confidential records about you that would otherwise be exempt from disclosure to the public.

(4) Upon your request, DSHS may give you records such as rules, policies, indexes, interpretive statements, pamphlets, forms and other publications at cost under WAC 388-01-180 without using the public records disclosure process.

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[Statutory Authority: RCW 41.17.020 [42.17.250], 41.17.260 [42.17.260], and 41.17.300 [42.17.300]. WSR 03-17-014, § 388-01-030, filed 8/12/03, effective 9/12/03. Statutory Authority: RCW 42.17.250 and 34.05.220. WSR 99-15-065, § 388-01-030, filed 7/19/99, effective 8/19/99.]

WAC 388-01-040 What public records are available for release? (1) Public records kept by DSHS are available for release unless the law specifically excludes (or exempts) them.

(2) For a list of public records that are excluded from public disclosure by law, see RCW 42.17.310 through RCW 42.17.31911, and other disclosure laws specific to DSHS programs.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 42.17.250 and 34.05.220. WSR 99-15-065, § 388-01-040, filed 7/19/99, effective 8/19/99.]

WAC 388-01-050 Who should be contacted to request a public record? An individual should contact the public disclosure coordinators at DSHS offices to request a public record. Public disclosure coordinators are located at local community service offices (CSO), regional offices, home and community services (HCS), division of child support (DCS), children's services, DDD field services offices, DSHS facilities, and within each DSHS administration.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 42.17.250 and 34.05.220. WSR 99-15-065, § 388-01-050, filed 7/19/99, effective 8/19/99.]

WAC 388-01-060 How can an individual request a public record? (1) An individual can request a public record orally or in writing. DSHS encourages that all public record requests be in writing on a "request for disclosure of DSHS records" form, DSHS 17-041(X). Individuals may request this form from DSHS, Forms and Records Management Services, P.O. Box 45805, Olympia, WA 98504-5805, (360) 664-6120, or email at DSHSFormsRecordsMgmt@dshs.wa.gov.

(2) If the form is not used, the written public record request should include the following information:

(a) The requester's name, organization, mailing address, telephone number, fax number, and email address;

(b) The date of the request;

(c) A detailed description of the public record being requested;

(d) The address where copies of the record are to be mailed, or if the requester wants to examine the record at DSHS; and

(e) The signature of the requester.

(3) An individual can fill out a record request at a DSHS office, or send it by regular mail, electronic mail, or fax to the public disclosure coordinator at the appropriate DSHS office.

(4) DSHS may ask an individual requesting a public record for personal identification when the law makes a record disclosable to a specific person.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 42.17.250 and 34.05.220. WSR 99-15-065, § 388-01-060, filed 7/19/99, effective 8/19/99.]

WAC 388-01-070 When can a public record be examined? (1) Individuals can examine public records during DSHS office hours. The office hours are 8:00 a.m. to noon and 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except for legal holidays. Contact the public disclosure coordinator

in the appropriate office to arrange a time to examine the public record.

(2) In order to preserve the record or prevent interference in the performance of departmental duties, DSHS reserves the right to restrict an individual's ability to examine or copy public records. This does not prevent DSHS from providing copies of the public record by mail.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 42.17.250 and 34.05.220. WSR 99-15-065, § 388-01-070, filed 7/19/99, effective 8/19/99.]

WAC 388-01-080 Does DSHS charge for examining or copying public records? (1) There is no fee for examining public records.

(2) DSHS charges one or more of the following fees for copies of public records:

(a) Up to fifteen cents per page for black and white photocopies of a record;

(b) The actual cost of manuals, blueprints, and other non-printed materials such as audio or video tapes; and

(c) The cost of postage, when items are mailed (see RCW 42.17.260).

(3) Government agencies, or DSHS clients involved in an administrative hearing procedure, may receive public records reasonably related to the hearing free of charge.

(4) DSHS may waive copying and postage fees if:

(a) Providing a copy of the record assists in managing a program; or

(b) The expense of billing exceeds the copying and postage costs.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 42.17.250 and 34.05.220. WSR 99-15-065, § 388-01-080, filed 7/19/99, effective 8/19/99.]

WAC 388-01-090 When and how must DSHS respond to a public record request? Within five business days after receiving the public record request, DSHS must review the public record and must:

(1) Provide the public record; or

(2) Acknowledge receipt of the request, and give the DSHS date for response; or

(3) Deny the request in writing, noting the reason(s) for denial.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 42.17.250 and 34.05.220. WSR 99-15-065, § 388-01-090, filed 7/19/99, effective 8/19/99.]

WAC 388-01-100 When might DSHS need to extend the time to respond to a public record request? (1) DSHS might need to extend the time to respond to a public record request to:

(a) Locate and gather the information requested;

(b) Notify an individual or organization affected by the request; and/or

(c) Determine whether the information requested is exempt and whether all or part of the public record requested can be released; and/or

(d) Contact the individual requesting the public record to clarify the intent, scope or specifics of the request. If the individual requesting the public record fails to clarify the request, DSHS does not have to respond to the request.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 42.17.250 and 34.05.220. WSR 99-15-065, § 388-01-100, filed 7/19/99, effective 8/19/99.]

WAC 388-01-110 What if an individual thinks DSHS is unreasonably delaying the release of a public record? If an individual requesting a public record thinks DSHS is unreasonably delaying the release of a public record, the individual may:

(1) Petition the public disclosure coordinator to release the public record before the date indicated on DSHS response (see WAC 388-01-090); or

(2) File a lawsuit in superior court to require DSHS to release the public record.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 42.17.250 and 34.05.220. WSR 99-15-065, § 388-01-110, filed 7/19/99, effective 8/19/99.]

WAC 388-01-120 What if the public record that is requested contains information that is exempt from public disclosure? (1) If the requested public record contains information that is exempt from public disclosure, DSHS may:

(a) Release the nonexempt portion, explaining what exemption applies to the deleted portion of the record; or

(b) Deny release of the entire record, sending a written explanation citing the exemption that applies to the denial.

(2) DSHS may release information to law enforcement officers and United States immigration officials to the extent authorized by RCW 74.04.062.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 42.17.250 and 34.05.220. WSR 99-15-065, § 388-01-120, filed 7/19/99, effective 8/19/99.]

WAC 388-01-130 What are an individual's options if DSHS denies a public record request? If DSHS denies a public record request, an individual may do any of the following:

(1) Petition for a review of the denied request from the denying public disclosure coordinator or a director approved designee. Contact DSHS to obtain a petition form (DSHS 17-062(X)) at: DSHS Forms and Records Management Services, P.O. Box 45805, Olympia, WA 98504-5805, (360) 664-6120, or email DSHSFormsRecordsMgmt@dshs.wa.gov. DSHS has two business days after receiving the petition to respond. If DSHS upholds the denial, the decision is considered final; or

(2) Ask the office of the attorney general to review the public record request.

(a) Send a copy of the denied public record request and the DSHS written denial to:

Office of Attorney General
Public Records Review
P.O. Box 40100
Olympia WA 98504-0100

(b) The office of the attorney general will review the request and DSHS denial. The office of attorney general issues a written opinion as to whether the requested public record is excluded from disclosure.

(3) File a lawsuit for release of a public record in superior court in the county where the public record is located.

(a) DSHS must establish that its denial of a public record is legal.

(b) If the DSHS denial is reversed, the court may require DSHS to pay costs and attorney fees. DSHS may be fined

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five dollars to one hundred dollars a day for each day they denied the public record.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 42.17.250 and 34.05.220. WSR 99-15-065, § 388-01-130, filed 7/19/99, effective 8/19/99.]

WAC 388-01-140 If a public record contains personal information that identifies an individual or organization, other than the subject of the record, is that individual or organization notified? (1) If a public record contains personal information that identifies an individual or organization other than the subject of the requested public record, DSHS may notify that individual or organization.

(2) DSHS may send a written notice to the individual or organization if releasing the personal information could damage the individual or organization, or government operations, or is not in the best interest of the public. The notice should include:

(a) The record being requested;

(b) The date DSHS intends to release the record; and

(c) How the individual or organization can prevent release of the record (see RCW 42.17.330).

(3) DSHS may also send a written notice to the record requester notifying them that:

(a) The individual or organization whose personal information is contained in the requested public record has been notified;

(b) DSHS expects a response from the individual or organization regarding disclosure of their personal information by a specified date; and

(c) Disclosure may be denied.

(4) DSHS releases the record by the specified date if no one objects or the contacted party does not respond by the specified date.

(5) DSHS must notify the office of the attorney general when an individual or organization, other than the subject of a record, files a lawsuit to prevent release of the record.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 42.17.250 and 34.05.220. WSR 99-15-065, § 388-01-140, filed 7/19/99, effective 8/19/99.]

WAC 388-01-150 Can an individual's record be requested by his or her representative? (1) An individual's attorney, legal guardian, or lay representative can request the individual's record with a signed written release.

(2) The written release must include:

(a) The identity of the individual(s) or organization(s) authorized to receive the records;

(b) An identification of the record(s), or part of the record, that the individual wants released; and

(c) The date the release expires.

(3) DSHS may ask for identification verifying the representatives's relationship to the individual.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 42.17.250 and 34.05.220. WSR 99-15-065, § 388-01-150, filed 7/19/99, effective 8/19/99.]

WAC 388-01-160 Is DSHS required to create public records for requesters? (1) DSHS is only required to provide access to existing, identifiable public records in its possession at the time of the request (see RCW 42.17.270).

(2) DSHS is not required to collect information to create a public record that does not exist at the time of the public record request.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 42.17.250 and 34.05.220. WSR 99-15-065, § 388-01-160, filed 7/19/99, effective 8/19/99.]

WAC 388-01-170 Can DSHS release public records to its offices and to outside agencies? (1) For the purposes of this chapter, outside agencies include, but are not limited to, group homes, mental health centers, drug and alcohol agencies, and other state agencies.

(2) DSHS may release public records to its offices and to outside agencies when the information relates to the administration of DSHS programs unless exempt by 45 C.F.R. 205.50 or other law.

(3) If an outside agency requests a public record for reasons other than information that relates to the administration of DSHS programs, the outside agency must have the individual's written authorization.

(4) Outside agencies receiving information are subject to applicable disclosure confidentiality laws.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 42.17.250 and 34.05.220. WSR 99-15-065, § 388-01-170, filed 7/19/99, effective 8/19/99.]

WAC 388-01-180 Who should be contacted to review an interpretive or policy statement index, or to get a copy of the documents? DSHS issues administrative policy statements that apply to the whole department. Administrations may issue policies and interpretive statements that relate to their own programs. See RCW 34.05.010.

(1) To receive a copy of a DSHS administrative policy, send a written request to: Office of Legal Affairs, Rules and Policies Assistance Unit, P.O. Box 45850, Olympia, Washington 98504-5850.

(2) To receive a copy or review a specific administration's policies or interpretive statements, send a written request to the administration.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 42.17.250 and 34.05.220. WSR 99-15-065, § 388-01-180, filed 7/19/99, effective 8/19/99.]

WAC 388-01-190 How can an individual get an index of DSHS significant decisions? (1) The DSHS board of appeals reviews and selects orders and creates an index of significant decisions that substantially affect DSHS performance (see RCW 42.17.260).

(2) The index:

- (a) Is divided into program categories;
- (b) Contains a copy or synopsis of the order; and
- (c) Is updated, as needed.

(3) An individual can inspect or request a copy of the index by contacting the board of appeals located at:

Board of Appeals
Blake Office Park
4500 - 10th Avenue Southeast
Lacey, WA 98503-5803
(360) 664-6100

Mailing address:
Board of Appeals
P.O. Box 45803
Olympia, WA 98503-5803

(4) An individual may ask the board of appeals to index an order as a significant decision by sending a written request with a copy of the order to the mailing address.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 42.17.250 and 34.05.220. WSR 99-15-065, § 388-01-190, filed 7/19/99, effective 8/19/99.]

WAC 388-01-200 How are petitions for declaratory orders filed? (1) First, read the information on declaratory orders in RCW 34.05.240 and WAC 10-08-250, 10-08-251, and 10-08-252.

(2) Next, file the petition with the Rules and Policies Assistance Unit; DSHS; P.O. Box 45850; Olympia, WA 98504-5850.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 42.17.250 and 34.05.220. WSR 99-15-065, § 388-01-200, filed 7/19/99, effective 8/19/99.]