

**WAC 246-15-030 Procedures for filing, investigation, and resolution of whistleblower complaints.** In filing, investigating and resolving a whistleblower complaint, the department will follow its usual procedures for complaint processing while protecting a whistleblower's identity consistent with WAC 246-15-020.

(1) Filing.

(a) Upon receipt of a complaint from a whistleblower alleging improper quality of care, department staff will enter the complaint into the tracking system for complaints against health care providers or facilities and create a file on that complaint.

(b) Staff will affix a permanent cover to the letter of complaint, or other form of notice, in the complaint file, noting the statutory citation for protection of identity of the complainant.

(c) Staff will assess priority of the case and conduct the initial case planning based on the complainant information.

(2) Investigation.

(a) For cases assigned to an investigation, staff will develop an investigative plan. The investigator will gather pertinent information and perform other functions as appropriate to the allegation. The investigator may interview witnesses or others with information relevant to the investigation, review records and consult with staff of other agencies.

(b) At the conclusion of the investigation, the investigator will prepare the necessary documents, such as an investigative report summarizing the findings, and other documents necessary for the department to take further action.

(3) Resolution. The regulatory authority for the health facility or provider will:

(a) Review investigative findings to determine violation of any statutes or rules;

(b) Take appropriate disciplinary action as necessary;

(c) Ensure upon case closure, that the permanent cover affixed in subsection (1)(c) of this section will remain;

(d) Will code or obliterate references to the whistleblower complainant in investigative materials or in the investigative report as necessary to protect the whistleblower's identity prior to any public disclosure; and

(e) Make the case file available to the public upon case closure, subject to public disclosure and other relevant laws.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 43.70.075 and 43.70.040. WSR 97-02-013, § 246-15-030, filed 12/20/96, effective 1/20/97.]