

**WAC 284-43B-035 Arbitration initiation and selection of arbitrator.**

(1)(a) To initiate arbitration, the carrier, provider, or facility must provide written notification to the commissioner and the noninitiating party no later than 10 calendar days following completion of the period of good faith negotiation under WAC 284-43B-030(3) using the arbitration initiation request form designated by the commissioner. A request must be submitted electronically through the website of the office of the insurance commissioner. When multiple claims are addressed in a single arbitration proceeding, subsection (3) of this section governs calculation of the 10 calendar days. Each arbitration initiation request must be submitted to the commissioner individually and constitutes a distinct arbitration proceeding unless consolidation of requests is authorized by a court under chapter 7.04A RCW. The commissioner will assign a unique number or designation to each arbitration initiation request. The parties must include that designation in all communication related to that request. Any information submitted to the commissioner with the arbitration initiation request must be included in the notice to the noninitiating party under RCW 48.49.040. A provider or facility initiating arbitration must send the arbitration initiation request form to the email address appearing on the website established by the commissioner under (c) of this subsection. Any patient information submitted to the commissioner with an arbitration initiation request form must be de-identified to ensure that protected health information is not disclosed.

(b) The written notification to the commissioner must be made electronically and provide dates related to each of the time period limitations described in WAC 284-43B-030 (1) through (3) and subsection (1)(a) of this section. The commissioner's review of the arbitration initiation request form is limited to the information necessary to determine that the request has been timely submitted and is complete. The commissioner's review does not include a review of whether particular claims included in the request are subject to chapter 48.49 RCW or whether claims are appropriately bundled under subsection (3) of this section. A party seeking to challenge whether a claim is subject to chapter 48.49 RCW or whether claims are appropriately bundled may raise those issues during arbitration.

(c) Each carrier must provide the commissioner with the email address and telephone number of the carrier's designated contact for receipt of notices to initiate arbitration. The email address and phone number provided must be specific to the carrier staff responsible for receipt of notices or other actions related to arbitration proceedings. The carrier must keep its contact information accurate and current by submitting updated contact information to the commissioner as directed by the commissioner.

(2) Within 10 business days of a party notifying the commissioner and the noninitiating party of intent to initiate arbitration, both parties shall agree to and execute a nondisclosure agreement. The nondisclosure agreement must prohibit either party from sharing or making use of any confidential or proprietary information acquired or used for purposes of one arbitration in any subsequent arbitration proceedings. The nondisclosure agreement must not preclude the arbitrator from submitting the arbitrator's decision to the commissioner under RCW 48.49.040 or impede the commissioner's duty to prepare the annual report under RCW 48.49.050.

(3) If a nonparticipating provider or nonparticipating facility chooses to address multiple claims in a single arbitration proceeding as provided in RCW 48.49.040, notification must be provided no later

than 10 calendar days following completion of the period of good faith negotiation under WAC 284-43B-030(3) for the most recent claim that is to be addressed through the arbitration. All of the claims at issue must:

(a) Involve identical carrier and provider, provider group or facility parties. Items and services are billed by the same provider, provider group or facility if the items or services are billed with the same national provider identifier or tax identification number;

(b) Involve the same or similar items and services. The services are considered to be the same or similar items or services if each is billed under the same service code, or a comparable code under a different procedural code system, such as current procedural terminology (CPT) codes with modifiers, if applicable, health care common procedure coding system (HCPCS) with modifiers, if applicable, or diagnosis-related group (DRG) codes with modifiers, if applicable; and

(c) Occur within the same 30-business-day period of one another, such that the earliest claim that is the subject of the arbitration occurred no more than 30 business days prior to the latest claim that is the subject of the arbitration. For purposes of this subsection, a provider or facility claim occurs on the date the service is provided to a patient or, in the case of inpatient facility admissions, the date the admission ends.

(4) A notification submitted to the commissioner later than 10 calendar days following completion of the period of good faith negotiation will be considered untimely and will be rejected. Any revision to a previously timely submitted arbitration initiation request form must be submitted to the commissioner within the 10 calendar day period applicable to submission of the original request. A party that has submitted an untimely notice is permanently foreclosed from seeking arbitration related to the claim or claims that were the subject of the untimely notice.

(5) Within seven calendar days of receipt of notification from the initiating party, the commissioner must provide the parties with a list of approved arbitrators or entities that provide arbitration. The commissioner will use the email addresses for the initiating party and the noninitiating party indicated on the arbitration initiation request form for all communication related to the arbitration request. The arbitrator selection process must be completed within 20 calendar days of receipt of the original list of arbitrators from the commissioner, as follows:

(a) If the parties are unable to agree on an arbitrator from the original list sent by the commissioner, they must notify the commissioner within five calendar days of receipt of the original list of arbitrators. The commissioner must send the parties a list of two individual arbitrators and three arbitration entities within five calendar days of receipt of notice from the parties under this subsection. Each party is responsible for reviewing the list of five arbitrators and arbitration entities and notifying the commissioner and the other party within three calendar days of receipt of the list:

(i) Whether they are taking the opportunity to veto up to two of the five arbitrators or arbitration entities on this list, and if so, which arbitrators or arbitration entities have been vetoed; and

(ii) If there is a conflict of interest as described in subsection (6) of this section with any of the arbitrators or arbitration entities on the list, to avoid the commissioner assigning an arbitrator or arbitration entity with a conflict of interest to an arbitration.

(b) If, after the opportunity to veto up to two of the five named arbitrators or arbitration entities on the list of five arbitrators and arbitration entities sent by the commissioner to the parties, more than one arbitrator or arbitration entity remains on the list, the parties must notify the commissioner within five calendar days of receipt of the list of five arbitrators or arbitration entities. The commissioner will choose the arbitrator from among the remaining arbitrators on the list. If a party fails to timely provide the commissioner with notice of their veto, the commissioner will choose the arbitrator from among the remaining arbitrators or arbitration entities on the list.

(6) Before accepting any appointment, an arbitrator shall ensure that there is no conflict of interest that would adversely impact the arbitrator's independence and impartiality in rendering a decision in the arbitration. A conflict of interest includes (a) current or recent ownership or employment of the arbitrator or a close family member by any health carrier; (b) serves as or was employed by a physician, health care provider, or a health care facility; (c) has a material professional, familial, or financial conflict of interest with a party to the arbitration to which the arbitrator is assigned.

(7) For purposes of this subsection, the date of receipt of a list of arbitrators is the date of electronic transmittal of the list to the parties by the commissioner. The date of receipt of notice from the parties to the commissioner is the date of electronic transmittal of the notice to the commissioner by the parties.

(8) If a noninitiating party fails to timely respond without good cause to a notice initiating arbitration, the initiating party will choose the arbitrator.

(9) Where a dispute resolution matter initiated under sections 2799A-1 and 2799A-2 of the Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C. Secs. 300gg-111 and 300gg-112) and federal regulations implementing those provisions of P.L. 116-260 (enacted December 27, 2020) results in a determination by a certified independent dispute resolution entity that such process does not apply to the dispute or to portions thereof, RCW 48.49.040 (3)(b) governs initiation of arbitration under this chapter.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 48.02.060, 48.49.100, 48.49.060, and 2024 c 218. WSR 24-24-065 (Matter R 2024-01), s 284-43B-035, filed 11/27/24, effective 12/28/24. Statutory Authority: RCW 48.43.820, 48.49.180, 48.49.110, and 48.02.060. WSR 23-01-110 (Matter R 2022-02), § 284-43B-035, filed 12/19/22, effective 1/19/23. Statutory Authority: RCW 48.49.060 and 48.49.110. WSR 20-22-076, § 284-43B-035, filed 11/2/20, effective 12/3/20.]