

**WSR 21-24-069**  
**EMERGENCY RULES**  
**DEPARTMENT OF**  
**SOCIAL AND HEALTH SERVICES**

[Filed November 30, 2021, 8:52 a.m., effective November 30, 2021, 8:52 a.m.]

Effective Date of Rule: Immediately upon filing.

Purpose: The department is amending WAC 388-97-0140 to waive and suspend the requirement for nursing homes to suspend transfers and discharges pending the outcome of a resident appeal of the nursing home transfer or discharge decision. The COVID-19 pandemic continues to require more rapid transfers and discharges than the rule permits. This emergency rule waives the requirement for nursing homes to suspend transfers and discharges pending the outcome of a resident appeal hearing, and improves resident safety by allowing faster grouping of COVID-19 positive residents in one facility, or grouping asymptomatic residents together. This helps expedite infection control processes, and maximizes the availability of nursing home beds.

Citation of Rules Affected by this Order: Amending WAC 388-97-0140.

Statutory Authority for Adoption: RCW 74.42.620.

Under RCW 34.05.350 the agency for good cause finds that immediate adoption, amendment, or repeal of a rule is necessary for the preservation of the public health, safety, or general welfare, and that observing the time requirements of notice and opportunity to comment upon adoption of a permanent rule would be contrary to the public interest.

Reasons for this Finding: The threat of COVID-19 to our most vulnerable populations is significant, especially for those receiving long-term care services in their homes and congregate settings, such as nursing homes. Currently WAC 388-97-0140 requires nursing homes to suspend a transfer or discharge pending the outcome of a resident appeal request to the office of administrative hearings (the office) when the appeal is received by the office on or before the date the resident actually transfers or discharges.

Strict compliance with these requirements will prevent, hinder, or delay certain transfers or discharges of nursing home residents to other long-term care facilities when they are necessary to expedite the grouping or cohorting of residents to reduce the spread of COVID-19, especially the Delta variant, among our most vulnerable populations, and to relieve stress on our health care system to meet the increased demand of addressing COVID-19 related illnesses.

Number of Sections Adopted in Order to Comply with Federal Statute: New 0, Amended 0, Repealed 0; Federal Rules or Standards: New 0, Amended 0, Repealed 0; or Recently Enacted State Statutes: New 0, Amended 0, Repealed 0.

Number of Sections Adopted at the Request of a Nongovernmental Entity: New 0, Amended 0, Repealed 0.

Number of Sections Adopted on the Agency's own Initiative: New 0, Amended 1, Repealed 0.

Number of Sections Adopted in Order to Clarify, Streamline, or Reform Agency Procedures: New 0, Amended 0, Repealed 0.

Number of Sections Adopted using Negotiated Rule Making: New 0, Amended 0, Repealed 0; Pilot Rule Making: New 0, Amended 0, Repealed 0; or Other Alternative Rule Making: New 0, Amended 1, Repealed 0.

Date Adopted: November 29, 2021.

Katherine I. Vasquez

## SHS-4908.1

AMENDATORY SECTION (Amending WSR 20-03-103, filed 1/15/20, effective 2/15/20)

**WAC 388-97-0140 Transfer and discharge appeals for resident in medicare or medicaid certified facilities.** (1) A skilled nursing facility and a nursing facility that initiates transfer or discharge of any resident, regardless of payor status, must:

(a) Provide the required written notice of transfer or discharge to the resident and, if known or appropriate, to a family member or the resident's representative;

(b) Attach a department-designated hearing request form to the transfer or discharge notice;

(c) Inform the resident in writing, in a language and manner the resident can understand, that:

(i) An appeal request may be made any time up to ninety days from the date the resident receives the notice of transfer or discharge; and

(ii) ~~((Transfer or discharge will be suspended when an appeal request is received by the office of administrative hearings on or before the date the resident actually transfers or discharges; and~~

~~(iii))~~) The nursing home will assist the resident in requesting a hearing to appeal the transfer or discharge decision.

(2) ~~((A skilled nursing facility or nursing facility must suspend transfer or discharge pending the outcome of the hearing when the resident's appeal is received by the office of administrative hearings on or before the date of the transfer or discharge set forth in the written transfer or discharge notice, or before the resident is actually transferred or discharged.~~

~~(3))~~) The resident is entitled to appeal the skilled nursing facility or nursing facility's transfer or discharge decision. The appeals process is set forth in chapter 182-526 WAC and this chapter. In such appeals, the following will apply:

(a) In the event of a conflict between a provision in this chapter and a provision in chapter 182-526 WAC, the provision in this chapter will prevail;

(b) The resident must be the appellant and the skilled nursing facility or the nursing facility will be the respondent;

(c) The department must be notified of the appeal and may choose whether to participate in the proceedings. If the department chooses to participate, its role is to represent the state's interest in assuring that skilled nursing facility and nursing facility transfer and discharge actions comply substantively and procedurally with the law and with federal requirements necessary for federal funds;

(d) If a medicare certified or medicaid certified facility's decision to transfer or discharge a resident is not upheld, and the resident has been relocated, the resident has the right to readmission immediately upon the first available bed in a semi-private room if the resident requires and is eligible for the services provided by a nursing facility or skilled nursing facility;

(e) Any review of the administrative law judge's initial decision shall be conducted under chapter 182-526 WAC.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 74.42.620. WSR 20-03-103, § 388-97-0140, filed 1/15/20, effective 2/15/20. Statutory Authority: Chapters 18.51 and 74.42 RCW. WSR 11-22-077, § 388-97-0140, filed 11/1/11, effective 12/2/11. Statutory Authority: Chapters 18.51 and 74.42 RCW and 42 C.F.R. 489.52. WSR 08-20-062, § 388-97-0140, filed 9/24/08, effective 11/1/08.]