

WAC 208-680-410 Administration of funds held in trust. (1) **Who is responsible for funds deposited to and disbursed from an escrow trust account?** The escrow agent must establish a trust account or accounts in a recognized Washington state depository. The escrow agent, through the designated escrow officer, is responsible for depositing, holding, disbursing, and accounting for funds in the trust account as provided in the act and the rules, regardless of how they are received or disbursed. The designated escrow officer or branch designated escrow officer must hold the funds in trust for the purposes of the transaction or agreement and must not utilize such funds for the benefit of the agent or any person not entitled to such benefit. For branch offices, the branch designated escrow officer is also responsible for depositing, holding, disbursing, and accounting for funds in the branch's trust account. The escrow agent is ultimately responsible for all the actions of the designated escrow officer or branch designated escrow officer.

(2) **What kind of an account can I use as a trust account for my escrow services?** Your trust account or accounts must be designated as a trust account or accounts in the licensed name of the escrow agent. Your trust accounts must be noninterest bearing demand deposit accounts unless they are one of the following:

(a) An interest-bearing trust account or dividend earning investment account containing funds pertaining to an individual escrow transaction or escrow collection account, if directed to use one by a written agreement between and signed by all principal parties to the transaction. The agreement must specify the manner of distribution of accumulated interest to the parties to the transaction;

(b) An interest-bearing trust account or dividend-earning investment account containing only funds held on behalf of an owner, vendor, lessor, etc., involving escrow collections, if directed to use one by a written agreement or directive signed by the principal parties. The agreement must specify the manner of distribution of accumulated interest to the parties to the transaction;

(c) An interest-bearing trust account containing funds related to transactions in which a limited practice officer has prepared documents under authorization set forth in APR 12(h); or

(d) An interest-bearing trust account containing funds related to transactions in which a licensed attorney has prepared documents. Your trust account must not be used for any purpose other than that specified in the act or rules. You must not use the trust account for the receipt or disbursement of funds for any business other than that conducted under the act.

(3) **What information do I need to provide to the department regarding my trust account?** Each time you renew your escrow agent license, you must provide the department with an authorization to examine your trust account. This authorization must be on a form specified by the department, signed by a representative of the bank, and notarized.

(4) **Can I set up a system of records and procedures that varies from this section?** No. You must establish and maintain a system of records and procedures as provided in this section unless you receive advance approval from the department.

(5) **Who may have signatory authority over trust account disbursements?** The designated escrow officer must have signatory authority on all trust accounts, and he or she may authorize any employee that he or she supervises to sign disbursements by including them on a bank account signature card. Branch designated escrow officers must have

signature authority for trust accounts at their branch, and may have signature authority for other branches if the designated escrow officer authorizes it on either a temporary or permanent basis. The signatory authority of any employee other than a designated or branch designated escrow officer is discretionary, may be conditional or temporary, and may be revoked by the designated escrow officer at any time.

(6) When must my client's funds be deposited into a trust account? You must deposit any funds you receive for an escrow transaction or collection account into the escrow agent's trust account on the first banking day following receipt.

This requirement does not apply to funds owned exclusively by the agent.

(7) What do I need to do when I receive escrow funds?

(a) When you receive funds, you must record the date, amount, source, and purpose on either a cash receipts journal or duplicate receipt. If you use a duplicate receipt, you must keep it as a permanent record.

(b) When you deposit funds into your trust account or accounts, the deposit must be documented by:

(i) For traditionally deposited funds, a duplicate bank deposit slip that is validated by bank imprint or an attached deposit receipt that bears the signature of the authorized representative of the agent indicating that the funds were actually deposited into the proper trust account;

(ii) For funds received via wire transfer, posting of the deposit in the same manner as other receipts with a traceable identifying name or number supplied by the financial institution or transferring entity. You must also make arrangements for a follow-up "hard copy" receipt for the deposit; or

(iii) For remotely deposited funds, a follow-up "hard copy" receipt for the deposit.

(c) The traceable identifying name or number supplied by the financial institution in (b) of this subsection does not need to be a name or number you use to identify the transaction, but must be enough to allow the department to track and verify the transfer.

(8) What are my responsibilities regarding my individual client ledgers? You must maintain an individual client ledger for each escrow transaction or collection account for which funds are received in trust. All receipts and disbursements must be posted in the individual client ledger. Your client ledgers are subject to the following requirements:

(a) Credit entries must show the date of deposit, amount, and name of remitter.

(b) Debit entries must show the date of check, check number (if funds are disbursed via check), amount of check, and name of payee.

(c) You must prepare monthly trial balances of each client ledger. You must reconcile the ledger with both the trust account bank statement and the trust account receipts and disbursement records. The reconciliation must be signed by the designated escrow officer or branch designated escrow officer, and must be maintained as permanent records.

(9) What are my obligations regarding a reconciled trust account? Your reconciled trust account or accounts must be equal at all times to your outstanding trust liability to clients. Your outstanding trust liability to clients must equal the trial balance of all of your escrows with undisbursed balances.

(10) What requirements must I meet for disbursements of trust funds?

(a) Disbursed funds must be good funds.

(b) Unless otherwise authorized by (c) of this subsection, in the escrow instructions, you must make trust fund disbursements by check or cashier's check. Checks must be drawn on your trust account or accounts, and must identify which specific escrow transaction or collection account the disbursement relates to. Cashier's checks may be issued by the financial institution and drawn upon the trust account. The number of each check and its amount, date, payee, and the specific client's ledger sheet debited must be shown in the cash register or cash disbursement journal. All data must agree exactly with the check as written.

(c) You may make disbursements via wire transfer or ACH if both of the following are true:

(i) You have made arrangements with the financial institution that holds your trust account or accounts to provide you with a follow-up "hard copy" debit memo when funds are disbursed via wire transfer; and

(ii) You retain in the transaction file a copy of instructions signed by the owner of the funds to be wire transferred identifying the receiving entity and account number.

(d) You may make disbursements via ACH if both of the following are true:

(i) The ACH disbursements are restricted to fees payable to the escrow agent and reoccurring payments made to payees in the escrow transaction. See subsection (13) of this section for further restrictions on escrow agent fees; and

(ii) You print and retain the ACH confirmation or a copy of the confirmation screen. The retained documentation must, at a minimum, include payee, payment date, escrow trust account number debited, and confirmation number assigned to the ACH transaction.

(e) You may make appropriate transfers between escrow accounts by ledger entries alone if you use either:

(i) A transfer form containing the date of the transfer, the amount being transferred, the identity of the accounts being debited and credited, and the signature of a person authorized to approve disbursements; or

(ii) An intrabank debit memo transfer form, and all escrow accounts involved in the transaction are closed through the same bank account.

(f) If you are making recurring transfers between collection escrows, they must be authorized by standing escrow instructions on file from all appropriate parties.

(g) See also WAC 208-680-560.

(11) I have a voided check written on the trust account. What do I need to do with it? You must permanently deface the check and retain it as a permanent record in the individual escrow or collection account file.

(12) What are my obligations regarding fees payable to me for my escrow services? You must be paid via a separate check or bank transfer, drawn on the trust account and bearing the escrow or transaction number, for escrow and service fees. This payment must be provided for in the escrow instructions. All of your fees relating to a transaction may be combined in a single check, or transfer, but the settlement statement or an addendum signed by the principal parties must itemize the included charges.

(13) **What are my obligations regarding fees payable to me for my collection account services?** Your collection account fees may be paid with a single check for each collection period as long as such a check is supported by a schedule of fees and identified to each individual account. Your fees must be paid monthly unless the collection contract agreement provides a longer collection period.

(14) **May I have funds in my Washington trust account that are not related to a Washington escrow transaction or collection account?** No. Only funds related to the services you provide under the authority of your Washington license may be placed in your trust account. No other funds may be in the trust account for any reason.

(15) **What kinds of disbursements am I not allowed to make from my trust account?** You may only make disbursements from your trust account for authorized purposes. Specifically, you may not make disbursements:

(a) For items not related to a specific escrow transaction or escrow collection account;

(b) To any person or for any reason before the closing of an escrow transaction, or before the happening of a triggering condition set forth in the escrow instructions. You may make a disbursement before the closing of a transaction or before a triggering condition if you receive a written release from all principal parties of the escrow transaction or collection account. Unless the disbursement is disputed under WAC 208-680-560, you are permitted to disburse earnest money funds without a written release if the earnest money agreement terminates according to its own terms prior to closing and provides for such disbursement;

(c) Relating to a specific escrow transaction or collection account in excess of the actual amount held in your trust account in connection with such transaction or collection account;

(d) To pay any fee owed to you, your employees or for your own business expenses. Such fees or expenses must be paid from your own general business operating account and not from your trust account or accounts;

(e) For bank charges of any nature. You must make arrangements with your bank to have any bank charges applicable to the trust accounts charged to your regular business bank account, or to provide a separate statement of bank charges so they may be paid from your regular business bank account. However, you may pay bank charges from the interest you receive on trust accounts allowed under subsection (2)(c) or (d) of this section;

(f) If the Washington financial institution's trust account does not have the ability to automatically charge fees to another account, or does not provide a separate statement for the service fees as required by (e) of this subsection, and the account is debited for service fees, you must deposit funds from your general business or other nontrust account to cover the service fee charged within one banking day after receipt of notice of the charge;

(g) On lease or rental contract collection account for preauthorization of payments by the financial institution for recurring expenses such as mortgage payments on behalf of the owner if the account contains tenant security deposits or funds belonging to more than one client;

(h) On lease or rental contract collection accounts, of funds received as a damage or security deposit involving a lease or rental contract, to the property owner or any other person or persons, without the written authority of the lessee. You must hold these funds until the end of the tenancy, at which point you must disburse them to

the person or persons entitled to the funds under the terms of the rental or lease agreement, and as consistent with the provisions of RCW 59.18.270, Residential Landlord-Tenant Act, or other appropriate statute.

(16) If I choose to use a computer accounting system, what additional requirements do I need to meet? The provisions of this section apply to both manual and computerized accounting systems. However, there are some additional requirements if you choose to use a computer accounting system.

(a) Your computer accounting system must provide a capability to back-up all data files;

(b) You must print receipt and check registers at least once monthly. You must retain printed records as permanent records. Reconciliations and trial balances must be conducted at least once monthly, and then printed and retained as a permanent record;

(c) You must maintain a printed, dated source document file to support any changes to existing accounting records;

(d) If your computer accounting system has the ability to write checks by filling in fields on existing checks, the check number must be preprinted on the check or a voucher copy retained by the supplier. Your computer accounting system may assign suffixes or subaccount codes before or after the check number for identification purposes;

(e) If your computer accounting system has the ability to print entire checks on blank check stock using MICR toner or a similar system, it must track all checks that are printed. Those checks must be verifiable against your check register to ensure no duplication or skipping of check numbers;

(f) The check number must appear in the magnetic coding which also identifies the account number for readability by the financial institution's computer; and

(g) All checks you write must be included within the computer accounting system.

(17) I have unclaimed funds in my trust account. What do I need to do with them? Unclaimed funds are governed by and defined in the Uniform Unclaimed Property Act of 1983, chapter 63.29 RCW. If you have unclaimed funds in your trust account, your designated escrow officer or branch designated escrow officer must contact the department of revenue for disposition instructions. You must maintain a record of the correspondence relating to unclaimed funds for at least six years.

You must dispose of unclaimed funds in accordance with this section on a rolling basis. You must examine your books at least once a year to determine if you have unclaimed funds. If you have unclaimed funds in your trust account, they must be disposed of pursuant to chapter 63.29 RCW. See also WAC 208-680-425.

[Statutory Authority: Chapter 43.320 RCW, RCW 18.44.410. WSR 16-08-028, § 208-680-410, filed 3/30/16, effective 4/30/16. Statutory Authority: RCW 43.320.040 and 18.44.410. WSR 13-24-022, § 208-680-410, filed 11/22/13, effective 1/1/14. Statutory Authority: RCW 43.320.040 and chapter 18.44 RCW (as amended by 2010 c 34). WSR 10-20-124, § 208-680-410, filed 10/5/10, effective 11/5/10.]