

WSR 22-23-155
EMERGENCY RULES
DEPARTMENT OF
SOCIAL AND HEALTH SERVICES

(Aging and Long-Term Support)

[Filed November 22, 2022, 2:31 p.m., effective November 26, 2022]

Effective Date of Rule: November 26, 2022.

Purpose: The department is amending WAC 388-97-0140 and 388-97-0120 to waive and suspend the requirement for nursing homes to suspend certain 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 certain 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. This amendment will align with federal rules.

Citation of Rules Affected by this Order: Amending WAC 388-97-0120 and 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 (OAH) when the appeal is received by OAH 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 2, 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 2, 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 2, Repealed 0.

Date Adopted: November 21, 2022.

Katherine I. Vasquez
Rules Coordinator

SHS-4908.3

AMENDATORY SECTION (Amending WSR 08-20-062, filed 9/24/08, effective 11/1/08)

WAC 388-97-0120 Individual transfer and discharge rights and procedures. (1) The skilled nursing facility and nursing facility must comply with all of the requirements of 42 C.F.R. § 483.10 and § 483.12, and RCW 74.42.450, or successor laws, and the nursing home must comply with all of the requirements of RCW 74.42.450 (1) through (4) and (7), or successor laws, including the following provisions and must not transfer or discharge any resident unless:

- (a) At the resident's request;
- (b) The transfer or discharge is necessary for the resident's welfare and the resident's needs cannot be met in the facility;
- (c) The transfer or discharge is appropriate because the resident's health has improved enough so the resident no longer needs the services provided by the facility;
- (d) The safety of individuals in the facility is endangered;
- (e) The health of individuals in the facility would otherwise be endangered; or
- (f) The resident has failed, after reasonable and appropriate notice, to pay for a stay at the facility.

(2) The following notice requirements apply if a nursing home/facility initiates the transfer or discharge of a resident. The notice must:

- (a) Include all information required by 42 C.F.R. § 483.12 when given in a nursing facility;
- (b) Be in writing, in language the resident understands;
- (c) Be given to the resident, the resident's surrogate decision maker, if any, the resident's family and to the department;
- (d) Be provided thirty days in advance of a transfer or discharge initiated by the nursing facility, except that the notice may be given as soon as practicable when the facility cannot meet the resident's urgent medical needs, or under the conditions described in (1)(c), (d), and (e) of this section; or for cohorting purposes related to the COVID-19 pandemic as allowed under any applicable Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) emergency waivers; and

(e) Be provided fifteen days in advance of a transfer or discharge initiated by the nursing home, unless the transfer is an emergency.

(3) The nursing home must:

(a) Provide sufficient preparation and orientation to the resident to ensure safe and orderly transfer or discharge from the nursing home;

(b) Attempt to avoid the transfer or discharge of a resident from the nursing home through the use of reasonable accommodations unless

agreed to by the resident and the requirements of WAC 388-97-0080 are met; and

(c) Develop and implement a bed-hold policy. This policy must be consistent with any bed-hold policy that the department develops.

(4) The nursing home must provide the bed-hold policy, in written format, to the resident, and a family member, before the resident is transferred or goes on therapeutic leave. At a minimum the policy must state:

(a) The number of days, if any, the nursing home will hold a resident's bed pending return from hospitalization or social/therapeutic leave;

(b) That a medicaid eligible resident, whose hospitalization or social/therapeutic leave exceeds the maximum number of bed-hold days will be readmitted to the first available semi-private bed, provided the resident needs nursing facility services. Social/therapeutic leave is defined under WAC 388-97-0001. The number of days of social/therapeutic leave allowed for medicaid residents and the authorization process is found under WAC 388-97-0160; and

(c) That a medicaid eligible resident may be charged if he or she requests that a specific bed be held, but may not be charged a bed-hold fee for the right to return to the first available bed in a semi-private room.

(5) The nursing facility must send a copy of the federally required transfer or discharge notice to:

(a) The department's home and community services when the nursing home has determined under WAC 388-97-0100, that the medicaid resident's health has improved sufficiently so that the resident no longer needs the services provided by the facility; and

(b) The department's designated local office when the transfer or discharge is for any of the following reasons:

(i) The resident's needs cannot be met in the facility;

(ii) The health or safety of individuals in the facility is endangered; or

(iii) The resident has failed to pay for, or to have paid under medicare or medicaid, a stay at the facility.

[Statutory Authority: Chapters 18.51 and 74.42 RCW and 42 C.F.R. 489.52. WSR 08-20-062, § 388-97-0120, filed 9/24/08, effective 11/1/08.]

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 unless the failure to discharge or transfer would endanger the health or safety of the resident or other individuals in the facility (the facility must document the danger that failure to transfer or discharge would pose); 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 unless the failure to discharge or transfer would endanger the health or safety of the resident or other individuals in the facility. The facility must document the danger that failure to transfer or discharge would pose.

(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.]