WSR 26-09-029
PERMANENT RULES
HEALTH CARE AUTHORITY
[Filed April 7, 2026, 8:08 a.m., effective May 8, 2026]

Effective Date of Rule: Thirty-one days after filing.

Purpose: The health care authority (HCA) is updating the definition of substance use disorder professional in WAC 182-546-0125 to match the definition recently codified in WAC 182-538D-0200. This will help ensure consistency across HCA rule chapters.

Citation of Rules Affected by this Order: Amending WAC 182-546-0125.

Statutory Authority for Adoption: RCW 41.05.021 and 41.05.160.

Adopted under notice filed as WSR 26-04-014 on January 22, 2026.

Number of Sections Adopted in Order to Comply with Federal Statute: New 0, Amended 0, Repealed 0; Federal Rules or Standards: New 0, Amended 0, Repealed 0; or Recently Enacted State Statutes: New 0, Amended 0, Repealed 0.

Number of Sections Adopted at the Request of a Nongovernmental Entity: New 0, Amended 0, Repealed 0.

Number of Sections Adopted on the Agency's own Initiative: New 0, Amended 1, Repealed 0.

Number of Sections Adopted in Order to Clarify, Streamline, or Reform Agency Procedures: New 0, Amended 1, Repealed 0.

Number of Sections Adopted using Negotiated Rule Making: New 0, Amended 0, Repealed 0; Pilot Rule Making: New 0, Amended 0, Repealed 0; or Other Alternative Rule Making: New 0, Amended 1, Repealed 0.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: April 7, 2026.

Wendy Barcus
Rules Coordinator

RDS-6960.1

AMENDATORY SECTION (Amending WSR 21-15-010, filed 7/8/21, effective 8/8/21)

WAC 182-546-0125 Ambulance transportation—Definitions. The following definitions and those found in chapter 182-500 WAC apply to ambulance transportation services.

"Advanced life support (ALS)" - See RCW 18.73.030.

"Advanced life support (ALS) assessment" - Means an assessment performed by ALS trained personnel as part of an emergency response that was necessary because the client's reported conditions at the time of dispatch was such that only an ALS crew was qualified to perform the assessment. An ALS assessment does not necessarily result in an ambulance transport or determination that the client requires an ALS level of service or that the transport will be reimbursed at the ALS rate.

"Advanced life support, Level 1 (ALS1)" - Means the transportation by ground ambulance vehicle and the provision of medically necessary supplies and services including the provision of an ALS assessment or at least one ALS intervention.

"Advanced life support, Level 1 (ALS1) emergency" - Means medically necessary ALS1 services, as previously specified, in the context of an emergency response. An emergency response is one that, at the time the ambulance provider is called, it responds immediately.

"Advanced life support, Level 2 (ALS2)" - Means transportation by ground ambulance vehicle and the provision of medically necessary supplies and services including at least three separate administrations of one or more medications by intravenous push/bolus or by continuous infusion (excluding crystalloid fluids) or ground ambulance transport, medically necessary supplies and services, and the provision of at least one of the ALS2 procedures listed below:

(a) Endotracheal intubation;
(b) Cardiac pacing;
(c) Chest decompression;
(d) Creation of a surgical airway;
(e) Manual defibrillation/cardioversion;
(f) Placement of central venous line; or
(g) Placement of intraosseous line.

"Advanced life support (ALS) intervention" - Means a procedure that is in accordance with state and local laws, required to be done by an emergency medical technician intermediate, emergency medical technician advanced, or paramedic.

"Aggregate fee schedule amount" - See RCW 74.70.020.

"Aid vehicle" - See RCW 18.73.030.

"Air ambulance" - Means a helicopter or airplane designed and used to provide transportation for the ill and injured, and to provide personnel, facilities, and equipment to treat clients before and during transportation. Air ambulance is considered an ALS service.

"Allowable costs" - For the ground emergency medical transportation (GEMT) program only, allowable costs means an expenditure that meets the test of the appropriate Executive Office of the President of the United States, Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Circular.

"Ambulance" - Means a ground vehicle or aircraft designed and used to transport the ill and injured, provide personnel, facilities, and equipment to treat clients before and during transportation, and licensed in accordance with RCW 18.73.140.

"Ambulance transport provider" - See RCW 74.70.020.

"Bariatric patient" - Means a patient whose weight, height, or width exceeds the capacity standards of a normal ambulance gurney.

"Bariatric transport unit" - Means a specially equipped ambulance designed for the transportation of bariatric patients.

"Base rate" - Means the agency's minimum payment amount per covered trip, which includes allowances for emergency medical personnel and their services, the costs of standing orders, reusable supplies and equipment, hardware, stretchers, oxygen and oxygen administration, intravenous supplies and IV administration, disposable supplies, waiting time, and the normal overhead costs of doing business. The base rate excludes mileage.

"Basic life support (BLS)" - Means transportation by ground ambulance vehicle and the provision of medically necessary supplies and services, including BLS ambulance services as defined in chapter 18.73 RCW. The ambulance must be staffed by a person qualified as an emergency medical technician-basic (EMT basic) according to department of health (DOH) regulations. BLS does not require the ability to provide or deliver invasive medical procedures and services.

"Basic life support (BLS) emergency" - BLS services provided in an emergency response.

"Bed-confined" - Means the client is unable to perform all of the following actions:

(a) Get up from bed without assistance;

(b) Unable to bear weight or ambulate;

(c) Sit in a chair or wheelchair.

"Behavioral health disorder" - Means mental disorders and substance use disorders.

"Bordering city hospital" - Means a licensed hospital in a designated bordering city (see WAC 182-501-0175).

"Brokered transportation" - Means nonemergency transportation arranged by a broker under contract with the agency, to or from covered health care services for an eligible client (also, see "Transportation provider" in WAC 182-546-5100).

"By report" - See WAC 182-500-0015.

"Children's long-term inpatient program (CLIP)" - Means psychiatric residential treatment provided as a result of judicial commitment or review of the CLIP committee for children five through ((~~seventeen~~)) 17 years of age.

"Closest and most appropriate" - The agency-contracted facility or level of care in which the expected clinical benefits (e.g., improved symptoms) outweigh the expected negative effect (e.g., adverse reactions) to such an extent that the treatment or transportation is justified. This facility may not necessarily be the closest provider based solely on driving distance.

"Conditional release" - Means a period of time the client is released from inpatient care to outpatient care, provided that the client continues to meet certain conditions according to RCW 71.05.340.

"Cost allocation plan (CAP)" - Means a document that identifies, accumulates, and distributes allowable direct and indirect costs to cost objectives. The document also identifies the allocation methods used for distribution to cost objectives, based on relative benefits received.

"Designated crisis responder (DCR)" - Means a behavioral health professional appointed by the county or other authority authorized in rule to perform duties specified in chapter 71.05 RCW and who has received substance use disorder training as determined by the division of behavioral health and recovery.

"Detention" or **"detain"** - Means the lawful confinement of a person, under chapter 71.05 RCW.

"Direct costs" - Means all costs identified specifically with a particular final cost objective in order to meet emergency medical transportation requirements. This includes unallocated payroll costs for personnel work shifts, medical equipment and supplies, professional and contracted services, travel, training, and other costs directly related to delivering covered medical transportation services.

"Emergency medical service" - Means medical treatment and care that may be rendered at the scene of any medical emergency or while transporting a client in an ambulance to an appropriate medical facility, including ambulance transportation between medical facilities.

"Emergency medical transportation" - Means ambulance transportation during which a client receives necessary emergency medical services immediately prior to, or in transit to, an appropriate medical facility.

"Emergency response" - Means a BLS or ALS level of service that has been provided in immediate response to a 911 call or the equivalent.

"Evaluation and treatment facility" - See RCW 71.05.020.

"Federal financial participation (FFP)" - Means the portion of medical assistance expenditures for emergency medical services that are paid or reimbursed by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) according to the state plan for medical assistance. Clients under Title 19, U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) are eligible for FFP.

"Gravely disabled" - Means a condition in which a person, as a result of a mental disorder, or as the result of the use of alcohol or other psychoactive chemicals:

(a) Is in danger of serious physical harm as a result of being unable to provide for personal health or safety; or

(b) Shows repeated and escalating loss of cognitive control over personal actions and is not receiving care essential for personal health or safety.

"Ground ambulance" - Means a ground vehicle designed and used to transport the ill and injured and to provide personnel, facilities, and equipment to treat clients before and during transportation.

"Indirect costs" - Means the costs for a common or joint purpose benefiting more than one cost objective and allocated to each objective using an agency-approved indirect rate or an allocation methodology.

"Initial detention" - Means the period, up to ((~~seventy-two~~)) 72 hours, in which a person is involuntarily placed in an evaluation and treatment facility under RCW 71.05.150 or 71.05.153 (see RCW 71.05.160). This period begins on the date and time the evaluation and treatment facility provisionally accepts the client for admission. See definition for "petition for initial detention."

"Interfacility" - Means transportation services between hospitals.

"Invasive procedure" - Means a medically necessary operative procedure in which skin or mucous membranes and connective tissues are cut or an instrument is introduced through a natural body orifice, e.g., an intubation tube. Invasive procedures include a range of procedures from minimally invasive (biopsy, excision) to extensive (organ transplantation). This does not include use of instruments for examinations or very minor procedures such as drawing blood.

"Involuntary Treatment Act (ITA)" - See chapters 71.05 and 71.34 RCW.

"Less restrictive alternative treatment" - Means a program of individualized treatment in a less restrictive setting than inpatient treatment and that includes the services described in RCW 71.05.585.

"Lift-off fee" - Means either of the two base rates the agency pays to air ambulance providers for transporting a client. The agency establishes separate lift-off fees for helicopters and airplanes.

"Loaded mileage" - Means the distance the client is transported in the ambulance.

"Medical attestation" - Means the medical professional is attesting to the fact that the client has a condition that justifies medical transportation and the level of care that is specified by BLS or ALS services and supplies. The condition must also be such that other means of transportation (such as taxi, bus, car, or other means) would be harmful to the client. (See WAC 182-500-0070 for additional information - Medically necessary definition.)

"Medical control" - Means the medical authority upon which an ambulance provider relies to coordinate prehospital emergency services, triage, and trauma center assignment/destination for the person being transported. The medical control is designated in the trauma care

plan, by the department of health's (DOH) contracted medical program director, of the region in which the ambulance service is provided.

"Nonemergency ambulance transportation" - Means the use of a ground ambulance to carry a client who may be confined to a stretcher but typically does not require the provision of emergency medical services in transit, or the use of an air ambulance to or from an out-of-state health care service when the out-of-state health care service and air ambulance transportation are prior authorized by the agency. Nonemergency ambulance transportation is usually scheduled or prearranged. See definitions for "prone or supine transportation."

"Parent" - For the purpose of family initiated treatment under RCW 71.34.600 through 71.34.670, means a legal guardian, a person that has been given authorization to make health care decisions for the adolescent, a kinship caregiver who is involved in caring for the adolescent, or another relative who is responsible for the health care of the adolescent who may be required to provide a declaration under penalty of perjury stating that they are a relative responsible for the health care of the adolescent under RCW 9A.72.085.

"Petition for initial detention" - A document required by the superior court of Washington for admission of the client by the evaluation and treatment facility. This form is available on the Washington state superior court mental proceedings rules web page.

"Petition for revocation of a conditional release or less restrictive treatment" - Means a document completed by a designated crisis responder (DCR).

"Point of destination" - Means a health care facility generally equipped to provide the necessary medical, nursing, or behavioral health care necessary to treat the client's injury, illness, symptoms, or complaint.

"Point of pickup" - Means the location of the client at the time the client is placed on board the ambulance or transport vehicle.

"Prehospital care" - Means an assessment, stabilization, and emergency medical care of an ill or injured client by an emergency medical technician, paramedic, or other person before the client reaches the hospital.

"Prone or supine transportation" - Means transporting a client confined to a stretcher or gurney, with or without emergency medical services being provided in transit.

"Public institution" - Means a facility that is either an organizational part of a government entity or over which a governmental unit exercises final administrative control, (e.g., city/county jails and state correctional facilities).

"Publicly owned or operated" - Means an entity that is owned or operated by a unit of government. The unit of government is a state, city, county, special purpose district, or other governmental unit in the state that has taxing authority, has direct access to tax revenues, or is an Indian tribe as defined in the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act, Section 4.

"Qualifying expenditure" - Means an expenditure for covered services provided to an eligible beneficiary.

"Secure withdrawal management and stabilization facility" - Means a facility operated by either a public or private agency or by the program of an agency which provides care to voluntary individuals involuntarily detained and committed under this chapter for whom there is a likelihood of serious harm or who are gravely disabled due to the presence of a substance use disorder.

"Service period" - Means July 1st through June 30th of each Washington state fiscal year.

"Shift" - Means a standard period of time assigned for a complete cycle of work as set by each participating provider.

"Specialty care transport (SCT)" - Means interfacility (hospital-to-hospital or hospital-to-skilled nursing facility) transportation of a critically injured or ill client by a ground ambulance vehicle under the command of ALS-trained personnel with additional training above the level of a paramedic.

"Standing order" - Means an order remaining in effect indefinitely until canceled or modified by an approved medical program director (regional trauma system) or attending physician.

"Substance use disorder professional (SUDP)" - ((~~Means a person certified as a substance use disorder professional by the department of health (DOH) under chapter 18.205 RCW~~)) See WAC 182-500-0100.

"Transfer-down" - Means a transfer from a higher level facility to a facility of lower or equivalent level of care, or back to the original point of pickup (e.g., referring hospital or skilled nursing facility).

"Transfer-up" - Means a transfer from one hospital to a hospital of higher level care when the transfer and discharging hospital has inadequate facilities or care, or appropriate personnel to provide the necessary medical services required by the client.

"Trip" - Means a transportation one-way from the point of pickup to the point of destination by an authorized transportation provider.