

RCW 43.70.050 Collection, use, and accessibility of health-related data. (1) The legislature intends that the department and board promote and assess the quality, cost, and accessibility of health care throughout the state as their roles are specified in chapter 9, Laws of 1989 1st ex. sess. in accordance with the provisions of this chapter. In furtherance of this goal, the secretary shall create an ongoing program of data collection, storage, assessability, and review. The legislature does not intend that the department conduct or contract for the conduct of basic research activity. The secretary may request appropriations for studies according to this section from the legislature, the federal government, or private sources.

(2) All state agencies which collect or have access to population-based, health-related data are directed to allow the secretary access to such data. This includes, but is not limited to, data on needed health services, facilities, and personnel; future health issues; emerging bioethical issues; health promotion; recommendations from state and national organizations and associations; and programmatic and statutory changes needed to address emerging health needs. Private entities, such as insurance companies, health maintenance organizations, and private purchasers are also encouraged to give the secretary access to such data in their possession. The secretary's access to and use of all data shall be in accordance with state and federal confidentiality laws and ethical guidelines. Such data in any form where the patient or provider of health care can be identified shall not be disclosed, subject to disclosure according to chapter 42.56 RCW, discoverable or admissible in judicial or administrative proceedings. Such data can be used in proceedings in which the use of the data is clearly relevant and necessary and both the department and the patient or provider are parties.

(3) The department shall serve as the clearinghouse for information concerning innovations in the delivery of health care services, the enhancement of competition in the health care marketplace, and federal and state information affecting health care costs.

(4) The secretary shall review any data collected, pursuant to this chapter, to:

(a) Identify high-priority health issues that require study or evaluation. Such issues may include, but are not limited to:

(i) Identification of variations of health practice which indicate a lack of consensus of appropriateness;

(ii) Evaluation of outcomes of health care interventions to assess their benefit to the people of the state;

(iii) Evaluation of specific population groups to identify needed changes in health practices and services;

(iv) Evaluation of the risks and benefits of various incentives aimed at individuals and providers for both preventing illnesses and improving health services;

(v) Identification and evaluation of bioethical issues affecting the people of the state; and

(vi) Other such objectives as may be appropriate;

(b) Further identify a list of high-priority health study issues for consideration by the board, within their authority, for inclusion in the state health report required by *RCW 43.20.050. The list shall specify the objectives of each study, a study timeline, the specific

improvements in the health status of the citizens expected as a result of the study, and the estimated cost of the study; and

(c) Provide background for the state health report required by *RCW 43.20.050.

(5) Any data, research, or findings may also be made available to the general public, including health professions, health associations, the governor, professional boards and regulatory agencies and any person or group who has allowed the secretary access to data.

(6) Information submitted as part of the health professional licensing application and renewal process, excluding social security number and background check information, shall be available to the office of financial management consistent with RCW 43.370.020, whether the license is issued by the secretary of the department of health or a board or commission. The department shall replace any social security number with an alternative identifier capable of linking all licensing records of an individual. The office of financial management shall also have access to information submitted to the department of health as part of the medical or health facility licensing process.

(7) The secretary may charge a fee to persons requesting copies of any data, research, or findings. The fee shall be no more than necessary to cover the cost to the department of providing the copy. [2009 c 343 § 2; 2005 c 274 § 301; 1989 1st ex.s. c 9 § 107.]

***Reviser's note:** RCW 43.20.050 was amended by 2011 c 27 § 1, eliminating the "state health report."