

RCW 70.58A.520 Disclosure of vital records, data, and vital statistics—When authorized. (1) The department may disclose vital records information for persons named in any birth, death, or fetal death record only as provided under this chapter.

(2) Proposals for research and public health purposes must be reviewed and approved as to scientific merit and adequacy of confidentiality safeguards in accordance with this section.

(3) The department may release birth and fetal death record data that includes direct identifiers for research with approval of the state institutional review board and receipt of a signed confidentiality agreement with the department.

(4) The department may release birth and fetal death record data that includes direct identifiers for nonresearch public health purposes to a government agency upon receipt of a signed written data-sharing agreement with the department.

(5) The department may release birth and fetal death record data that contains only indirect identifiers to anyone upon receipt of a signed written data-sharing agreement with the department.

(6) The department may release death record data to anyone upon approval of the department and receipt of a signed written data-sharing agreement with the department.

(7) A written data-sharing agreement required under subsections (4) through (6) and (14) through (17) of this section must, at a minimum:

(a) Include a description of the type of data needed and the purpose for how the data will be used;

(b) Include the methods to be used to protect the confidentiality and security of the data;

(c) State that ownership of the data provided under this section remains with the department, and is not transferred to those authorized to receive and use the data under the agreement; and

(d) Include the applicable fees for use of the data.

(8) In addition to the conditions required by subsection (7) of this section, the written data-sharing agreement for birth and fetal death record data for public health purposes under subsection (4) of this section must:

(a) Prohibit redisclosure of any direct or indirect identifiers without explicit permission from the department; and

(b) Prohibit the recipient of the data from contacting or attempting to contact the person whose information is included in the data set or that person's family members without explicit permission from the department.

(9) In addition to the conditions required by subsection (7) of this section, the written data-sharing agreement for birth or fetal death record data with indirect identifiers under subsection (5) of this section must prohibit the recipient of the data from attempting to determine the identity of persons whose information is included in the data set or use the data in any manner that identifies individuals or their family members.

(10) The department and the state institutional review board shall apply the most restrictive law governing data release to proposals for research and public health purposes requesting data sets with direct identifiers for linkage to other data sets.

(11) The department may provide the fewest birth and fetal death record data elements necessary for the purpose described in the proposal for research or public health purposes.

(12) The department may deny a request for data for cause including, but not limited to, when:

(a) Indirect identifiers are sufficient for the purpose described in the proposal for research or public health purposes;

(b) The research or public health proposal lacks scientific merit;

(c) The department lacks resources or the request would result in an unreasonable use of resources related to data preparation and analysis;

(d) The requestor cannot meet the requirements in a data-sharing agreement for protecting the confidentiality of the data; or

(e) The requestor is out of compliance with an existing data-sharing agreement.

(13) The department must provide notice of the denial to the requestor and include a statement of the reasons for the denial. If the state registrar denies a request for data under the provisions of this section, a person may appeal the decision under RCW 70.58A.550.

(14) The department may release vital records to government agencies in the conduct of official duties upon approval of the state registrar and receipt of a signed written data-sharing agreement with the department that prohibits redisclosure of any direct or indirect identifiers without explicit permission from the department. Vital records information released by the department under this subsection may be limited to only the information necessary to perform the official duties of the agencies to which the information is released. The department may deny requests according to subsection (12) of this section. Government agencies may access records electronically and use of records must be limited to the information needed for official business. The agreement may include cost sharing for support of the electronic system.

(15) The department shall make available to the department of social and health services, division of child support, the social security numbers of parents listed on birth records as required for establishing child support upon receipt of a signed written data-sharing agreement with the department.

(16) The department may release vital records to the national center for health statistics to be used solely for national statistics upon approval of the state registrar and receipt of a signed written data-sharing agreement with the department.

(17) The department may release copies of vital records through an interjurisdictional exchange agreement to offices of vital statistics in states or territories of the United States, the District of Columbia, New York City, or neighboring countries. The records must relate to a resident of, a person born in, or a person who died in the requesting state, territory, the District of Columbia, New York City, or neighboring country.

(18) The department may release indices of death, marriage, and divorce records annually to the state archives.

(19) Nothing in this chapter may be construed as giving authority to the state or local registrar, department, government agencies, or data recipients to sell or provide access to lists of individuals when requested for commercial purposes.

(20) For the purposes of this section:

(a) "Data" means a data file containing multiple records.

(b) "Direct identifier" means a single data element that identifies an individual person.

(c) "Indirect identifier" means a single data element that on its own does not identify an individual person, but when combined with other indirect identifiers can be used to identify an individual person.

(d) "Public health purpose" means a purpose that seeks to support or evaluate public health activities which include, but are not limited to, health surveillance; identifying population health trends; health assessments; implementing educational programs; program evaluation; developing and implementing policies; determining needs for access to services and administering services; creating emergency response plans; promoting healthy lifestyles; and preventing, detecting, and responding to infectious diseases, injury, and chronic and inheritable conditions. Public health purpose does not include research as defined in this section.

(e) "Research" means a systematic investigation, including research development, testing, and evaluation, designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge. Activities that meet this definition constitute research for purposes of this policy, whether or not they are conducted or supported under a program that is considered research for other purposes. [2019 c 148 s 20.]