

RCW 74.34.035 Reports—Mandated and permissive—Contents—

Confidentiality. (1) When there is reasonable cause to believe that abandonment, abuse, financial exploitation, or neglect of a vulnerable adult has occurred, mandated reporters shall immediately report to the department.

(2) When there is reason to suspect that sexual assault has occurred, mandated reporters shall immediately report to the appropriate law enforcement agency and to the department.

(3) When there is reason to suspect that physical assault has occurred or there is reasonable cause to believe that an act has caused fear of imminent harm:

(a) Mandated reporters shall immediately report to the department; and

(b) Mandated reporters shall immediately report to the appropriate law enforcement agency, except as provided in subsection (4) of this section.

(4) A mandated reporter is not required to report to a law enforcement agency, unless requested by the injured vulnerable adult or his or her legal representative or family member, an incident of physical assault between vulnerable adults that causes minor bodily injury and does not require more than basic first aid, unless:

(a) The injury appears on the back, face, head, neck, chest, breasts, groin, inner thigh, buttock, genital, or anal area;

(b) There is a fracture;

(c) There is a pattern of physical assault between the same vulnerable adults or involving the same vulnerable adults; or

(d) There is an attempt to choke a vulnerable adult.

(5) When there is reason to suspect that the death of a vulnerable adult was caused by abuse, neglect, or abandonment by another person, mandated reporters shall, pursuant to RCW 68.50.020, report the death to the medical examiner or coroner having jurisdiction, as well as the department and local law enforcement, in the most expeditious manner possible. A mandated reporter is not relieved from the reporting requirement provisions of this subsection by the existence of a previously signed death certificate. If abuse, neglect, or abandonment caused or contributed to the death of a vulnerable adult, the death is a death caused by unnatural or unlawful means, and the body shall be the jurisdiction of the coroner or medical examiner pursuant to RCW 68.50.010.

(6) Permissive reporters may report to the department or a law enforcement agency when there is reasonable cause to believe that a vulnerable adult is being or has been abandoned, abused, financially exploited, or neglected.

(7) No facility, as defined by this chapter, agency licensed or required to be licensed under chapter 70.127 RCW, or facility or agency under contract with the department to provide care for vulnerable adults may develop policies or procedures that interfere with the reporting requirements of this chapter.

(8) Each report, oral or written, must contain as much as possible of the following information:

(a) The name and address of the person making the report;

(b) The name and address of the vulnerable adult and the name of the facility or agency providing care for the vulnerable adult;

(c) The name and address of the legal guardian or alternate decision maker;

(d) The nature and extent of the abandonment, abuse, financial exploitation, neglect, or self-neglect;

(e) Any history of previous abandonment, abuse, financial exploitation, neglect, or self-neglect;

(f) The identity of the alleged perpetrator, if known; and

(g) Other information that may be helpful in establishing the extent of abandonment, abuse, financial exploitation, neglect, or the cause of death of the deceased vulnerable adult.

(9) Unless there is a judicial proceeding or the person consents, the identity of the person making the report under this section is confidential.

(10) In conducting an investigation of abandonment, abuse, financial exploitation, self-neglect, or neglect, the department or law enforcement, upon request, must have access to all relevant records related to the vulnerable adult that are in the possession of mandated reporters and their employees, unless otherwise prohibited by law. Records maintained under RCW 4.24.250, 18.20.390, 43.70.510, 70.41.200, 70.230.080, and 74.42.640 shall not be subject to the requirements of this subsection. Providing access to records relevant to an investigation by the department or law enforcement under this provision may not be deemed a violation of any confidential communication privilege. Access to any records that would violate attorney-client privilege shall not be provided without a court order unless otherwise required by court rule or case law. [2013 c 263 § 2; 2010 c 133 § 4; 2003 c 230 § 2; 1999 c 176 § 5.]

Effective date—2003 c 230: See note following RCW 74.34.020.

Findings—Purpose—Severability—Conflict with federal requirements—1999 c 176: See notes following RCW 74.34.005.