

RCW 18.130.080 Unprofessional conduct—Complaint—Investigation—Civil penalty. (1)(a) An individual, an impaired practitioner program, or a voluntary substance abuse monitoring program approved by a disciplining authority, may submit a written complaint to the disciplining authority charging a license holder or applicant with unprofessional conduct and specifying the grounds therefor or to report information to the disciplining authority, or voluntary substance abuse monitoring program, or an impaired practitioner program approved by the disciplining authority, which indicates that the license holder may not be able to practice his or her profession with reasonable skill and safety to consumers as a result of a mental or physical condition.

(b)(i) Every license holder, corporation, organization, health care facility, and state and local governmental agency that employs a license holder shall report to the disciplining authority when the employed license holder's services have been terminated or restricted based upon a final determination that the license holder has either committed an act or acts that may constitute unprofessional conduct or that the license holder may not be able to practice his or her profession with reasonable skill and safety to consumers as a result of a mental or physical condition.

(ii) All reports required by (b)(i) of this subsection must be submitted to the disciplining authority as soon as possible, but no later than twenty days after a determination has been made. A report should contain the following information, if known:

(A) The name, address, and telephone number of the person making the report;

(B) The name, address, and telephone number of the license holder being reported;

(C) The case number of any patient whose treatment is the subject of the report;

(D) A brief description or summary of the facts that gave rise to the issuance of the report, including dates of occurrences;

(E) If court action is involved, the name of the court in which the action is filed, the date of filing, and the docket number; and

(F) Any further information that would aid in the evaluation of the report.

(iii) Mandatory reports required by (b)(i) of this subsection are exempt from public inspection and copying to the extent permitted under chapter 42.56 RCW or to the extent that public inspection or copying of the report would invade or violate a person's right to privacy as set forth in RCW 42.56.050.

(2) If the disciplining authority determines that a complaint submitted under subsection (1) of this section merits investigation, or if the disciplining authority has reason to believe, without a formal complaint, that a license holder or applicant may have engaged in unprofessional conduct, the disciplining authority shall investigate to determine whether there has been unprofessional conduct. In determining whether or not to investigate, the disciplining authority shall consider any prior complaints received by the disciplining authority, any prior findings of fact under RCW 18.130.110, any stipulations to informal disposition under RCW 18.130.172, and any comparable action taken by other state disciplining authorities.

(3) Notwithstanding subsection (2) of this section, the disciplining authority shall initiate an investigation in every instance where:

(a) The disciplining authority receives information that a health care provider has been disqualified from participating in the federal medicare program, under Title XVIII of the federal social security act, or the federal medicaid program, under Title XIX of the federal social security act; or

(b) There is a pattern of complaints, arrests, or other actions that may not have resulted in a formal adjudication of wrongdoing, but when considered together demonstrate a pattern of similar conduct that, without investigation, likely poses a risk to the safety of the license holder's patients.

(4) Failure of a license holder to submit a mandatory report to the disciplining authority under subsection (1)(b) of this section is punishable by a civil penalty not to exceed five hundred dollars and constitutes unprofessional conduct.

(5) If a report has been made by a hospital to the department under RCW 70.41.210 or an ambulatory surgical facility under RCW 70.230.120, a report to the disciplining authority under subsection (1)(b) of this section is not required.

(6) A person is immune from civil liability, whether direct or derivative, for providing information in good faith to the disciplining authority under this section.

(7)(a) The secretary is authorized to receive criminal history record information that includes nonconviction data for any purpose associated with the investigation or licensing of persons under this chapter.

(b) Dissemination or use of nonconviction data for purposes other than that authorized in this section is prohibited. [2008 c 134 § 8; 2006 c 99 § 5; 1998 c 132 § 9; 1986 c 259 § 5; 1984 c 279 § 8.]

Finding—Intent—Severability—2008 c 134: See notes following RCW 18.130.020.

Finding—Intent—Severability—1998 c 132: See notes following RCW 18.71.0195.

Severability—1986 c 259: See note following RCW 18.130.010.