

RCW 26.23.120 Information and records—Confidentiality—

Disclosure—Adjudicative proceeding—Rules—Penalties. (1) Any information or records concerning individuals who owe a support obligation or for whom support enforcement services are being provided which are obtained or maintained by the Washington state support registry, the division of child support, or under chapter 74.20 RCW shall be private and confidential and shall only be subject to public disclosure as provided in subsection (2) of this section.

(2) The secretary of the department of social and health services may adopt rules:

(a) That specify what information is confidential;

(b) That specify the individuals or agencies to whom this information and these records may be disclosed;

(c) Limiting the purposes for which the information may be disclosed;

(d) Establishing procedures to obtain the information or records;
or

(e) Establishing safeguards necessary to comply with federal law requiring safeguarding of information.

(3) The rules adopted under subsection (2) of this section shall provide for disclosure of the information and records, under appropriate circumstances, which shall include, but not be limited to:

(a) When authorized or required by federal statute or regulation governing the support enforcement program;

(b) To the person the subject of the records or information, unless the information is exempt from disclosure under chapter 42.56 RCW;

(c) To government agencies, whether state, local, or federal, and including federally recognized tribes, law enforcement agencies, prosecuting agencies, and the executive branch, if the disclosure is necessary for child support enforcement purposes or required under Title IV-D of the federal social security act;

(d) To the parties in a judicial or adjudicative proceeding upon a specific written finding by the presiding officer that the need for the information outweighs any reason for maintaining the privacy and confidentiality of the information or records;

(e) To private persons, federally recognized tribes, or organizations if the disclosure is necessary to permit private contracting parties to assist in the management and operation of the department;

(f) Disclosure of address and employment information to the parties to an action for purposes relating to a child support order, subject to the limitations in subsections (4) and (5) of this section;

(g) Disclosure of information or records when necessary to the efficient administration of the support enforcement program or to the performance of functions and responsibilities of the support registry and the division of child support as set forth in state and federal statutes; or

(h) Disclosure of the information or records when authorized under RCW 74.04.060.

(4) Prior to disclosing the whereabouts of a physical custodian, custodial parent or a child to the other parent or party, a notice shall be mailed, if appropriate under the circumstances, to the parent or physical custodian whose whereabouts are to be disclosed, at that person's last known address. The notice shall advise the parent or

physical custodian that a request for disclosure has been made and will be complied with unless the department:

(a) Receives a copy of a court order within thirty days which enjoins the disclosure of the information or restricts or limits the requesting party's right to contact or visit the parent or party whose address is to be disclosed or the child;

(b) Receives a hearing request within thirty days under subsection (5) of this section; or

(c) Has reason to believe that the release of the information may result in physical or emotional harm to the physical custodian whose whereabouts are to be released, or to the child.

(5) A person receiving notice under subsection (4) of this section may request an adjudicative proceeding under chapter 34.05 RCW, at which the person may show that there is reason to believe that release of the information may result in physical or emotional harm to the person or the child. The administrative law judge shall determine whether the whereabouts of the person or child should be disclosed based on subsection (4)(c) of this section, however no hearing is necessary if the department has in its possession a protective order or an order limiting visitation or contact.

(6) The notice and hearing process in subsections (4) and (5) of this section do not apply to protect the whereabouts of a noncustodial parent, unless that parent has requested notice before whereabouts information is released. A noncustodial parent may request such notice by submitting a written request to the division of child support.

(7) Nothing in this section shall be construed as limiting or restricting the effect of *RCW 42.56.070(9). Nothing in this section shall be construed to prevent the disclosure of information and records if all details identifying an individual are deleted or the individual consents to the disclosure.

(8) It shall be unlawful for any person or agency in violation of this section to solicit, publish, disclose, receive, make use of, or to authorize, knowingly permit, participate in or acquiesce in the use of any lists of names for commercial or political purposes or the use of any information for purposes other than those purposes specified in this section. A violation of this section shall be a gross misdemeanor as provided in chapter 9A.20 RCW. [2005 c 274 § 242; 1998 c 160 § 4; 1997 c 58 § 908; 1994 c 230 § 12. Prior: 1989 c 360 § 17; 1989 c 175 § 78; 1987 c 435 § 12.]

***Reviser's note:** RCW 42.56.070 was amended by 2017 c 304 § 1, changing subsection (9) to subsection (8).

Short title—Part headings, captions, table of contents not law—Exemptions and waivers from federal law—Conflict with federal requirements—Severability—1997 c 58: See RCW 74.08A.900 through 74.08A.904.

Effective date—1989 c 175: See note following RCW 34.05.010.