

RCW 42.56.660 Agency employee records. (1) Except by court order issued pursuant to subsection (3) of this section, an agency may not disclose as a response to a public records request made pursuant to this chapter records concerning an agency employee, as defined in subsection (5) of this section, if:

(a) The requestor is a person alleged in the claim of workplace sexual harassment or stalking to have harassed or stalked the agency employee who is named as the victim in the claim; and

(b) After conducting an investigation, the agency issued discipline resulting from the claim of workplace sexual harassment or stalking to the requestor described under (a) of this subsection.

(2) (a) When the requestor is someone other than a person described under subsection (1) of this section, the agency must immediately notify an agency employee upon receipt of a public records request for records concerning that agency employee if the agency conducted an investigation of the claim of workplace sexual harassment or stalking involving the agency employee and the agency issued discipline resulting from the claim.

(b) Upon notice provided in accordance with (a) of this subsection, the agency employee may bring an action in a court of competent jurisdiction to enjoin the agency from disclosing the records. The agency employee shall immediately notify the agency upon filing an action under this subsection. Except for the five-day notification required under RCW 42.56.520, the time for the employing agency to process a request for records is suspended during the pendency of an action filed under this subsection. Upon notice of an action filed under this subsection, the agency may not disclose such records unless by an order issued in accordance with subsection (3) of this section, or if the action is dismissed without the court granting an injunction.

(3) (a) A court of competent jurisdiction, following sufficient notice to the employing agency, may order the release of some or all of the records described in subsections (1) and (2) of this section after finding that, in consideration of the totality of the circumstances, disclosure would not violate the right to privacy under RCW 42.56.050 for the agency employee. An agency that is ordered in accordance with this subsection to disclose records is not liable for penalties, attorneys' fees, or costs under RCW 42.56.550 if the agency has complied with this section.

(b) For the purposes of this section, it is presumed to be highly offensive to a reasonable person under RCW 42.56.050 to disclose, directly or indirectly, records concerning an agency employee who has made a claim of workplace sexual harassment or stalking with the agency, or is named as a victim in the claim, to persons alleged in the claim to have sexually harassed or stalked the agency employee named as the victim and where the agency issued discipline resulting from the claim after conducting an investigation. The presumption set out under this subsection may be rebutted upon showing of clear, cogent, and convincing evidence that disclosure of the requested record or information to persons alleged in the claim to have sexually harassed or stalked the agency employee named as the victim in the claim is not highly offensive.

(4) Nothing in this section restricts access to records described under subsections (1) and (2) of this section where the agency employee consents in writing to disclosure.

(5) For the purposes of this section:

(a) "Agency" means a state agency, including every state office, department, division, bureau, board, commission, or other state agency.

(b) "Agency employee" means a state agency employee who has made a claim of workplace sexual harassment or stalking with the employing agency, or is named as the victim in the claim.

(c) "Records concerning an agency employee" do not include work product created by the agency employee as part of his or her official duties. [2019 c 373 § 2.]

Findings—2019 c 373: "The legislature finds that state agency employees operate in unique work environments in which there is a higher level of transparency surrounding their daily work activities. The legislature finds that we must act to protect the health and safety of state employees, but even more so when employees become the victims of sexual harassment or stalking. The legislature finds that when a state agency employee is the target of sexual harassment or stalking, there is a significant risk to the employee's physical safety and well-being. The legislature finds that workplace safety is of paramount importance and that the state has an interest in protecting against the inappropriate use of public resources to carry out actions of sexual harassment or stalking." [2019 c 373 § 1.]

Effective date—2019 c 373: "This act takes effect July 1, 2020." [2019 c 373 § 6.]