

RCW 70.02.010 Definitions. The definitions in this section apply throughout this chapter unless the context clearly requires otherwise.

- (1) "Admission" has the same meaning as in RCW 71.05.020.
- (2) "Audit" means an assessment, evaluation, determination, or investigation of a health care provider by a person not employed by or affiliated with the provider to determine compliance with:
 - (a) Statutory, regulatory, fiscal, medical, or scientific standards;
 - (b) A private or public program of payments to a health care provider; or
 - (c) Requirements for licensing, accreditation, or certification.
- (3) "Authority" means the Washington state health care authority.
- (4) "Commitment" has the same meaning as in RCW 71.05.020.
- (5) "Custody" has the same meaning as in RCW 71.05.020.
- (6) "Deidentified" means health information that does not identify an individual and with respect to which there is no reasonable basis to believe that the information can be used to identify an individual.
- (7) "Department" means the department of social and health services.
- (8) "Designated crisis responder" has the same meaning as in RCW 71.05.020 or 71.34.020, as applicable.
- (9) "Detention" or "detain" has the same meaning as in RCW 71.05.020.
- (10) "Directory information" means information disclosing the presence, and for the purpose of identification, the name, location within a health care facility, and the general health condition of a particular patient who is a patient in a health care facility or who is currently receiving emergency health care in a health care facility.
- (11) "Discharge" has the same meaning as in RCW 71.05.020.
- (12) "Evaluation and treatment facility" has the same meaning as in RCW 71.05.020 or 71.34.020, as applicable.
- (13) "Federal, state, or local law enforcement authorities" means an officer of any agency or authority in the United States, a state, a tribe, a territory, or a political subdivision of a state, a tribe, or a territory who is empowered by law to: (a) Investigate or conduct an official inquiry into a potential criminal violation of law; or (b) prosecute or otherwise conduct a criminal proceeding arising from an alleged violation of law.
- (14) "General health condition" means the patient's health status described in terms of "critical," "poor," "fair," "good," "excellent," or terms denoting similar conditions.
- (15) "Health care" means any care, service, or procedure provided by a health care provider:
 - (a) To diagnose, treat, or maintain a patient's physical or mental condition; or
 - (b) That affects the structure or any function of the human body.
- (16) "Health care facility" means a hospital, clinic, nursing home, laboratory, office, or similar place where a health care provider provides health care to patients.
- (17) "Health care information" means any information, whether oral or recorded in any form or medium, that identifies or can readily be associated with the identity of a patient and directly relates to the patient's health care, including a patient's deoxyribonucleic acid

and identified sequence of chemical base pairs. The term includes any required accounting of disclosures of health care information.

(18) "Health care operations" means any of the following activities of a health care provider, health care facility, or third-party payor to the extent that the activities are related to functions that make an entity a health care provider, a health care facility, or a third-party payor:

(a) Conducting: Quality assessment and improvement activities, including outcomes evaluation and development of clinical guidelines, if the obtaining of generalizable knowledge is not the primary purpose of any studies resulting from such activities; population-based activities relating to improving health or reducing health care costs, protocol development, case management and care coordination, contacting of health care providers and patients with information about treatment alternatives; and related functions that do not include treatment;

(b) Reviewing the competence or qualifications of health care professionals, evaluating practitioner and provider performance and third-party payor performance, conducting training programs in which students, trainees, or practitioners in areas of health care learn under supervision to practice or improve their skills as health care providers, training of nonhealth care professionals, accreditation, certification, licensing, or credentialing activities;

(c) Underwriting, premium rating, and other activities relating to the creation, renewal, or replacement of a contract of health insurance or health benefits, and ceding, securing, or placing a contract for reinsurance of risk relating to claims for health care, including stop-loss insurance and excess of loss insurance, if any applicable legal requirements are met;

(d) Conducting or arranging for medical review, legal services, and auditing functions, including fraud and abuse detection and compliance programs;

(e) Business planning and development, such as conducting cost-management and planning-related analyses related to managing and operating the health care facility or third-party payor, including formulary development and administration, development, or improvement of methods of payment or coverage policies; and

(f) Business management and general administrative activities of the health care facility, health care provider, or third-party payor including, but not limited to:

(i) Management activities relating to implementation of and compliance with the requirements of this chapter;

(ii) Customer service, including the provision of data analyses for policyholders, plan sponsors, or other customers, provided that health care information is not disclosed to such policyholder, plan sponsor, or customer;

(iii) Resolution of internal grievances;

(iv) The sale, transfer, merger, or consolidation of all or part of a health care provider, health care facility, or third-party payor with another health care provider, health care facility, or third-party payor or an entity that following such activity will become a health care provider, health care facility, or third-party payor, and due diligence related to such activity; and

(v) Consistent with applicable legal requirements, creating deidentified health care information or a limited data set for the benefit of the health care provider, health care facility, or third-party payor.

(19) "Health care provider" means a person who is licensed, certified, registered, or otherwise authorized by the law of this state to provide health care in the ordinary course of business or practice of a profession.

(20) "Human immunodeficiency virus" or "HIV" has the same meaning as in RCW 70.24.017.

(21) "Imminent" has the same meaning as in RCW 71.05.020.

(22) "Indian health care provider" has the same meaning as in RCW 43.71B.010(11).

(23) "Information and records related to mental health services" means a type of health care information that relates to all information and records compiled, obtained, or maintained in the course of providing services by a mental health service agency or mental health professional to persons who are receiving or have received services for mental illness. The term includes mental health information contained in a medical bill, registration records, and all other records regarding the person maintained by the department, by the authority, by behavioral health administrative services organizations and their staff, managed care organizations contracted with the authority under chapter 74.09 RCW and their staff, and by treatment facilities. The term further includes documents of legal proceedings under chapter 71.05, 71.34, or 10.77 RCW, or somatic health care information. For health care information maintained by a hospital as defined in RCW 70.41.020 or a health care facility or health care provider that participates with a hospital in an organized health care arrangement defined under federal law, "information and records related to mental health services" is limited to information and records of services provided by a mental health professional or information and records of services created by a hospital-operated community behavioral health program as defined in RCW 71.24.025. The term does not include psychotherapy notes.

(24) "Information and records related to sexually transmitted diseases" means a type of health care information that relates to the identity of any person upon whom an HIV antibody test or other sexually transmitted infection test is performed, the results of such tests, and any information relating to diagnosis of or treatment for any confirmed sexually transmitted infections.

(25) "Institutional review board" means any board, committee, or other group formally designated by an institution, or authorized under federal or state law, to review, approve the initiation of, or conduct periodic review of research programs to assure the protection of the rights and welfare of human research subjects.

(26) "Legal counsel" has the same meaning as in RCW 71.05.020.

(27) "Local public health officer" has the same meaning as the term "local health officer" as defined in RCW 70.24.017.

(28) "Maintain," as related to health care information, means to hold, possess, preserve, retain, store, or control that information.

(29) "Managed care organization" has the same meaning as provided in RCW 71.24.025.

(30) "Mental health professional" means a psychiatrist, psychologist, psychiatric *advanced registered nurse practitioner, psychiatric nurse, or social worker, and such other mental health professionals as may be defined by rules adopted by the secretary of health under chapter 71.05 RCW, whether that person works in a private or public setting.

(31) "Mental health service agency" means a public or private agency that provides services to persons with mental disorders as

defined under RCW 71.05.020 or 71.34.020 and receives funding from public sources. This includes evaluation and treatment facilities as defined in RCW 71.34.020, community mental health service delivery systems, or community behavioral health programs, as defined in RCW 71.24.025, and facilities conducting competency evaluations and restoration under chapter 10.77 RCW.

(32) "Minor" has the same meaning as in RCW 71.34.020.

(33) "Parent" has the same meaning as in RCW 71.34.020.

(34) "Patient" means an individual who receives or has received health care. The term includes a deceased individual who has received health care.

(35) "Payment" means:

(a) The activities undertaken by:

(i) A third-party payor to obtain premiums or to determine or fulfill its responsibility for coverage and provision of benefits by the third-party payor; or

(ii) A health care provider, health care facility, or third-party payor, to obtain or provide reimbursement for the provision of health care; and

(b) The activities in (a) of this subsection that relate to the patient to whom health care is provided and that include, but are not limited to:

(i) Determinations of eligibility or coverage, including coordination of benefits or the determination of cost-sharing amounts, and adjudication or subrogation of health benefit claims;

(ii) Risk adjusting amounts due based on enrollee health status and demographic characteristics;

(iii) Billing, claims management, collection activities, obtaining payment under a contract for reinsurance, including stop-loss insurance and excess of loss insurance, and related health care data processing;

(iv) Review of health care services with respect to medical necessity, coverage under a health plan, appropriateness of care, or justification of charges;

(v) Utilization review activities, including precertification and preauthorization of services, and concurrent and retrospective review of services; and

(vi) Disclosure to consumer reporting agencies of any of the following health care information relating to collection of premiums or reimbursement:

(A) Name and address;

(B) Date of birth;

(C) Social security number;

(D) Payment history;

(E) Account number; and

(F) Name and address of the health care provider, health care facility, and/or third-party payor.

(36) "Person" means an individual, corporation, business trust, estate, trust, partnership, association, joint venture, government, governmental subdivision or agency, or any other legal or commercial entity.

(37) "Professional person" has the same meaning as in RCW 71.05.020.

(38) "Psychiatric *advanced registered nurse practitioner" has the same meaning as in RCW 71.05.020.

(39) "Psychotherapy notes" means notes recorded, in any medium, by a mental health professional documenting or analyzing the contents

of conversations during a private counseling session or group, joint, or family counseling session, and that are separated from the rest of the individual's medical record. The term excludes mediation prescription and monitoring, counseling session start and stop times, the modalities and frequencies of treatment furnished, results of clinical tests, and any summary of the following items: Diagnosis, functional status, the treatment plan, symptoms, prognosis, and progress to date.

(40) "Reasonable fee" means the charges for duplicating or searching the record, but shall not exceed 65 cents per page for the first 30 pages and 50 cents per page for all other pages. In addition, a clerical fee for searching and handling may be charged not to exceed \$15. These amounts shall be adjusted biennially in accordance with changes in the consumer price index, all consumers, for Seattle-Tacoma metropolitan statistical area as determined by the secretary of health. However, where editing of records by a health care provider is required by statute and is done by the provider personally, the fee may be the usual and customary charge for a basic office visit.

(41) "Release" has the same meaning as in RCW 71.05.020.

(42) "Resource management services" has the same meaning as in RCW 71.05.020.

(43) "Serious violent offense" has the same meaning as in RCW 9.94A.030.

(44) "Sexually transmitted infection" or "sexually transmitted disease" has the same meaning as "sexually transmitted disease" in RCW 70.24.017.

(45) "Test for a sexually transmitted disease" has the same meaning as in RCW 70.24.017.

(46) "Third-party payor" means an insurer regulated under Title 48 RCW authorized to transact business in this state or other jurisdiction, including a health care service contractor, and health maintenance organization; or an employee welfare benefit plan, excluding fitness or wellness plans; or a state or federal health benefit program.

(47) "Treatment" means the provision, coordination, or management of health care and related services by one or more health care providers or health care facilities, including the coordination or management of health care by a health care provider or health care facility with a third party; consultation between health care providers or health care facilities relating to a patient; or the referral of a patient for health care from one health care provider or health care facility to another.

(48) "Tribal public health authority" means a tribe that is responsible for public health matters as a part of its official mandate.

(49) "Tribal public health officer" means the individual appointed as the health officer for the tribe.

(50) "Tribe" has the same meaning as in RCW 71.24.025. [2024 c 209 s 31. Prior: 2020 c 302 s 112; 2020 c 256 s 401; 2019 c 325 s 5019; 2018 c 201 s 8001; 2016 sp.s. c 29 s 416; prior: 2014 c 225 s 70; 2014 c 220 s 4; 2013 c 200 s 1; 2006 c 235 s 2; 2005 c 468 s 1; 2002 c 318 s 1; 1993 c 448 s 1; 1991 c 335 s 102.]

Reviser's note: *(1) The term "advanced registered nurse practitioner" was changed to "advanced practice registered nurse" by 2024 c 239 s 1, effective June 30, 2027.

(2) For charges or fees under subsection (40) of this section as adjusted by the secretary of health, see chapter 246-08 WAC.

Effective date—2019 c 325: See note following RCW 71.24.011.

Findings—Intent—Effective date—2018 c 201: See notes following RCW 41.05.018.

Effective dates—2016 sp.s. c 29: See note following RCW 71.05.760.

Short title—Right of action—2016 sp.s. c 29: See notes following RCW 71.05.010.

Effective date—2014 c 225: See note following RCW 71.24.016.

Effective date—2014 c 220: See note following RCW 70.02.290.

Effective date—2013 c 200: "Except for section 5 of this act, this act takes effect July 1, 2014." [2013 c 200 s 35.]

Purpose—Effective date—2006 c 235: See notes following RCW 70.02.050.

Effective date—1993 c 448: "This act is necessary for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health, or safety, or support of the state government and its existing public institutions, and shall take effect July 1, 1993." [1993 c 448 s 9.]