



Health Systems Quality Assurance Division
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January 29, 2026

The Honorable Annette Cleveland, Chair
Senate Health & Long-Term Care Committee
P.O. Box 40466
Olympia, WA 98504-0466

The Honorable Dan Bronoske, Chair
House Health Care and Wellness
Committee
Post Office Box 40600
Olympia, Washington 98504-0600

Dear Senator Cleveland and Representative Bronoske,

[RCW 69.50.317\(8\)](#) requires the Washington State Department of Health (department) to review this section of law and report to the legislature on whether the requirements should be retained, repealed, or amended. This statute requires that practitioners, prior to prescribing opioids for the first time, engage in a documented conversation with patients regarding the risks of opioid use and alternative treatments, and provide the department's standardized written warning information.

Specifically, this section requires providers:

- Discuss opioid risks and alternatives prior to issuing the first opioid prescription.
- Provide written materials developed by the department to warn patients of the risks of opioid use.
- Include the patient's parent or guardian in the discussion if the patient is a minor or incapable of making health care decisions.
- Document the conversation in the patient's medical record.

The department finds that these requirements support a preventative approach to opioid misuse and promote transparency between patients and providers at the point of first exposure by:

- Promoting informed decision-making and patient understanding of opioid risks.
- Encouraging consideration of non-opioid alternatives in pain management.
- Protecting vulnerable populations, particularly minors and incapacitated adults.
- Preserving clinical flexibility, with reasonable exemptions and delegation options.
- Supporting public health goals without placing an undue burden on providers.

In addition, the department conducted a survey to determine whether interested parties support or oppose retaining these requirements. The following entities were invited to participate:

- Health Care Authority (HCA)
- Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS)
- Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)
- Washington Medical Commission (PA & MD)
- Washington Advocates for Patient Safety
- Northwest Health Law Advocates
- Pain patient advocates
- Pharmacy Commission
- Various state medical, dental, pharmacy, nursing, hospital, and podiatric associations and boards representing prescribers, and
- Licensees of the department required to comply with this statute

The survey responses did not indicate objections to retaining the requirements in RCW 69.50.317, though some respondents stated the practices outlined in Section 17 are already standard of care for prescribing opioids.

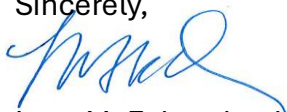
Recommendation

Given the ongoing opioid crisis and the vital role of early education in preventing misuse, the department recommends retaining the requirements in RCW 69.50.317. The absence of significant feedback to our survey supports the department's finding that this provision continues to meet the needs of those it serves.

This statute serves as a reasonable and effective part of Washington's efforts to reduce opioid-related harm. The department appreciates the opportunity to provide recommendations about this important topic.

For questions about this review or to request additional information, please contact Kelly Cooper, Director of Legislative Relations, at Kelly.cooper@doh.wa.gov or 360-789-7176.

Sincerely,



Lacy M. Fehrenbach, MPH, CPH
Chief of Prevention, Safety and Health

Cc: Honorable Members, Senate Health and Long-Term Care Committee
Honorable Members, House Health Care and Wellness Committee

Dennis E. Worsham, Secretary of Health

Kristin Peterson, Chief of Policy, Department of Health

Ramiro Cantu, Acting Assistant Secretary, Health Systems Quality Assurance Division

Megan Veith, Policy Director, Health Systems Quality Assurance Division