

RCW 19.05.100 Private and confidential information. (1) Any information or records concerning an individual or employer obtained by the administrative agency or the governing board to administer this chapter are private and confidential, except as otherwise provided in this section.

(a) If information provided to the administrative agency or the governing board by a governmental agency is held private and confidential by state or federal law, the administrative agency and the governing board may not release such information, unless otherwise provided in this section.

(b) Information provided to the administrative agency or the governing board by a governmental entity conditioned upon privacy and confidentiality under a provision of law is to be held private and confidential according to the agreement between the administrative agency or the governing board and the other governmental agency, unless otherwise provided in this title.

(2) Persons requesting disclosure of information held by the administrative agency or the governing board under this section must request such disclosure from the governmental agency that provided the information to the administrative agency or the governing board, rather than from the administrative agency or the governing board.

(3) If the governing board creates or enters into, on behalf of the program, a consortium, alliance, joint venture, partnership, compact, or contract with another state or states or their programs or boards, the laws of the state that is most protective of individual and employer confidentiality governs.

(4) The governing board has the authority to adopt, amend, or rescind rules interpreting and implementing this chapter.

(5) (a) An individual must have access to all records and information concerning that individual held by the administrative agency or the governing board.

(b) An employer must have access to its own records relating to their compliance with the program and any audit conducted or penalty assessed under this chapter.

(c) The administrative agency or the governing board may disclose information and records deemed confidential under this chapter to a third party acting on behalf of an individual or employer that would otherwise be eligible to receive records under this section when the administrative agency or the governing board receives a signed release from the individual or employer. The release must include a statement:

(i) Specifically identifying the information that is to be disclosed;

(ii) The acknowledgment that state government files will be assessed [accessed] to obtain that information;

(iii) The specific purpose for which the information is sought and a statement that information obtained under the release will only be used for that purpose; and

(iv) Indicating all parties who will receive the information disclosed.

(d) The administrative agency or the governing board may disclose information or records deemed private and confidential under this chapter to any private person or organization, including the trustee, and, by extension, the agents of any private person or organization, when the disclosure is necessary to permit private contracting parties to assist in the operation, management, and implementation of the program. The private person or organization may only use the information or records solely for the purpose for which the

information was disclosed and are bound by the same rules of privacy and confidentiality as the administrative agency and the governing board.

(6) (a) A decision under this chapter by the administrative agency, the department, the governing board, or the appeals tribunal may not be deemed private and confidential under this section, unless the decision is based on information obtained in a closed hearing.

(b) Information or records deemed private and confidential under this section must be available to parties to judicial or formal administrative proceedings only upon a written finding by the presiding officer that the need for the information or records in the proceeding outweighs any reasons for the privacy and confidentiality of the information on record.

(7) (a) All private persons, governmental agencies, and organizations authorized to receive information from the administrative agency or the governing board under this chapter have an affirmative duty to prevent unauthorized disclosure of confidential information and are prohibited from disclosing confidential information unless expressly permitted by this section.

(b) If misuse of an unauthorized disclosure of confidential records or information occurs, all parties who are aware of the violation must inform the administrative agency immediately and must take all reasonable available actions to rectify the disclosure to the administrative agency standards.

(c) The misuse or unauthorized release of records or information deemed private and confidential under this chapter by any private person, governmental agency, or organization will subject the person, governmental agency, or organization to a civil penalty of up to \$20,000 in the first year of the program. Beginning in December of the second year of the program and each December thereafter, the administrative agency must adjust the maximum civil penalty amount by multiplying the current maximum civil penalty by one plus the percentage by which the most current consumer price index available on December 1st of the current year exceeds the consumer price index for the prior 12-month period, and rounding the result to the nearest \$1,000. If an adjustment under this subsection (7) (c) would reduce the maximum civil penalty, the administrative agency must not adjust the maximum civil penalty for use in the following year. Other applicable sanctions under state and federal law also apply.

(d) Suit to enforce this section must be brought by the attorney general and the amount of any penalties collected must be paid into the administrative account created in RCW 19.05.110. The attorney general may recover reasonable attorneys' fees for any action brought to enforce this section.

(8) This section does not contain a rule of evidence. [2024 c 327 s 10.]

Conflict with federal requirements—2024 c 327: See note following RCW 19.05.020.