



Frequently Asked Questions Provider Credential Search Web site

Overview

This Web site provides easy access to information on health care professionals in the state. The site provides the health care provider's license status. It also includes any current restrictions or disciplinary actions. The Web site displays any action taken against a health care professional since July 1998. It allows copies of legal documents to be printed. When you search by name, you will see all credentials for the practitioner in Washington.

Q. What information is available about a health care provider?

- Credential number
- Type of credential(s)
- Whether the health care professional's license status is active, deceased, expired, inactive, military, revoked, suspended, unlicensed, or retired
- Birth year
- The date when they first became credentialed
- Expiration date of credential
- Last renewal date
- Restrictions or disciplinary actions
- Copies of legal documents issued after July 1998

Q. Can I search even if I do not know the entire first and last name of the health provider?

A.: Yes. You can type all or part of the last and first names. This will return the most matching records for your criteria.

Q. How do I find information about restrictions or disciplinary actions before 1998?

Call the Customer Service Center at 360-236-4700.

Q. Can I find out how many complaints have been filed against a health care provider?

Yes. All complaints about health care professionals are public information. Call the Customer Service Center at 360-236-4700. Many complaints describe events that are not violations of law. They cannot be acted upon. Only complaints that led to an action are shown on Provider Credential Search.

Q. Does Provider Credential Search have malpractice or criminal conviction information?

No. Malpractice settlements and criminal convictions are reported to the Department of Health. They may serve as the basis for restrictions or disciplinary actions. Legal documents since July 1998 are on Provider Credential Search. They give details about the reason for actions.

Q. Why isn't a health care provider's address shown? How will I know I'm asking about the right person?

The address given by the provider may be a work or home location. If he or she provides a home address, we cannot legally disclose it. This is why only the city information is shown.

Q. Does Provider Credential Search show specialty information (e.g. a physician is an orthopedic specialist)?

No. Washington State does not license by specialty. The exception is the Advanced Registered Nurse Practitioners (ARNPs). The ARNP specialty information is provided by the Customer Service Center. Call 360-236-4700.

Q. If I want to find the best practitioner, will I be able to make that distinction from the Web site?

No, DOH cannot recommend which practitioner you should see. The Web site will tell you the license status and any restrictions or disciplinary actions.

Q. What is an informal complaint resolution versus a formal disciplinary action?

Informal complaint resolutions called Stipulations to Informal Disposition (STIDs) are used to educate practitioners. They may require additional training, reports or other actions. They are meant to be corrective rather than disciplinary.

Formal disciplinary action may limit a healthcare professional's practice. This is used in more serious cases.

Q. Why are informal complaint resolutions (Stipulations to Informal Disposition STIDs) shown on Provider Credential Search?

The information, like other information on Provider Credential Search, is public. It is reported to the national databanks. The information can only be seen on Provider Credential Search if the practitioner's name or credential number is known.

Q. When I view the legal documents on Provider Credential Search, why is some information blanked out and not visible?

DOH has a responsibility to withhold information protected by law. Each legal document is reviewed. The information that cannot be disclosed is blanked out. There is a cover letter that appears with each document. The letter explains the specific laws requiring information to be blanked out.

Q. I just checked on my health care practitioner and realize I should file a complaint. How do I do that?

From the practitioner page in Provider Credential Search, you can click back to the Health Professions Quality Assurance (HPQA) home page. Under “Site Directory,” select “Complaint Information” to get the forms you need. You may also call the Customer Service Center at 360-236-4700 to file a complaint.

Q. Does this Web site serve as a primary source for verification?

Yes. The Web site is the primary source for verification of health care professionals. It meets the requirements of the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO).

Q. Doesn't the disclosure of my name, birth year, and credential number violate my privacy under the federal Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) regulations?

No. This information can be publicly disclosed. The regulation of health care professionals is exempted from the rule. The information is an identifier for employers, insurance companies and verification services that rely on the Web site for information. It also helps the general public distinguish one practitioner from another. We cannot, by law, disclose social security numbers or address information as identifiers.

Q. Why are the complaints not shown? How can I get that information?

Up to 80 percent of complaints are outside our jurisdiction. Many are below the level we investigate. Others, when investigated, do not result in evidence of a violation. For those reasons, we do not display complaint information. Complaints that do not lead to action are public information. You can get them by calling the Customer Service Center at 360-236-4700.