

Complaint Process: Hospitals and Hospital Staffing

Complaint Types

The Department of Health (DOH) regulates and investigates [acute care hospitals](#). DOH also regulates other health care facilities which can be found using the [our credentials search](#). For more information, visit [DOH's complaint and disciplinary process webpage](#).

Table 1: Examples of complaints that DOH can investigate

Hospital	Hospital Staffing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A hospital not responding to a patient complaint • Patient abuse or neglect • Staff not available to provide care • Failure to provide care • Providing improper care • Medication errors or mistakes • Environmental concerns within the hospital • Infection control concerns within the hospital • Patient injuries or falls • Not following medical orders • Retail food code violations • Unsafe or poor discharge planning • Emergency Medical Treatment and Labor Act (EMTALA) violations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Failure to form or establish a hospital staffing committee • Failure to submit a hospital staffing plan • Failure to carry out or follow the hospital staffing plan • Failure to do a semiannual review of the hospital staffing plan • Failure to submit a hospital charter • Retaliation or intimidation against someone who reports concerns about hospital staffing • Failure to submit a semiannual compliance/non-compliance form when required to do so

How to Submit a Complaint

Complaints can be submitted by:

1. [Online Form](#)
2. Email: HSQAComplaintIntake@doh.wa.gov
3. Phone: (360) 236-4700
4. Mail: Washington State Department of Health
Health Systems Quality Assurance - Complaint Intake

Table 2: Complaint Information

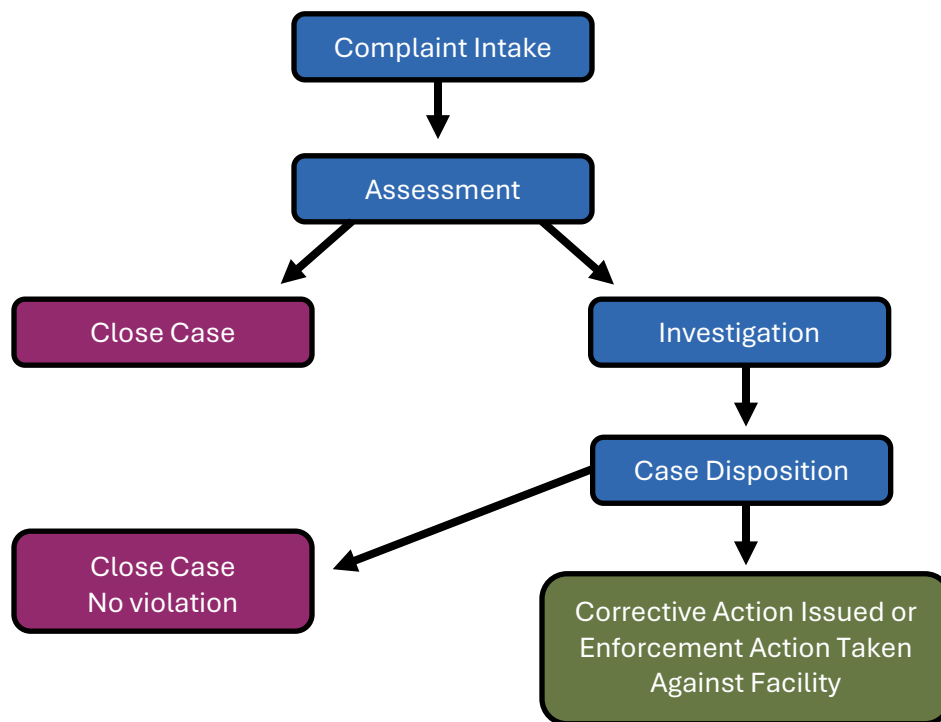
You do not need to be the patient to file a complaint. You can submit complaints anonymously. If you submit a complaint anonymously, then you will not receive any follow-up information about the status of the complaint.

Complaints should include:

- Name and contact information (phone number, mailing address, and email) if additional information is needed.
- Where and when the incident happened (date, name/type of facility, room number, unit, service area).
- Names of staff or other people involved, who saw or heard the incident. If possible, include their contact information.
- Details about the incident. Include reason(s) for complaint and if possible, any supporting documentation about the complaint.

Complaint Process

The complaint process timeline can change depending on the complaint and its complexity. Investigations can take as little as a few weeks, or in some cases, up to six months or more. This ensures we can thoroughly investigate complaints.



1. The Complaint Intake Unit receives complaints and assign it a case number.
2. The Case Management Team (CMT) reviews the complaint to determine if it meets two conditions:
 - Is the complaint a violation of a law or rule AND,
 - Does DOH have legal authority to investigate the complaint.
3. If the two conditions are not met, then CMT closes the complaint.
4. The complainant (person who submitted the complaint) and facility will receive a letter stating the complaint/case outcome.
 - a. If a complaint was submitted anonymously, then the complainant will not receive a letter.
5. If the two conditions are met, CMT investigates the case.
6. After an investigation is complete, the case moves to Case Disposition for the outcome or resolution of the complaint.
7. Once the Case Disposition is determined, the following process occurs:
 - CMT closes the complaint if no violation is found. The complainant and facility receive a letter stating the case outcome.
 - If the case has findings, CMT issues a corrective action or takes an enforcement action.

Program Contact - ochsfacilities@doh.wa.gov

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To request this document in another format, call 1-800-525-0127. Deaf or hard of hearing customers, please call 711 (Washington Relay) or email doh.information@doh.wa.gov.