

# EVERYONE DESERVES CLEAN, SAFE DRINKING WATER WHERE THEY LIVE AND WORK, INCLUDING THOSE IN RURAL AND AGRICULTURAL COMMUNITIES

## Washington State Department of Health is proposing to revise statute to ensure everyone's access to clean drinking water

The Department of Health (DOH) is asking the Washington State Legislature to update the definition of a “public water system” for the 2026 Washington State Legislative Session to strengthen drinking water protections. DOH is submitting this request through a process called Agency Request Legislation (ARL).

The current definitions of a public drinking water system state that systems “with four or fewer connections all of which serve residences on the same farm” are not subject to regulation, but do not clarify if the exemption applies to Group A or Group B systems<sup>1</sup>. The definitions in our state laws and rules need to be as strict as the federal Safe Drinking Water Act<sup>2</sup> to ensure all water systems that meet the Group A threshold are regulated as Group A public water systems, without exception.

We need a change in legislation (RCW) to allow clarification in state rules (WAC). This rule revision will:

- Align state and federal definitions of a “public water system”,
- Further clarify the difference between a Group A public water system and a Group B public water system, and
- Clarify exclusions only from a Group B public water system for four or fewer connections to single-family residences on the same farm.

Protections related to your drinking water may be impacted by this change in RCW and WAC. This change ensures that all employers provide drinking water that meets the same safety standards statewide. This can impact those relying on employer-provided housing or small community water systems.

<sup>1</sup>A Group A system is a water system with at least 15 services connections or that regularly serve an average of at least twenty-five individuals daily at least 60 days out of the year. A Group B system is a public water system that does not meet the definition of a Group A water system. WAC 246.290.020 and RCW 70.A.125.010

<sup>2</sup>40 CFR Part 142

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