



News Release

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Department of Health works to improve investigation process for sexual misconduct cases

OLYMPIA – The Washington State Department of Health (DOH) is implementing recommendations in its processes to reduce the time it takes to complete sexual misconduct cases, while working with other partner agencies on recommended actions they can take, to improve the process overall.

Secretary of Health Dr. Umair A. Shah, MD, MPH convened a task force to develop recommendations for improving the disciplinary process for sexual misconduct cases. The task force met several times in 2021 and 2022 and developed an extensive set of recommendations. [This summary](#) explains how the department intends to implement some of those recommendations, while other oversight partners look to implement actions on behalf of their entities.

It will be an evolving process with immediate, short- and long-term actions. Some of those actions will include enhanced management oversight practices, establishing shorter timelines to complete some parts of the process, enhancing capacity for boards and commissions, updating rules, exploring options to suspend providers during legal processes, and exploring possible statutory changes.

“Patient safety is a critical priority for the department, and for Washingtonians,” said Dr. Shah. “Everyone is entitled to due process, and we’re committed to conducting investigations to arrive at the correct decision, but we can and must do better to complete those investigations in a timely manner and in a way that earns the confidence of all Washingtonians.”

The procedures in place for provider discipline are designed to uphold legal due process, while ensuring investigations are thorough, maintaining transparency as much as possible, and taking

actions when appropriate. DOH is committed to enhancing and expediting the process, while working with oversight partners to help make systemic improvements in their areas.

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