



STATE OF WASHINGTON
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL AND HEALTH SERVICES
Home and Community Living Administration
PO Box 45600 Olympia, WA 98504-5600

March 2, 2026

HCLA: AFH #2026-010
Window Obstructions in Adult Family Homes

Dear Adult Family Home Provider:

Residential Care Services (RCS) is standardizing the way we inspect resident bedroom windows in **newly** licensed adult family homes (AFH). WAC [388-76-10795\(1\)\(d\)](#), requires "...at least one window in each resident bedroom meets the following requirements...the window must be free from obstructions that might block or interfere with access for emergency escape or rescue." Residential Care Services (RCS) interprets this to mean that a 36-inch clearance is required directly in front of the part of the window that opens. This applies to both interior obstructions, such as furniture and air conditioning units, and exterior obstructions, such as sheds, trees, railings or outbuildings.

For clarity and consistency in practice, we will begin applying this standard to initial licensing inspections (pre-licensure) on **NEW AFHs** beginning March 1, 2026. When conducting routine inspections of AFHs licensed on or after April 1, 2026, we will use this same standard.

AFHs that are **CURRENTLY** licensed, and those that had their pre-licensure inspection before March 1, 2026, will be inspected without the 36-inch requirement. The window opening must still meet the WAC requirement and not be obstructed, but the 36-inch measurement will not be applied. This also includes

- Currently licensed AFHs that add or modify a resident bedroom in the future; and
- AFHs that change ownership (CHOW), when the AFH has been continuously licensed.

This means the same inspection standard for resident bedroom windows that was used to approve your AFH license will be used for future inspections of your AFH.

For both groups of AFHs, this new practice should not impact your routine inspection, unless you have placed, grown or built something near the inside or outside of the resident bedroom window opening since your AFH was licensed.

RCS will be initiating rulemaking in the future to reflect this practice in chapter [388-76](#) WAC. For questions related to window obstructions, please contact Colleen Jensen, AFH Policy Program Manager at RCSPolicy@dshs.wa.gov or 564-999-3182 or Amena Jones, Residential Inspection Quality Improvement Unit Manager at (360) 995-2243 or Amena.jones@dshs.wa.gov .

Sincerely,

Amy Abbott, Director
Residential Care Services

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