

## **Administrative Policy No. 01.01**

**Subject:** Communication with the State Legislature

**Information Contact:** Government and Community Relations Office  
MS: 45115, Phone: (360) 902-7813  
TTY: 1-800-833-6388

**Authorizing Source:** Office of the Secretary

**Resources:** [Government and Community Relations Legislative Protocols](#)

**Effective Date:** December 1, 1988

**Revised:** August 3, 2020

**Approved By:** **Original signed by Lori Melchiori**  
Senior Director, Office of Policy and Rules

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### **Purpose**

This policy establishes Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) policy and procedure for state legislative activities and communication in the following areas.

- A. Verbal and written communication with state legislators and members of their staff.
- B. Attendance at legislative hearings.
- C. Legislative testimony.
- D. Modifying a department position.
- E. Legislative meetings and contact.
- F. Reports to the legislature.
- G. Distributing information to the legislature.
- H. Department request legislation.

For more detailed instructions, see the [Government and Community Relations Legislative Protocols document](#).

### **Scope**

This policy applies department-wide without exception.

### **Policy Requirements**

Before communicating a department policy position or recommendation on legislation, regulations, or budget issues verbally or through written communication with legislative members or their staff, department staff must first consult with government and community relations office, and the appropriate assistant secretary and legislative coordinator, chief financial officer, or chief information officer.

## **Procedures**

### **A. Communications with state legislators and members of their staff**

1. Department staff must obtain approval as described in Section A (5) of this section before communicating a department policy position or recommendation that advocates a position on state legislation, regulations, or budget issues. **Note:** Communication includes both written and verbal exchanges.
2. Department staff must coordinate the department's expressed positions with the government and community relations office. **Note:** This includes requests from associations and organizations asking for the department's position on legislation, regulations, or budget issues.
3. Department staff are not required to obtain review and approval when communicating with legislators or their staff about a department policy position that is routine or non-controversial in nature or expresses a position already approved by the department. The government and community relations office must be copied on all communication with legislators and legislative staff.
4. Department staff must notify the facilities, finance and analytics administration when verbal or written communication to legislative members or their staff includes budget implications related to policy proposals. The facilities, finance, and analytics administration must be involved in the response process. A budget analyst will work with program staff to complete the final response.
5. Department staff must obtain the signatures of the secretary, assistant secretary, chief financial officer, chief information officer, or the appropriate division director on any written communication sent to legislative members or their staff, regarding department positions on legislation, regulations, or budget.
  - a. Department staff must send copies of this written communication to the government and community relations office.
  - b. The government and community relations office must coordinate with the appropriate assistant secretary, chief financial officer, chief information officer, Office of Financial Management (OFM), or Governor's Office for their review and approval.
  - c. Upon approval of the correspondence, the government and community relations office will notify the appropriate department staff and assist in the dissemination of the written communication.

**B. Attendance at legislative hearings**

1. The government and community relations office monitors attendance at all legislative hearings. Attendance at legislative hearings is limited only to those department staff that are assigned by the executive leadership team to testify or be available for questions. Staff assigned to monitor a hearing should do so via the TVW website.
2. Department staff designated to monitor hearings must fill out the legislative monitoring or hearing report found at <http://one.dshs.wa.lcl/per/GovernmentRelations/Pages/DocumentResources.aspx> and send it to the administration's legislative coordinator within 48 hours. Legislative coordinators will submit to the government and community relations office when comments are made during the hearing that the department should be aware of and if follow up is required. Administrations will copy the GCRO on the response to the legislature.

**C. Legislative testimony, presentations, and correspondence**

1. The government and community relations office coordinates department testimony to the legislature. Executive leadership team (ELT) members must provide the testimony. **Note:** in the event an ELT member has an unavoidable scheduling conflict, GCRO must be contacted to discuss a possible substitute.
2. Testimony must reflect the department's position on the legislative proposal.
3. An ELT member or their designee authorized to provide legislative testimony may request that specific employees attend the hearing, work session, task force, or sub-cabinet meeting to assist with technical questions relating to the testimony.
4. The facilities, finance, and analytics administration must review testimony that includes budget implications related to policy proposals.
5. After obtaining approval from the appropriate ELT member, OFM, and the Governor's Office, the appropriate administration or division legislative coordinator must submit to the government and community relations office 48 hours in advance for final review:
  - a. Any PowerPoint presentation. (All legislative presentations must be created using the DSHS Legislative PowerPoint Presentation template located on the government relations intranet site at <http://one.dshs.wa.lcl/per/GovernmentRelations/Pages/DocumentResources.aspx>;
  - b. Written testimony or an outline of the testimony including talking points if they are going to be shared with the committee; and
  - c. Any other information needed by the legislative committee.
6. The administration's legislative coordinator will submit the approved material to the appropriate legislative committee 24 hours in advance of the hearing, work session, task force, or sub-cabinet meeting, with a copy to GCRO.

7. For legislative task force meetings, sub-cabinet meetings, materials must be submitted and approved by GCRO in advance of the meetings.

**D. Modifying a department position**

Department positions on legislative issues must not be altered, nor compromises accepted, until the government and community relations office has ensured approval from the secretary, Governor's Office, and OFM.

**E. Legislative meetings and contact**

1. Department staff must inform the government and community relations office before initiating a meeting, task force, or committee that includes legislators or legislative staff.
2. Department staff must respond to telephone inquiries from legislative members and their staff as fully and openly as possible while protecting confidential information from unauthorized disclosure. Confidential information about clients cannot be given to legislators or their staff unless they have received authorization from the client by using DSHS Form 17-063 found at <http://forms.dshs.wa.lcl/> or other legally valid form. If a legislator makes a request for public records under the Public Records Act, department staff receiving the request must forward it to the appropriate public disclosure coordinator or to the DSHS public records officer.
3. Regional, area, and local offices may establish contact with their local legislators. They may disseminate material about their programs and projects, but cannot take a position on a bill or policy without conferring with their division director.
4. Program and field staff may request assistance from the government and community relations office in developing contacts with local legislators.
5. Department staff must refer all inquiries regarding interpretation of policy, controversial or pending policy, or budget issues to appropriate assistant secretary, chief financial officer, chief information officer, division director, or government and community relations office as appropriate, prior to response.
6. Department staff must coordinate with the government and community relations office on legislative matters involving individual constituents that are non-routine in nature.
7. Department staff must send information on all meetings, discussions, and inquiries with local legislators to the government and community relations office.  
See <http://one.dshs.wa.lcl/per/GovernmentRelations/Forms/Forms/AllItems.aspx> for forms.

**F. Reports to the legislature**

1. Department staff must send all reports required by the legislature to the government and community relations office for review, approval, and distribution according to department guidelines. See <http://one.dshs.wa.lcl/per/GovernmentRelations/Pages/DocumentResources.aspx> for report guidelines.

2. The government and community relations office routes reports to FFAA and OFM for review and approval when reports have fiscal estimates or fiscal impacts and notifies administrations when the report approval process is complete.
3. The government and community relations office transmits the legislative reports electronically to the:
  - a. Required legislative committees;
  - b. Secretary of the Senate;
  - c. Chief Clerk of the House of Representatives;
  - d. Washington State Library.

**G. Distributing information to the legislature**

Department staff must consult with the government and community relations office before disseminating annual reports or other information to the legislature that has not been explicitly requested by a legislator or their staff.

**H. Department request legislation**

1. The government and community relations office coordinates the review and approval of all request legislation proposals with the ELT, the Governor's Office, and OFM.
2. The government and community relations office notifies administrations of the status of their proposal after the request legislation review process is completed.