



## Patient Safety Improvement Task Force

In December 2021, Washington State Secretary of Health, Dr. Umair A. Shah, convened the Patient Safety Improvement Task Force to develop recommendations to improve the disciplinary process for sexual misconduct cases. The task force was asked to focus on two goals:

- Reduce the timeline to process sexual misconduct cases, and
- Recommend changes to better inform the public about disciplinary cases to help patients make more informed decisions when selecting a health care provider.

Task force members included representatives from the Department of Health (DOH), Office of the Attorney General (AGO), Washington Medical Commission (WMC), Nursing Care Quality Assurance Commission (NCQAC), Chiropractic Quality Assurance Commission (CQAC), Board of Massage, and Board of Physical Therapy. Additionally, two members from outside the disciplinary process were invited to represent provider and patient perspectives.

The task force met several times between December 2021 and January 2022. DOH drafted a recommendation report for task force review and later shared the draft report with 38 stakeholder organizations for comment. Stakeholder organizations included health care provider associations, labor unions, and organizations that work on the issues of patient advocacy, sexual assault prevention, and equity.

The following page summarizes the work that the Department of Health will undertake to address the goals to reduce the timeline for processing sexual misconduct cases and to better inform the public about disciplinary cases, guided by the recommendations of the task force.

### Sasha de Leon

Assistant Secretary  
Health Systems Quality Assurance  
Washington State Department of Health  
Sasha.deleon@doh.wa.gov

# Task Force Recommendations

*Note: The numbers following each recommendation correspond to the full recommendations report.*

## Work Already Underway

- Monthly and bi-monthly meetings of subject matter experts at DOH to improve and monitor enhanced management oversight practices for sexual misconduct cases.
- Quarterly meetings of DOH and AGO leaders to review themes in sexual misconduct cases that exceed timelines to identify and address root causes of delays.
- Begin an education campaign using various communication tools and social media platforms to inform the public about DOH's Provider Credential Search tool and how to file complaints against providers.
- Apply for new funding to support a sustained public education effort to increase awareness about DOH's Provider Credential Search tool and how to file a complaint against a provider.
- Conduct outreach to partner agencies, boards and commissions to establish a workgroup with the goal of implementing the process improvements based on the recommendations of the task force.

## Short-Term Focus of the Workgroup (by June 30, 2023)

- Reach consensus on shorter timelines for sexual misconduct cases and produce a roadmap for implementation.
- Develop and implement strategies to expedite board and commission review of sexual misconduct cases.
- Enhance the capacity of boards and commissions by expanding the pool of pro tems, filling vacancies, and implementing [SSB 5753](#).
- Identify and implement ways to accelerate the contracting process for hiring experts for disciplinary cases.
- Expand the pool of experts available to consult and testify on sexual misconduct cases.
- Assess and implement a broad range of time-saving procedural efficiencies within each phase of the disciplinary process.
- Update the memorandum of understanding and explore a service level agreement between DOH and the AGO.

## Long-Term Focus of the Workgroup (beyond June 30, 2023)

- Update rules with shorter timelines for sexual misconduct cases.
- Develop a dashboard for visualizing data on the status of sexual misconduct cases.
- Implement a paperless process for managing disciplinary and adjudicative case files.
- Research new tools to remove a provider from practice during the legal process.
- Research ways to clarify when sexual misconduct cases should be referred to the Secretary and adopt rules.
- Explore statutory changes that would delegate greater authority to Executive Directors to approve steps in the disciplinary process.
- Research the regulation of health profession sexual misconduct in other states.
- Explore approaches for creating specialized units for sexual misconduct cases.
- Research the risk and benefits for adding investigative information to DOH's Provider Credential Search tool and prepare a recommendation for the Secretary of Health.
- Launch an on-going sustained public education effort to increase awareness about DOH's Provider Credential Search tool and how to file a complaint against a provider.

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 [civil.rights@doh.wa.gov](mailto:civil.rights@doh.wa.gov).