



PREPROPOSAL STATEMENT OF INQUIRY

CR-101 (October 2017)
(Implements RCW 34.05.310)

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DATE: March 19, 2025

TIME: 3:04 PM

WSR 25-08-002

Agency: Department of Health

Subject of possible rule making: Ground Ambulance Services – Balanced billing. The Department of Health (department) is considering rulemaking in response to new legislative requirements under Substitute Senate Bill (SSB) 5986 (chapter 218, Laws of 2024) regarding Out-of-Network Health Care Charges (balance billing) for ground ambulance services. WAC 246-976-260 and 246-976-270 may be amended as necessary.

Statutes authorizing the agency to adopt rules on this subject: RCW 18.73.081, 43.70.040, and SSB 5986 (chapter 218, Laws of 2024)

Reasons why rules on this subject may be needed and what they might accomplish: As provided in SSB 5986 – Out of network health care charges – ground ambulance services, licensed ground emergency medical service (EMS) services are prohibited from balance billing and the department may take disciplinary action on a ground ambulance service license for violations of the law. The law authorizes the department to enact civil penalties such as levying a fine or cost recovery. As this is a new area of enforcement for the department, rules may be needed to clarify potential reasons for disciplinary action and to articulate what actions can be taken.

Balance billing for ground ambulance services refers to the situation where a patient is transported by a ground ambulance service that is not in their insurance network and subsequently receives a surprise bill from the non-covered ground ambulance service. In an emergency situation, patients are not able to choose if the ground ambulance service that transports them is covered by their insurance network.

The department is considering adopting rules to satisfy the requirements of SSB 5986. The department would be able to enforce minimum standards through the effect of rule.

It is anticipated that the rules will clarify several points, including expectations for ground ambulance services to comply with balance billing laws, the department's disciplinary role for enforcement of balance billing regulations, and potential actions to be taken on an EMS service license for violations of the standards.

Identify other federal and state agencies that regulate this subject and the process coordinating the rule with these agencies: Washington State Office of the Insurance Commissioner (OIC). The department is required to work in consultation with the OIC in the disciplinary process. The department will collaborate with the OIC in rulemaking and establish standards and processes in agreement with OIC.

Process for developing new rule (check all that apply):

- ☐ Negotiated rule making
- ☐ Pilot rule making
- ☐ Agency study
- ☒ Other (describe) Collaborative rulemaking

Interested parties can participate in the decision to adopt the new rule and formulation of the proposed rule before publication by contacting:

(If necessary)

Name: Jason Norris

Name: Martravia Reed

Address: PO Box 47853, Olympia, 98504

Address: PO Box 47853, Olympia, WA 98504

Phone: 360-236-2851 Fax: 360-236-2830 TTY: 360-833-6388 or 711 Email: Jason.Norris@doh.wa.gov Web site: https://doh.wa.gov Other:	Phone: 360-236-2838 Fax: 360-236-2830 TTY: 360-833-6388 or 711 Email: martravia.reed@doh.wa.gov Web site: https://doh.wa.gov Other:
Additional comments: Interested parties can participate in the drafting of the proposed rules. The department will conduct a series of rules workshops. Rulemaking notices will be delivered via the GovDelivery list. To receive notices, please go to: https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/WADOH/subscriber/new . After signing in, please click open the box labeled "Health Systems Quality Assurance." Next click open the box labeled "Community Health Systems" and then click open the box labeled "Emergency Medical Services and Trauma." Finally, click the box for "Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Rule Making Chapter WAC 246.976." You may also check the box next to one or more of the other professions or facilities listed to receive information related to that specific topic.	
Date: March 19, 2025 Name: Kristin Peterson, JD for Jessica Todorovich, MS Title: Chief of Policy for Acting Secretary of Health	Signature: 