

AGING AND LONG TERM SUPPORT ADMINISTRATION
RESIDENTIAL CARE SERVICES
“Transforming Lives”

CHAPTER 8 – Policy

Policy – Overview

Residential Care Services’ (RCS) core mission is to protect the vulnerable in all RCS-regulated settings. The policy unit enables RCS to achieve its mission by providing good stewardship for the regulatory system on which RCS relies. This means the policy unit has the responsibility for careful planning, management, and monitoring of the rules, policies, procedures, and legislation affecting RCS. The policy unit is not the owner of any rule, policy, or procedure, but acts on behalf of RCS leadership, staff, and the public.

The five main functions of the policy unit are:

- Writing rules (WACs), policies and procedures (SOPs) in response to changes in the legal landscape of Washington State, such as new laws, regulations, or RCS business needs and processes.
- Promoting transparency, accountability, and democracy by conducting collaborative stakeholder activities, consensus-building, and other good governance processes.
- Supporting RCS leadership decision making by providing recommendations founded on evidence-based research, consultations and input from RCS staff and AAGs, and sound legal and business process analysis.
- Reviewing, analyzing, and drafting legislation that affects RCS regulated settings, including timely responses to the Governor’s office, legislators, and public inquiries.
- Providing rule and policy interpretation and advice to RCS leadership, staff, and the public.

The policy unit is comprised of subject matter experts in each of the regulated settings which RCS oversees. However, it is also the responsibility of the policy unit to listen to, understand, and incorporate the advice of the many experts across RCS.

SUBJECT MATTER EXPERTS

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CHAPTER 8 – Policy

OVERVIEW

A. STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

B. RULEMAKING (UNDER CONSTRUCTION)

C. LEGISLATIVE SESSION (UNDER CONSTRUCTION)

D. MANAGEMENT BULLETINS/DEAR PROVIDER LETTERS (UNDER CONSTRUCTION)

APPX A. CHAPTER 8 CHANGE LOG

CHAPTER 8A – Standard Operating Procedures

BACKGROUND

This section contains the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) that RCS Policy Unit staff are required to follow for the development and amendment of RCS Standard Operating Procedures and related forms and attachments.

SOPs detail regularly recurring work processes that are to be conducted or followed within the organization. SOPs contain primarily “policy” aspects (decisions made by RCS leadership about who is responsible to take what actions within the organization), but may also contain “procedure” aspects (task outlines detailing the steps to take in order to complete a business process). Desk manuals which may exist in specific units and contain detailed task outlines as kept by supervisors within the scope of their discretion are not part of the SOPs.

The policy unit is the gatekeeper to the processes that drive RCS and should collaborate with the subject matter experts to assure all new or revised SOPs meet the formatting, style, and understandability needs of the division. SOP formatting, such as sections, ordering, and style are not expected to be uniform across all chapters and may vary based on the needs of the content. However, policy staff should make every effort to align these aspects. SOPs should state clearly who the subject of the required action is in most cases, and should generally avoid passive voice sentences.

Acronyms

- Policy Program Manager (PPM)
- Policy Unit Manager (Manager)
- Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)
- Policy Unit Project Tracker (PUP Tracker)
- Office Chief Five Day Review (OC5D)
- Communications Program Manager (CPM)
- Management Bulletin (MB)
- Dear Provider Letter (DPL)
- Washington Administrative Code (WAC)
- Revised Code of Washington (RCW)

A. General Procedures and Pre-Drafting Steps.

1. A project to amend or create an SOP can arise in many different ways, but regardless of the source of the project, when a unit is assigned to develop a new SOP, or an issue is identified in a current SOP that needs to be addressed, the Policy Unit Manager (Manager) should be notified. The Manager may assist in scoping the project; most SOP projects should be defined by subchapter (e.g., “8A”) or section (e.g., “12B1”), depending on how the content is divided, but may be accomplished as appropriate for the project.

2. The Manager or PPM must create a new item in the PUP Tracker and fill out all appropriate sections, including:

- Targeted Review: for appropriate units/groups who are directly required to take action under the SOP, and may include others who could be affected by the new processes.
- Doc Review: this is generally standard, but may be skipped due to time constraints, the limited scope/impact of the SOP, or the coverage of Targeted Reviews.
- Office Chief Five Day Review (OC5D): always select “Needed” on all SOP projects other than “housekeeping” or error correction updates.
- Driver - Notes - Deadlines: describe the need or issue that is driving the project, any relevant deadlines, or other notes relevant to the project. This section should be kept up to date as the project evolves.
- Status: “PPM In-Progress” should generally be initially selected.

3. To ensure handoffs are not missed, the Manager, PPMs, and CPM must to ensure alerts have been created in SharePoint to automatically notify when the PUP Tracker status has been changed to a status requiring their role to take action.

4. Version control of drafts is important in order to be able to backtrack to previous language while drafting is in progress. When a draft version is released to stakeholders during the targeted, document, OC5D, and director review steps, a separate file should be saved to the PUP Tracker to reflect the version that was released to stakeholders, with the appropriate version number appended to the file name:

Targeted Review (Initial Draft)	v1.0
Document Review	v2.0
Office Chief 5 Day Review	v3.0
Director Review	v4.0

For example, when the drafting of the initial language is complete, “v1.0” needs to be added to the file name at the time the document is saved and ready for release to the targeted review audience. Then the feedback from the targeted review will be incorporated, editing may take place, and when the draft is complete the document needs to be saved as “v2.0” for release to document review as a separate file in the PUP Tracker. Dates may be used to supplement the filename. Proper labeling ensures that the correct files are used. When the final version is ready for publishing, the PPM should delete prior draft versions from the PUP Tracker Item.

5. At the time of amending a published SOP, the PPM should retrieve the current SOP from the official SharePoint archive folder. The PPM should typically enable track changes to capture all alterations to current text; this enables reviewers to see what is being changed and allows them to compare the current live published version of the SOP to the language being reviewed. During the development of a new SOP, track changes are only necessary if changes from one draft to the next need to be shown. The final track changes version has to be saved separately prior to accepting all changes for the final publishable draft and must to be kept as a separate file in the PUP Tracker item. All track changes must be removed from the final publishable document.

B. Initial Draft and Targeted Review (Version 1.0).

1. In the event that the SOP project is a new SOP chapter or section, the initial drafting will usually be done by the unit(s) or program manager(s) that are responsible for performing the work and who are the subject matter experts in their own processes. If the SOP project is an update or amendment to a currently-existing section, it may be drafted by the PPM as appropriate. In either case, the assigned PPM will work closely in developing the content with those who are responsible for performing the work, also known as “targeted review”.

- An initial SOP draft should focus primarily on the content, including clarity, readability, and accuracy of the process.
- A Management Bulletin (MB) should be developed for release along with the final SOP to explain the reason for the content. The responsibility to draft any accompanying MB should be the same as the SOP. Minor “housekeeping” edits or error fixes do not need an MB, but any significant change in procedure to which staff will need to be alerted must include one. A Dear Provider Letter (DPL) will generally not be needed for an SOP update.
- If the SOP project is an update or amendment, the PPM will be responsible for reviewing and clarifying the language of the entire subchapter, including incorporating any outstanding issues by reviewing for clarifications or typos in existing language, old terminology, or other changes.

- The PPM's files should be consulted to identify any outstanding issues which may be appropriate for incorporation into the project.
- All draft documents must be clearly marked as "draft" with a watermark, header/footer, or both.

2. The PPM is responsible for coordination and assistance with the creation of the initial draft. It is recommended that the PPM consult with other authors involved and provide advice as to a suitable policy structure, the active voice style, and what level of detail may be desirable. It is the role of PPM to ask questions, look for opportunities for improvement, and help ensure that the policy is clear, not just to current staff but new staff unfamiliar with RCS processes.

3. The PPM is also responsible to help ensure that the SOP follows all relevant RCW and WACs, which includes preventing unpromulgated rulemaking in violation of the WA Administrative Procedure Act (chapter 34.05 RCW). Unpromulgated rulemaking is a policy that requires a nongovernmental person or entity to take action for which a violation is subject to penalty. It is best for the PPM to consult with the Manager if there are any questions about unpromulgated rulemaking.

4. The PPM must search currently published MBs and if any are found relevant to the SOP in development, assist in incorporating their content into the initial draft. To ensure the CPM is notified for rescinding purposes, any MBs incorporated must be noted in the PUP Tracker.

5. The PPM must review and address any documents related to the project, which may include forms, template letters, or other related documents.

6. Any issues identified at the initial drafting stage which require a decision from RCS leadership must be resolved according to the process under section C of this subchapter. However, drafting should continue during the leadership decision-making process as appropriate.

7. When the initial draft is completed to the satisfaction of the PPM, the PPM will:

- Begin an implementation plan by filling out the appropriate column in the PUP Tracker.
- Change the PUP Tracker status to the status appropriate to the next step.

C. Leadership Decisions.

1. Issues identified at any point during review are appropriate for RCS leadership review if they are of significant consequence or special note. This may include budget impact, impact to relationships with non-DSHS entities, or issues with a significant and unresolved difference of opinion among reviewers.

2. The PPM should vet issues identified as meeting the criteria above with the appropriate chain of command through the policy unit, as well as any units affected by the issue. Leadership decisions should be resolved at the lowest level reasonably empowered to decide the issue.

D. Document Review (Version 2.0).

1. Document Review is a process that allows RCS staff to internally comment on proposed language and provide input on the draft. This step may not always be necessary if affected staff have had the opportunity to review during the targeted review step. However, the purpose of document review is to allow other units not otherwise involved to have the opportunity to view the changes, assess whether they would be impacted, and to provide further input. Document Review is available on the RCS intranet site at <http://intra.alsa.dshs.wa.gov/rcs/review/>

2. At the time a project is ready for document review, the PPM will change the PUP Tracker status to “Doc Review”.

3. The CPM will post the draft to document review and update the PUP Tracker with the end date for that review period. The standard length of document review is 20 calendar days, but it may be shortened or extended based on PPM recommendation or the volume of other items on document review. The accompanying MB may also be put on document review, along with any other forms or related documents appropriate to be reviewed.

3. The CPM will include an item in RCS weekly bulletins while the draft is on document review.

4. When the document review period is over, the CPM will remove the draft, change the PUP Tracker status to “PPM in-progress”, and email the received comments to both the PPM and Manager.

5. The Manager should typically provide input on the content of the project by the close of document review.

6. The PPM may incorporate comments received from document review, seeking clarification as necessary from the commenter, the unit, or others as appropriate. PPMs should reach out and thank commenters to encourage staff to provide input again in the future. Comments may not always be able to be incorporated into the draft; this is at the discretion of the PPM. Issues newly identified as requiring a leadership decision will go through the same process as identified in section C of this subchapter. If significant changes have been made to a draft and further staff input is warranted, it may be appropriate to put a draft onto document review a second time.

7. Once all comments are incorporated as needed, the PPM will update the PUP Tracker status to the status appropriate for the next step.

E. Office Chief Five Day Review (Version 3.0).

1. The PPM will select “Manager Review” or consult with the Manager directly to determine whether the draft is ready for OC5D and whether the Office Chiefs have the available bandwidth to review at that time. Typically the OC5D will be five days, but this may be extended in some cases, for instance when the reviewed material is over ten pages, or at the request of the office chief.
2. If the Manager approves, the PPM will send the track changes draft of the SOP by email to all Office Chiefs with an explanation of the project and the process so far, and have the requested review deadline clearly marked. The PPM will cc: the Manager and may include other parties as reviewers when appropriate. The PPM will update the PUP Tracker status to “OC 5 Day Review” and indicate the deadline in the notes section.
3. After the deadline, the PPM will review and incorporate any comments received from the OC5D Review, seeking clarification as necessary from the commenter, the unit, or others as appropriate. If necessary, the PPM may prompt additional responses from the Office Chiefs.
4. Any items that need a leadership decision will follow the same process identified in section C of this subchapter.

F. Final Draft and Publishing (Version 4.0).

1. Once comments are incorporated, all outstanding leadership decisions are addressed, and the content of the draft is finalized, the PPM with the assistance of the administrative assistant will review the following to create the final publishable version:
 - Formatting;
 - Typos and grammatical errors;
 - Hyperlinks;
 - Change log updates;
 - MB/DPL updates (ensuring the content matches the final content of the SOP, and if appropriate, a track changes version of the SOP should be included as an attachment in the MB for staff convenience);
 - Finalization of any forms (including forms that need to be approved through the DSHS Forms Manager);
 - Removal of track changes; and

- Incorporation of the draft sections into the full chapter file. Note: the director should only review the “v4.0” draft version rather than the full incorporated chapter. However, the final incorporated and publishable version should be ready in the PUP Tracker for upload prior to Director Review.
2. The PPM will select “Director Review” status once the SOP is in a final publishable state.
 3. The CPM will deliver the final draft version (“v4.0”) to the RCS Director for review and approval. If approval is not granted, the CPM will notify the PPM and return the PUP Tracker status to “PPM In-progress”.
 4. Once the RCS Director has approved the SOP, the CPM will:
 - Update the SOP to include the official published date which shall be the date of the release of the MB. These updates will include:
 - The date on the MB and/or DPL;
 - The change log with the publishing date in MM.DD.YYYY format; and
 - The footer with the new version number in vMM.DD.YYYY format;
 - Save a copy of the current live published version to an archive folder on SharePoint;
 - Send the final full chapter document to IT for publishing to the DSHS internet and RCS intranet sites;
 - Issue the MB/DPL and rescind any old MBs as appropriate; and
 - Notify the PPM and Manager by email that the SOP has been published.
 5. The CPM will update the PUP Tracker to reflect the completed project by changing the status to “Completed”, entering the completion date, and adding the control number (the same as the MB number). If no MB was issued, “no MB issued” may be put into the PUP Tracker to complete the item.
 6. After publishing, the PPM should eliminate extraneous documents and previous draft versions from the PUP Tracker as appropriate. Generally, the only documents that should remain after publishing are the final publishable document to be uploaded, the “v4.0” draft word document with track changes, the MB, and any attachments used.
 7. The PPM will continue working with the training unit and others as appropriate on the implementation plan.

[Change Log](#)

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APPENDIX 8A – CHANGE LOG

EFFECTIVE DATE	CHAPTER SECT #	WHAT CHANGED? BRIEF DESCRIPTION	REASON FOR CHANGE?	COMMUNICATION & TRAINING PLAN
09.27.2019	Chapter 8	Establishment of Chapter 8A.		MB R19-073

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