

## Administrative Policy No 9.01

**Subject:** Major Incident Reporting

**Information contact:** Enterprise Risk Management Office  
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**Authorizing source:** [Governor's Executive Order 16-06](#)  
[RCW 43.19.782](#)  
[RCW 43.09.185](#)

**Additional resources:** [AP No. 2.07](#)  
[AP No. 5.01](#)  
[AP No. 9.11](#)  
[AP No. 16.10](#)

**Effective date:** September 15, 1990

**Revised:** May 25, 2018 <sup>1</sup> [Housekeeping July 16, 2018](#) <sup>2</sup> [Housekeeping August 26, 2020](#)

**Approved by:** [Original signed by Sharon Swanson](#)  
Senior Director, Policy and External Relations

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### Purpose

This policy establishes a uniform system for reporting major incidents within the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS).

### Scope

This policy applies to all DSHS organizational units. It outlines general requirements for agency incident reporting.

### Definitions

**Major Incident** means a matter requiring immediate attention of the Secretary, Chief of Staff, the appropriate Assistant Secretary, Chief Risk Officer, the Office of Policy & External Relations Senior Director, and the Senior Director of Communications. This includes any situation involving significant harm or damage, or the threat of significant harm or damage to:

1. People
2. Property

3. Loss of funds or assets
4. Function of systems or security of information
5. Organizational reputation

**Examples** include:

- **Death** means the unexpected death of any person under unusual, suspicious or violent circumstances in a DSHS facility or involving a DSHS related activity.
- **Suicide attempts** means any suicide attempts made by a person who is under the supervision or custody of a DSHS operated or contracted facility requiring medical attention beyond first aid.
- **Allegations of Employee Criminal Activity** means a violation of local, state or federal statute.
- **Significant Injury** means any serious injury that involves a DSHS employee, client, or other person at a DSHS location, activity, or program such as loss of limb, eye, or consciousness due to injury, or injury requiring medical attention beyond first aid, such as by a medical professional or first responder.
- **Escape/Walk-away/Missing Person Leaves Supervision** means a person who is under the supervision and custody of a DSHS operated or contracted facility who leaves the physical confinement or grounds of that facility, or the supervision and custody of DSHS staff while off grounds, without express permission.
- **Major violence or threat of significant violence** that involves a DSHS employee, client or other person at a DSHS location, activity or program. A threat is a statement or intention to cause harm, damage, or other hostile action against a person, property, or operation.
- **Confidential Data Loss** means potentially compromising the security or privacy of confidential information held by DSHS or its contractors that poses a significant risk of financial, reputational or other harm effecting over 500 clients. Loss of confidential information includes unauthorized acquisition, access, or use not permitted by state or federal law.
- **Property loss or damage** valued in excess of \$50,000.
- **Potential damage to DSHS reputation** is the uncertainty surrounding circumstances in which a reputation may become damaged or reduced in some way, any known or presumed media interest. See also [AP 2.07](#) Office of Communications Policy.
- **Known or Suspected Loss or Misuse of Public funds or Assets** means loss or suspected loss of state resources due to actions by the public, DSHS employees, volunteers, contractors or vendors. [See also AP 16.10 Reporting Known or Suspected Loss of Public Funds or Assets.](#)

- **Investigations** by external entities (e.g. non-routine investigations by law enforcement or regulatory agencies).
- **Other.** Any type of incident not covered above as deemed necessary at the discretion of an Assistant Secretary or designee.

**Policy**

To safeguard the health and safety of clients and employees and to protect the interests of the department and the state, DSHS incidents that meet the definition in this policy must be fully and rapidly reported to the Secretary, the Chief of Staff, the appropriate Assistant Secretary, the Chief Risk Officer, the Office of Policy & External Relations Senior Director, and the Senior Director of Communications following the tables in “B” below. Uniform reporting of incidents *should not* include confidential client information or Protected Health Information (PHI).

**A. Administration-specific Protocol**

1. Each DSHS administration or administrative subdivision must have a written incident protocol which comports with this policy and includes:
  - Responding to incidents at the time of the event;
  - Reporting incidents;
  - Reviewing incidents; and
  - Reporting requirements specific to services provided by outside contractors.
2. Each DSHS administration must train employees regarding their specific incident reporting requirements.

**B. Reporting Requirements**

1. DSHS **employees** must follow their administration’s written incident protocol to report all major incidents following their chain of command as follows:

Description of Incident	Who to notify	Manner of notification	By when
<b>Allegations of Employee Criminal Activity</b>	Assistant Secretary	Verbal	Immediately upon becoming aware
	Chief Risk Officer	Via email at <a href="mailto:ERMOincidentreporting@dshs.wa.gov">ERMOincidentreporting@dshs.wa.gov</a>	Within 1 business day
<b>Confidential Data Loss.</b> Breach of confidential information or compromise	Assistant Secretary	Verbal	Immediately upon becoming aware

<p>of the integrity of client confidential information affecting over 500 clients</p>	<p>The Administration's Privacy Coordinator</p> <p>Enterprise Technology Service Desk</p> <p>DSHS Privacy Officer, per AP 5.01</p> <p>Chief Risk Officer</p>	<p>Email, see Privacy SharePoint</p> <p><a href="mailto:Help@dshs.wa.gov">Help@dshs.wa.gov</a></p> <p><a href="mailto:DSHSprivacyofficer@dshs.wa.gov">DSHSprivacyofficer@dshs.wa.gov</a></p> <p>Via email at <a href="mailto:ERMOincidentreporting@dshs.wa.gov">ERMOincidentreporting@dshs.wa.gov</a></p>	<p>Within 1 business day</p> <p>Within 1 business day</p> <p>Within 1 business day</p> <p>Within 1 business day</p>
<p><b>Death of a resident, client, or employee</b></p>	<p>Assistant Secretary</p>	<p>Verbal</p> <p>Followed by written report</p>	<p>Immediately</p> <p>Next business day</p>
	<p>Chief of Staff, Senior Director of Communications, the Office of Policy &amp; External Relations Senior Director, and the Chief Risk Officer</p>	<p>Email</p> <p>Followed by a written report</p> <p>For the Chief Risk Officer, email at <a href="mailto:ERMOincidentreporting@dshs.wa.gov">ERMOincidentreporting@dshs.wa.gov</a></p>	<p>Immediately</p> <p>Next business day</p>
<p><b>Escape/Walk-Away/Missing Person</b></p>	<p>Assistant Secretary</p>	<p>Verbal</p> <p>Followed by written report</p>	<p>Immediately</p> <p>Next business day</p>
	<p>Chief of Staff, Senior Director of Communications, the Office of Policy &amp; External Relations Senior Director, and the Chief Risk Officer</p>	<p>Email</p> <p>Followed by written report</p> <p>For the Chief Risk Officer, email at <a href="mailto:ERMOincidentreporting@dshs.wa.gov">ERMOincidentreporting@dshs.wa.gov</a></p>	<p>Immediately</p> <p>Next business day</p>
<p><b>Investigations by External Entities.</b> Contact by an</p>	<p>Assistant Secretary</p>	<p>Verbal</p>	<p>Immediately upon an employee being</p>

external entity such as any non-routine or un-announced visits from law enforcement or regulatory agencies			contacted by an external entity
	Chief Risk Officer	Via email at <a href="mailto:ERMOincidentreporting@dshs.wa.gov">ERMOincidentreporting@dshs.wa.gov</a>	Immediately upon an employee being contacted by an external entity
<b>Known or Suspected Loss of Public Funds or Assets</b>	Assistant Secretary	Verbal	Immediately upon becoming aware of known or suspected loss
	Internal Audit & Consultation Unit, per AP 16.10	Email DSHS form #17-169 to <a href="mailto:DSHSIACInternalAuditandConsultation@dshs.wa.gov">DSHSIACInternalAuditandConsultation@dshs.wa.gov</a>	Immediately upon becoming aware of known or suspected loss
	Chief Risk Officer	Via email at <a href="mailto:ERMOincidentreporting@dshs.wa.gov">ERMOincidentreporting@dshs.wa.gov</a>	Immediately upon becoming aware of known or suspected loss
<b>Major violence or threat of significant violence</b>	Assistant Secretary	Verbal	Immediately
	Chief of Staff, Senior Director of Communications, Chief Risk Officer, Policy & External Relations Senior Director	Email	Within 2 hours
<b>Potential compromise of agency reputation</b>	Assistant Secretary	Verbal	Within 2 hours of becoming aware
	Chief Risk Officer	Via email at <a href="mailto:ERMOincidentreporting@dshs.wa.gov">ERMOincidentreporting@dshs.wa.gov</a>	Within 2 hours of becoming aware
<b>Property Loss or Damage</b> valued in excess of \$50,000	Assistant Secretary Internal Audit & Consultation Unit	Written via email	Immediately

	Chief Risk Officer	Via email at <a href="mailto:ERMOincidentreporting@dshs.wa.gov">ERMOincidentreporting@dshs.wa.gov</a>	Immediately
<b>Significant Injury of client, resident, or staff, including attempted suicide</b>	Assistant Secretary	Verbal  Followed by written report	Immediately  Next business day
	Chief of Staff, Senior Director of Communications, the Office of Policy & External Relations Senior Director, and the Chief Risk Officer	Email  Followed by written report  For the Chief Risk Officer, email at <a href="mailto:ERMOincidentreporting@dshs.wa.gov">ERMOincidentreporting@dshs.wa.gov</a>	Immediately  Next business day
<b>Incidents occurring as a result of or in association with an emergency or disaster.</b> Any incident, including those within the scope of this policy, that occur as a result of or in association with an emergency or disaster as defined in Administrative Policy 9.11	Emergency Management Services	Verbal at (360) 522-2296	Immediately
	Assistant Secretary	Verbal	Immediately
	Chief of Staff, Senior Director of Communications, Chief Risk Officer, Policy & External Relations Senior Director	Email	Within 2 hours

2. DSHS Assistant Secretaries or designee must report all major incidents to the DSHS Secretary as follows (leaving a voicemail does not constitute verbal notification): \*

Description of Incident	Who to notify	Manner of notification	By when
<b>Allegations of Significant Employee Criminal Activity</b>	Secretary	Verbal or via text message	Immediately
<b>Confidential Data Loss with Media Attention.</b> Breach of confidential information or compromise of the integrity of client confidential information affecting over 500 clients	Secretary	Verbal or via text message	Immediately
<b>Death of a resident, client, or employee at a DSHS owned or operated facility, or under the care of the department</b>	Secretary	Verbal or via text message  Followed by written report	Immediately  Next business day
<b>Escape/Walk-Away/Missing Person</b>	Secretary	Verbal or via text message  Followed by written report	Immediately  Next business day
<b>Investigations by External Entities.</b> Contact by an external entity such as any non-routine or un-announced visits from <b>law enforcement</b> or regulatory agencies	Secretary	Verbal or via text message	Immediately
<b>Major violence or threat of significant violence</b>	Secretary	Verbal or via text message	Within 1 hour
<b>Potential compromise of agency reputation</b>	Secretary	Verbal or via text message	Immediately
<b>Property Loss or Damage</b> valued in excess of \$50,000	Secretary	Verbal or via text message  Followed by written report	Immediately  Next business day

<p><b>Significant Injury of client, resident, or staff, including attempted suicide</b></p>	<p>Secretary</p>	<p>Verbal or via text message  Followed by written report</p>	<p>Within 30 minutes  Next business day</p>
<p><b>Incidents occurring as a result of or in association with an emergency or disaster.*</b></p>	<p>Secretary</p>	<p>Verbal or via text message</p>	<p>Within 1 hour</p>

**\*Note: B.2 Reporting requirements temporarily modified under Secretary Directive 01.01 – COVID-19 – Infection reporting**

3. All written reports sent to the Secretary must also be sent to the Secretary’s Executive Assistant
4. Major incidents must be reported following the timelines stated above, following your chain of command, and your administration’s written incident protocol.
5. All other department, federal and state of Washington reporting requirements must be met.

<sup>1</sup> Clarified notification requirements in tables A & B

<sup>2</sup> Added reference to temporary modification to Section B.2 under Secretary Directive 01.01