

Administrative Policy No. 19.85.32

Subject: Signature Authority for Financial Documents

Contact: Office of Accounting Services
Chief, (360) 664-5716

Authorizing Source: Revised Code of Washington [RCW 43.20A.110](#), Secretary's delegation of powers and duties

Effective Date: June 23, 2008

Revised: May 21, 2021

Approved By: Original signed by Judy Fitzgerald
Assistant Secretary / Chief Financial Officer

Purpose

To establish and clarify policies regarding signature authority and the delegation of signature authority for financial documents.

Scope

This policy applies to all Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) programs.

This policy does not apply to signature authority for contracts or non-financial documents, nor does it affect Administrative Policy 10.02 – Overpayments and Debts for Providers and Vendors.

Additional Guidance

State Administrative and Accounting Manual (SAAM), Section [85.32.40](#), Payment Processing
DSHS Administrative Policies

[5.04](#), Records Retention

[13.10](#), Central Contract Services

[DSHS Forms Picker](#)

Form 03-369, Signature Authority

Definitions

Appointing authority is an individual lawfully authorized to appoint, transfer, layoff, reduce, dismiss, suspend, or demote employees (WAC 357-01-025).

Delegation of authority means an individual has received written authority to sign financial documents on behalf of their respective appointing authority. This process is an internal control used to mitigate risk and to help ensure effective financial practices are used.

DSHS refers to the Department of Social and Health Services.

Emergency is a set of unforeseen circumstances beyond the control of an agency that either: (a) presents a real, immediate threat to the proper performance of essential functions; or (b) may result in material loss or damage to property, bodily injury, or loss of life if immediate action is not taken.

Signature authority is the permission to execute transactions up to limits established by agency policies and permission to approve transactions for executions. This approval attests to the appropriateness of the transaction within DSHS objectives and budgetary authorizations.

Policy

A. Staff must be authorized to sign financial documents on behalf of DSHS.

1. No officer, agent, or employee of DSHS has the authority to sign financial documents on behalf of the department or any unit, division or subdivision of the department without formal delegation of authority.
2. The types of financial documents requiring written approval include, but are not limited to:
 - a. Requests for issuance of a payment (e.g., A19 – invoice voucher).
 - b. Accounting record adjustments (e.g., journal vouchers).
 - c. Procurement requisitions.
 - d. Purchases made during an emergency.
3. Documents signed by the person with signature authority have the same force and effect as if the appointing authority signed the documents.

B. Only appointing authorities can delegate signature authority.

1. Delegated signature authority must be renewed at the start of every biennium, at a minimum.
2. When staff leave or duties change, signature authority forms must be updated to include the effective date of changes.

3. The number of employees given signature authority should balance the need for adequate controls, while not hindering daily operations.

C. Prior to signing documents, individuals with signature authority must:

1. Understand the transaction or issue for which they are signing.
2. Review the information and supporting documentation to ensure that it is accurate and complete.
3. Know whether:
 - a. The transaction is allowable, reasonable, and justified.
 - b. The transaction is charged to the correct account coding or project(s).
 - c. There are adequate funds to cover the expense(s).
 - d. The funding source is appropriate for the expenditure.

D. Documents listed on the signature authority form (DSHS Form 03-369) may only be approved by staff designated on the form.

Procedures

To establish, modify, or terminate signature authority:

A. Program staff must:

1. Complete the DSHS signature authority form (DSHS Form 03-369) or a similar form.
2. Submit the completed form(s) to the appointing authority or designee for approval.

B. Appointing authorities or their designees must review the signature authority form. If the request is:

1. Approved:
 - a. Sign the form.
 - b. Submit the original form to the fiscal unit who retains copies of completed forms in compliance with records retention requirements.
2. Not approved:
 - a. Return the form with an explanation to the originator.