



STATE OF WASHINGTON

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

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NOTICE OF ADOPTION OF A POLICY STATEMENT

Title of Policy Statement: Veterinary-Client-Patient Relationship Requirements During the COVID-19 Response. Policy Number: VBOG 20-02

Issuing Entity: Veterinary Board of Governors

Subject Matter: Addressing the impact COVID-19 response measures have on veterinarians with regard to regulations for the veterinary-client-patient relationship.

Effective Date: May 15, 2020

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*Department of Health
Health Systems Quality Assurance
Veterinary Board of Governors*

Policy Statement

Revised – 10/18/11

<i>Title:</i>	Veterinary-Client-Patient Relationship Requirements During the COVID-19 Response	<i>Number: VBOG 20-02</i>
<i>References:</i>	Chapter 18.92 RCW, WAC 246-933-200 ; and Proclamations 20-05 , 20-14 , 20-24 , 20-25 , and 20-32 .	
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<i>Effective Date:</i>	May 15, 2020	
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<i>Approved By:</i>	Kirk Breuninger, VMD, MPH, DACVPM, Chair of the Washington State Veterinary Board of Governors	

To address the difficulties related to the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic that impact licensed veterinarians with regard to establishing a veterinary-client-patient relationship (VCPR) in Washington State, the Veterinary Board of Governors (board) makes the following allowance:

For the duration of the COVID-19 state declared emergency, the board does not intend to strictly enforce the requirement in WAC [246-933-200\(2\)](#). Even so, veterinarians must exercise professional judgment to determine whether establishing a VCPR remotely is appropriate. For example, diagnosing and treating a condition that may not require a hands-on examination could be reasonable; diagnosing and treating a condition that requires a hands-on examination or diagnostic testing is probably not.

WAC [246-933-200\(2\)](#) prohibits licensed veterinarians from establishing a VCPR solely through telemedicine and requires the veterinarian to have examined the animal patient within the previous year.

The Governor’s Proclamation [20-25](#) Stay Home Stay Healthy order directs businesses to do everything possible to support social distancing. Veterinary care is designated as an “essential” activity. Telehealth methods, applied appropriately, allow veterinarians to evaluate patients to determine which cases require emergency or urgent care, and whether remote treatment can be applied or whether the animal patient must be seen in-person to address an emergency or urgent situation.

Washington State's response to the COVID-19 pandemic is summarized as follows:

- On February 29, 2020, the Governor issued [Proclamation 20-05](#) declaring a State of Emergency for all counties in the state of Washington.
- On March 15, 2020, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) issued guidance discouraging all gatherings of 50 or more. On March 16, 2020, the Governor issued [Proclamation 20-14](#) prohibiting gatherings of 50 or more in all counties in the state of Washington.
- On March 19, 2020, the Governor issued [Proclamation 20-24](#) prohibiting non-urgent medical procedures to reduce disruption and maintain the supply chain of personal protective equipment (PPE) during this outbreak.
- On March 23, 2020, the Governor issued [Proclamation 20-25 Stay Home—Stay Healthy](#) that requires people to cease leaving their homes except to conduct essential activities or for employment of essential services.

For the duration of the COVID-19 declared emergency, the board does not intend to strictly enforce the requirement in WAC [246-933-200\(2\)](#). Even so, veterinarians must exercise professional judgment to determine whether establishing a VCPR remotely is appropriate. For example, diagnosing and treating a condition that may not require a hands-on examination could be reasonable; diagnosing and treating a condition that requires a hands-on examination or diagnostic testing is probably not.