

Department of Health
Office of Investigative and Legal Services

Notice of Adoption – Policy Statement

Title: 2026 FIFA World Cup Events in Washington | HSQA-25-02

Issuing Entity: Office of Investigative and Legal Services

Subject Matter: The Secretary of Health will exercise enforcement discretion to allow health care providers with international licenses to provide care to players and staff participating in and supporting FIFA World Cup 2026 events in Washington state without holding a license from Washington state or another United States state or territory.

Effective Date: January 1, 2026

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OFFICE OF THE CODE REVISER
STATE OF WASHINGTON
FILED

DATE: January 13, 2026

TIME: 11:53 AM

WSR 26-03-029

Washington State Department of Health
Office of Investigative and Legal Services

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Policy Statement

Title:	2026 FIFA World Cup Events in Washington
Policy Statement Number:	HSQA-25-02
References:	RCW 18.71.021, RCW 18.71.030, RCW 18.130.190
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Effective Date:	January 1, 2026
Supersedes:	N/A
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Policy

It is the Secretary of Health's (Secretary) policy that enforcement discretion will be exercised to allow health care providers with international health care licenses in good standing to provide care within the scope of their licenses to players and staff participating in and supporting Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) World Cup 2026 events in Washington state without holding a license from Washington state or another United States (U.S.) state or territory. The Secretary takes this position because the care will be limited in both scope and duration and exercising discretion in this manner is consistent with the spirit and intent of existing licensing exemptions permitting providers licensed in other U.S. states or territories to practice in Washington state under limited circumstances.

Background

The Secretary received a request from FIFA to clarify the application of Washington law to health care providers with international health care licenses who will be providing care to players and staff while participating in and supporting FIFA World Cup 2026 events in Washington.

Applicable Laws

Under Washington state law, Revised Code of Washington (RCW) 18.71.021, no individual may practice medicine without holding a valid license to do so, unless an exemption under RCW 18.71.030 or another applicable law applies.

RCW 18.71.030(1) provides that a license is not required to furnish medical assistance in cases of emergency requiring immediate action. Additionally, RCW 18.71.030(7) provides that a Washington state license is not required for the in-person practice of health care by practitioners who are licensed by another U.S. state or territory in which they reside, provided that such a practitioner does not open an office or appoint a place of meeting patients or receiving calls within Washington state. This exemption does not apply to providers licensed in other countries. And RCW 43.70.117 authorizes persons licensed as health care professionals in another state or territory of the U.S. or the District of Columbia, but not licensed in Washington, to practice in this state on a limited voluntary basis provided the profession they practice is substantially equivalent to a profession regulated in Washington and they comply with the other requirements of the statute. This exemption does not apply to providers licensed in other countries.

RCW 18.130.190 gives the Secretary discretionary authority to take enforcement action to prevent practitioners who do not hold a Washington state license and are not exempt from licensure from providing health care services in Washington. Per RCW 34.05.230, this policy statement is advisory only and constitutes a written description of the Secretary's current approach to implementing RCW 18.130.190 governing practice without a license.

Analysis

Internationally licensed health care practitioners will provide care within the scope of their licenses to staff and players participating in and supporting FIFA World Club 2026 events. Those practitioners will not provide care to individuals who are not participating in or supporting FIFA World Club 2026 events, nor will they provide care in Washington on an ongoing basis. Thus, their practice will be narrow in scope and duration, and exercising enforcement discretion to permit this practice is consistent with existing exemptions that allow the limited practice of medicine in Washington by providers who hold credentials from licensing authorities in other states or territories.

Conclusion

The Secretary will exercise enforcement discretion to allow health care practitioners with international health care licenses in good standing to provide care within the scope of their licenses to players and staff participating in and supporting FIFA World Cup 2026 events without holding a license from Washington state or another U.S. state or territory. This policy statement does not apply beyond the circumstances outlined herein, and the Secretary retains all applicable legal authorities.