



When can a minor access health care without parental consent?

Introduction

Washington State's general age of majority for health care, meaning you can get healthcare services in Washington without an authorized adult's permission, is 18. You can read the state law about this at [RCW 26.28.010](#).

Parents may consent for minors. **"Authorized adults" also include:**

- Adult with court permission to make health care decisions for you (legal guardian or custodian, out-of-home placement order)
- Adult with parent's written permission to make health care decisions for you
- Adult relative who has signed a declaration that they are responsible for your health care
- In some circumstances, a school nurse, school counselor, or school homeless student liaison. You can read the state law about this at RCW [7.70.065](#).

If you are under age 18, you can get healthcare services without an authorized adult's consent if you are married to an adult (RCW [26.28.020](#)), or have legally emancipated from your parents (RCW [13.64](#)), or have been determined by a health care provider to be a mature minor (definition in chart below), or in some situations if you are homeless.

Minors can also get medical services without authorized adult permission in the situations listed here:

Service for unemancipated minor (not married to an adult and isn't a declared mature minor)	Can a minor consent to their own care?	Required to notify an adult?	Notes and Source
Emergency medical services	Yes, but only if no adult is readily available.	No	If no adult is readily available, you can get emergency medical services. RCW 7.70.050(4) .
Non-emergency medical services	<p>No, consent from an authorized adult is required unless <i>at least one</i> of these is true:</p> <p>1. The youth is experiencing homelessness and is not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian. RCW 7.70.065(3).</p> <p>2. The health care provider determines the youth is a Mature Minor capable of understanding the consequences of a medical procedure. The provider should evaluate the minor's age, intelligence, maturity, training, experience, economic independence, general conduct as an adult and freedom from the control of parents. <i>Smith v. Seibly</i>, 72 Wn.2d 16, 21, 431 P.2d 719 (1967).</p>	No	<p>If you are a homeless child or youth, you can get nonemergency, outpatient, primary care services either with the consent of a school homeless youth liaison, school nurse, or school counselor (RCW 7.70.065(2)(b)). If no such adult is available, see #1 in the column to the left. The services you can get include physical exams, vision exams and eyeglasses, dental exams, hearing exams and hearing aids, immunizations, treatments for illnesses and conditions, and routine follow-up care in an outpatient setting. (Elective surgeries are not included.)</p>

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<p>Immunizations, including for COVID-19</p>	<p>No, consent from an authorized adult is required unless <i>at least one of these is true</i>:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The youth is experiencing homelessness and is not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian. RCW7.70.065(3). 2. The health care provider determines the youth is a Mature Minor. See above section. 	<p>No</p>	<p>McKinney-Vento liaisons, school nurses, and school counselors can consent for immunizations under RCW 7.70.065(b)(i). If no such adult is available, see #1 in the column to the left.</p>
<p>Sexually transmitted infection testing/treatment (including HIV)</p>	<p>No, consent from an authorized adult is generally required unless you are 14 or older, or a Mature Minor (See above). However, your county's health program may test without consent from an adult.</p>	<p>No</p>	<p>If you are age 14 or older, you can get tests and/or treatment for sexually transmitted infections without an authorized adult's consent. RCW 70.24.110. Public Health—Seattle & King County will provide STI testing and treatment without authorized adult consent. To find out if your county offers STI testing without parental permission, contact your county's public health program.</p>

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Birth control services	Yes, you can get these services without consent of an authorized adult.	No	You can get or refuse birth control services at any age without an authorized adult's consent. RCW 9.02.100(1) . Depending on your provider, this might include puberty blockers and/or hormone treatment.
Abortion services	Yes, you can get these services without consent of an authorized adult.	No	You can get an abortion and abortion related services at any age without the consent of an authorized adult or the person responsible for the pregnancy. RCW 9.02.100(2) ; <i>State v. Koome</i> , 84 Wn.2d 901 (1975).
Prenatal care services	Yes, you can get these services without consent of an authorized adult.	No	You can get prenatal care at any age without an authorized adult's consent. <i>State v. Koome</i> , 84 Wn.2d 901 (1975).
Gender care	It depends. See note.		Depending on your provider, you might be able to get puberty blockers and/or hormone treatment at any age without an adult's consent as part of birth control services. Also depending on your provider, you might be able to get consultations related to gender identity if you are age 13 or older without an authorized adult's consent, as part of

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			<p>outpatient mental health treatment. The authorized adult will only be notified if you consent. RCW 71.34.530.</p> <p>You can also talk with your provider about whether they believe you are sufficiently mature to make your own health care decisions, under the Mature Minor doctrine.</p> <p>Normally a youth homeless shelter or a host home must notify your parents within 72 hours of your arrival that you are there. Starting July 23, 2023, if you are getting gender care, the shelter or home will contact the state child welfare agency instead of your parents. The state will then contact your parents about the possibility of reunification.</p>
Outpatient mental health treatment	No, consent from an authorized adult is required unless you are 13 or older, or a Mature Minor. See definition above.	Only if you consent	You can get outpatient mental health treatment if you are age 13 or older without an authorized adult's consent. The authorized adult will only be notified if you consent. RCW 71.34.530 . Depending on your provider, this could include

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			consultations related to gender identity.
Inpatient mental health treatment	No, consent from an authorized adult is required unless you are 13 or older, or a Mature Minor. See definition above.	It depends.	<p>Consent: If you are age 13 or older, you can get inpatient mental health treatment only, and not substance abuse treatment, without consent from an authorized adult. RCW 71.34.500.</p> <p>Notice: The authorized adult does not have to be notified if the adult can't be found or it would be harmful to you to notify the adult, but the provider must check to see if you are listed as missing. If so, the provider must contact the Department of Children, Youth & Families (DCYF). RCW 71.34.510.</p>
Outpatient substance abuse treatment	Yes, you can get these services without consent of an authorized adult.	No	If you are age 13 or older, you can ask for and get outpatient substance abuse treatment without an authorized adult's consent. RCW 71.34.530 .
Inpatient substance abuse treatment	Yes, you can get these services without consent of an authorized adult.	No	If you are age 13 or older you can admit yourself for inpatient substance use treatment without consent from an authorized adult. RCW 71.34.500 .

Get Legal Help

- **Apply online:** nwjustice.org/apply-online
- **Facing a legal issue in King County** (other than Eviction or Foreclosure)? Call 2-1-1 (or toll-free 1-877-211-9274) weekdays 8:00 am - 6:00 pm. They will refer you to a legal aid provider.
- **Facing a legal issue outside of King County** (other than Eviction or Foreclosure)? Call the CLEAR Hotline at 1-888-201-1014 weekdays between 9:15 am - 12:15 pm or apply online at nwjustice.org/apply-online.
- **Facing Eviction?** Call 1-855-657-8387.
- **Facing Foreclosure?** Call 1-800-606-4819.
- **Seniors (age 60 and over)** with a legal issue outside of King County can also call CLEAR*Sr at 1-888-387-7111.

Deaf, hard of hearing or speech impaired callers can call any of these numbers using the relay service of your choice.

Interpreters provided.

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