

The 2022 Supplemental Budget directed JLARC to evaluate how the Department of Health (DOH) administers laws intended to protect farmworkers from hazardous pesticide exposure. This is one of three farmworker-related studies underway at JLARC. Others address the H-2A program and enforcement of safety and wage laws.

Three agencies have pesticide safety programs to protect farmworkers

Three agencies operate programs that are intended to protect farmworkers from potential or actual pesticide exposure. In general:

- DOH investigates suspected cases of pesticide poisoning.
- The Department of Agriculture (WSDA) regulates pesticides and licenses those who use them.
- The Department of Labor and Industries (L&I) regulates workplaces and farms to ensure employers comply with pesticide safety laws.



Statute directs the agencies to coordinate their oversight and regulatory responsibilities. For example, WSDA and L&I both may investigate violations of safety laws. DOH also may investigate if a farmworker becomes sick from pesticide exposure.

Project study questions

The study will focus on pesticide safety laws and rules intended to protect farmworkers. It will not include pesticide laws and rules with other primary aims (e.g., environmental protection).

1. Do the DOH, WSDA, and L&I pesticide safety programs comply with state law and follow best practices? To what degree do they meet their intended objectives?
2. Do DOH, WSDA, and L&I provide information and conduct program activities (e.g., training, investigations) in the languages used by farmworkers?
3. How do DOH, WSDA, and L&I coordinate in areas of overlapping or shared responsibility? Are there opportunities to improve interagency coordination?

In accordance with RCW 44.28.076, JLARC staff determined that there are racial equity considerations for this study. They are included in the study questions above.

Study timeframe

Preliminary Report: January 2024

Proposed Final Report: April 2024

Study team

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