

State of Washington
JOINT LEGISLATIVE AUDIT AND REVIEW COMMITTEE
JLARC

STATUS REPORT

**Implementation of
State Auditor I-900
Recommendations
to the Legislature**

As required by Initiative 900

July 2023



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Initiative 900 requires the State Auditor’s Office (SAO) to conduct performance audits

In November 2005, Washington voters approved Initiative 900 (I-900). The initiative directs the State Auditor’s Office (SAO) to conduct performance audits of state and local government agencies.

SAO audits released in 2022 included two recommendations to the Legislature. The State Auditor released ten performance audit reports in 2022. As indicated in the table, two of these reports include recommendations to the Legislature. The Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee (JLARC) held a [public hearing](#) for each of the audits.

2022 SAO performance audit	Report link
1. University of Washington’s Procurement Contracts: Approving, tracking, and reporting	Report link
2. Evaluating Washington’s Ballot Rejection Rates	Report link
3. I-1163: Evaluating the Relevance of Required Training for Long-Term Care Workers	Report link
4. I-1163: Addressing Testing Barriers for Home Care Aides *	Report link
5. Prescription Monitoring Program: Evaluating system processes and program oversight *	Report link
6. Charter Schools: A summary of audit results, 2019-2021	Report link
7. Sexual Assault Kits: Assessing Washington State Patrol’s testing backlog and tracking system	Report link
8. Contracted Homeless Services: Improving how local governments prioritize services and manage provider performance	Report link
9. WSDOT Toll Collection System Replacement Project	Report link
10. Evaluating Customer Service at Washington’s Department of Employment Security	Report link

*Indicates a report that included recommendations to the Legislature

Initiative 900 requires JLARC to report the status of SAO’s recommendations to the Legislature

By July 1 of each year, JLARC must report the status of the SAO’s recommendations to the Legislature. JLARC does not report on the SAO’s recommendations to state or local governments.

JLARC staff review the status of the SAO’s recommendations after each legislative session. The review includes:

- New recommendations (i.e., those made in the calendar year before the legislative session).
- Unresolved recommendations from previous years. JLARC staff follow up on recommendations for a total of four years, unless legislative or other action is taken that resolves the issue.

Initiative 900 also states that “justification must be provided for recommendations not implemented.” Since no individual or entity can singularly speak to the reason for legislative action or inaction, JLARC staff could not identify sufficient and appropriate evidence to make definitive conclusions about why recommendations have not been implemented to date. In some cases, the information included in the JLARC staff summary comments provides context for the Legislature’s actions.

This report demonstrates JLARC’s compliance with the status reporting requirement for 2023.

Implementation status of the SAO recommendations to the Legislature

The table below summarizes the status of the SAO’s recommendations to the Legislature.

- **New:** The SAO issued two recommendations to the Legislature in 2022.
- **Unresolved:** The appendix includes the status of two recommendations that were unresolved coming into the 2023 legislative session.
- **Previously resolved:** These recommendations were addressed in status reports in prior years.

Definitions of the reporting categories used in the table are below. Please note that the categories were consolidated in 2022.

SAO Recommendations to the Legislature	Total	Implemented	Not Implemented		Other	
		<i>Adopted as presented</i>	<i>Bill introduced but not adopted</i>	<i>No formal action taken</i>	<i>Made different policy choice</i>	<i>Other circumstances</i>
New in 2022	2	1		1		
Unresolved from 2019, 2020, or 2021	2*			1	1	
Previously resolved from 2019, 2020, or 2021	4	2			1	1
Grand total	8	3		2	2	1

* The two unresolved recommendations are from a single report addressing K-12 Student Behavioral Health in Washington.

Reporting categories used by JLARC

Implemented

- **Adopted as presented:** The Legislature passed legislation to implement a recommendation in the manner presented by the audit.

Not Implemented

- **Bill introduced but not adopted:** Bills related to the recommendation topic were introduced, but not adopted.
- **No formal action taken:** No bills were introduced, and no legislation passed. In some cases, the Legislature may have held work sessions or discussions on the topic.

Other

- **Made different policy choice:** The Legislature passed legislation with a policy choice that differed from the recommendation.
- **Other circumstances:** Other circumstances have occurred that may impact the applicability of the recommendation (e.g., change to federal law, administrative rule, or executive branch program).

APPENDIX

RECOMMENDATION STATUS DETAILS

How to read these reports

Recommendation year – [2022 Recommendations

SAO audit title – [**I-1163: Addressing Testing Barriers for Home Care Aides**

Release date – [Released 9/8/2022

Details from
SAO’s audit

About the Audit

Long-term care supports people who need help meeting their health or personal care needs due to age or disabling conditions. However, maintaining an adequate workforce of long-term care workers has been a challenge for Washington. The COVID-19 pandemic significantly worsened the problem. Stay-at-home orders related to COVID-19 upended every aspect of the home care aide certification process. These orders resulted in nearly all state employees suddenly working from home, disrupted home care aide training programs, and prevented in-person home care aide testing for months.

A 2016 performance audit found that more than half of survey respondents who dropped out due to a barrier said they experienced a problem with the test. Reasons why applicants quit the process included problems scheduling the test and challenges getting to test sites. This follow-up audit revisited issues around the Department of Health’s efforts to reduce testing barriers for home care aides.

SAO Recommendation to the Legislature

To address delays between training and testing for home care aides, as described on pages 12-20 of the audit, SAO recommended the Legislature provide the Department of Health with similar authority and discretion in testing home care aides as the Nursing Commission has in RCW 18.88A.060 for testing certified nursing assistants.

JLARC staff status review and summary comments

JLARC staff
status review

Implementation Status
Recommendation #1: **Implemented** – Adopted as presented

JLARC staff
summary of
legislative action

Comments: E2SSB 5278 directed DOH to work with DSHS to devise a system that reduces delays between training and testing home care aides.

2022 Recommendations

SAO released two reports with recommendations to the Legislature in 2022. Each report included one recommendation to the Legislature, for a total of two recommendations to the Legislature.

2022 Recommendations

I-1163: Addressing Testing Barriers for Home Care Aides

Released 9/8/2022 | [Link to report](#)

About the Audit

Long-term care supports people who need help meeting their health or personal care needs due to age or disabling conditions. However, maintaining an adequate workforce of long-term care workers has been a challenge for Washington. The COVID-19 pandemic significantly worsened the problem. Stay-at-home orders related to COVID-19 upended every aspect of the home care aide certification process. These orders resulted in nearly all state employees suddenly working from home, disrupted home care aide training programs, and prevented in-person home care aide testing for months.

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SAO Recommendation to the Legislature

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JLARC staff status review and summary comments

Implementation Status Recommendation #1:	Implemented – Adopted as presented
Comments:	E2SSB 5278 directed the Department of Health (DOH) to work with the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) to devise a system that reduces delays between training and testing home care aides.

Prescription Monitoring Program: Evaluating System Processes and Program Oversight

Released 10/7/2022 | [Link to report](#)

About the Audit

The Department of Health's (DOH) Prescription Monitoring Program (PMP) began operating more than 10 years ago. Its goals include improving patient care, reducing the abuse of controlled substances, and helping medical professionals reduce overprescribing. This performance audit identified detailed steps that will help DOH improve the effectiveness of this program.

SAO Recommendation to the Legislature

To allow greater oversight of the PMP by independent state auditors, as described on pages 31-35 of the audit, the SAO recommended the Legislature amend state law so that independent state auditors, including the Office of the Washington State Auditor and the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee, can have the authority to access identifiable PMP data.

JLARC staff status review and summary comments

Implementation Status Recommendation #1:	Not Implemented - No formal action taken
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Comments:	No action was taken during the 2023 Legislative Session.
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Previously Unresolved 2021 Recommendations

2021 Recommendations

K-12 Student Behavioral Health in Washington

Released 6/22/2021 | [Link to report](#)

About the Audit

This performance audit evaluates how the public K-12 school districts are addressing student behavioral health prevention and early intervention, and the larger state system in place to coordinate and support these services.

SAO Recommendations to the Legislature

To provide greater state-level coordination and promote equitable access to students across the state, as described on pages 25-27 of the audit, the SAO recommends the Legislature:

1. Designate either the Health Care Authority (HCA) or the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) as the lead state agency tasked with ensuring student access to the continuum of behavioral health services in school settings.

This legislation should reference existing laws and requirements to prevent any duplication, overlap, or fragmentation of duties related to student behavioral health services. It should also include language to ensure school districts and educational service districts comply with all requirements.

2. Allocate funding to the lead state agency with requirements to:
 - Establish and maintain an advisory council with representatives from HCA, OSPI, educational service districts, school districts, and other key partners such as managed care organizations and community providers. The council's responsibilities should include:
 - Establishing strategic direction and goals for programming around the full continuum of services funded under this legislation.
 - Developing outcome and performance measures and reporting them to the Legislature annually.
 - Providing guidance to school districts and service districts on how funds can be used.
 - Provide flexible funding to educational service districts and school districts that will help them develop comprehensive behavioral health services to address the needs of their students, either directly in schools or through community partnerships.
 - Provide upfront funding to educational service districts and school districts seeking to become Medicaid behavioral health providers, as described on page 35 of the audit.

K-12 Student Behavioral Health in Washington, continued

JLARC staff status review and summary comments

Implementation Status Recommendation #1:	Not Implemented - No formal action taken
Comments:	The Legislature provided some funding for student behavioral health services to DOH, OSPI, and educational service districts but has not designated a lead agency to ensure student access to the continuum of behavioral health services in school settings.
Implementation Status Recommendation #2:	Other - Made different policy choice
Comments:	Although no lead agency was designated, the 2023-25 operating budget (ESSB 5187) contains appropriations for DOH, OSPI, and educational service districts relevant to student behavioral health supports.