



Enhancing Background Checks in Washington

Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee
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Audit Question

Question

Can an automatic notification system (called a rap back service), enhance Washington's current background check process, and if it can, what are potential barriers to its implementation?

Answer

Yes, a rap back service would enhance Washington's background check process, but state law needs changing and information technology upgrades are needed.



What is the problem? How does “rap back” work?

Foster parent example (current system)



With rap back automatic notification:



What we did

- Identified federal, fingerprint checks authorized in Washington by surveying state agencies that order these checks
- Interviewed FBI staff, officials from other states with a rap back service, and potential Washington users
- Compared DSHS background check data with criminal history records

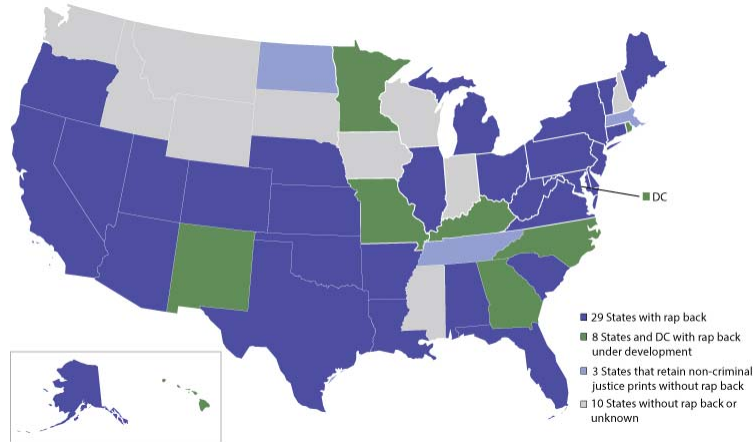
Our audit included the following positions:

- Behavioral Health Providers
- Residential Care Providers
- Aging & Disability Service Providers
- Childcare Workers
- Foster Parents



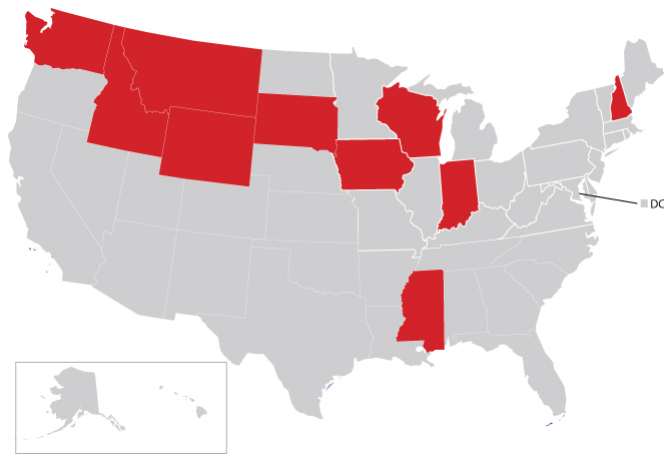
A rap back service is a nationwide best practice

Most states already operate or plan to operate a rap back service



A rap back service is a nationwide best practice


Washington is one of ten states that does not use a rap back service or retain civil fingerprints



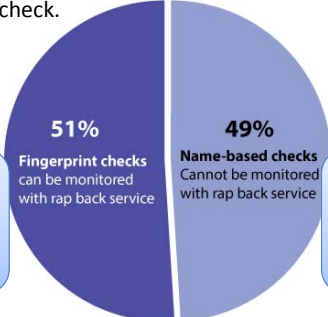
What we found

**To maximize rap back benefits,
more federal fingerprint checks are needed**

- Last year, about half of Washington background checks were name based, so couldn't be used for a rap back service.
- Only a federal check can detect out-of-state offenses. We estimate 3,000 people in our study had offenses occurring outside Washington.
- Other states found that, on average, 6% of applicants were disqualified solely on the federal background check.




- Foster parents
- Teachers
- Childcare workers
- Adult family homes




51%
Fingerprint checks
can be monitored
with rap back service

49%
Name-based checks
Cannot be monitored
with rap back service



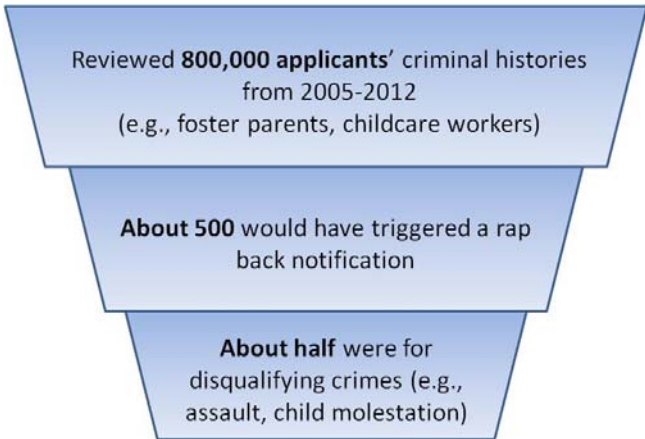
- Many healthcare professionals
- Unlicensed, subsidized childcare
- School volunteers



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What we found


**A rap back service would improve public safety in Washington
by more timely identifying new offenses for those in
positions of trust**



Reviewed **800,000 applicants'** criminal histories
from 2005-2012
(e.g., foster parents, childcare workers)

About 500 would have triggered a rap
back notification

About half were for
disqualifying crimes (e.g.,
assault, child molestation)



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Recommendations

To improve public safety, we recommend the Legislature:

- Revise state law to expressly allow the Washington State Patrol and Federal Bureau of Investigation to retain civil fingerprints.
- Authorize and appropriate funding for the Washington State Patrol to implement a state and federal rap back service as part of background check processes.

If the Legislature takes these steps, we recommend the State Patrol:

- Implement a state and federal rap back service as part of background check processes.



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