



STATE OF WASHINGTON
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL AND HEALTH SERVICES
Office of the Secretary | P.O. Box 45010, Olympia, WA 98504-5010

February 28, 2025

Eric Thomas, Legislative Auditor
Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee
106 11th Ave SW
PO Box 40910
Olympia, WA 98504-0910

Dear Mr. Thomas,

As requested in your correspondence dated January 13, 2025, the Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA) respectfully submits this formal response to the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee's (JLARC) *Processes and Staffing* report. We thank JLARC staff for their collaboration and willingness to represent all points of view. We thank the Honorable State Legislators who serve on the JLARC committee and look forward to collaborating in enhancing the mission and work of the Department and DDA.

We also thank the DDA Case Resource Managers and regional staff statewide who, despite their full workload, continue to show professionalism and dedication every day in supporting individuals' ability to live the life that they want to live.

We appreciate the identification of three recommendations to improve DDA timeliness, quality controls, and staffing in the draft report. Please find our response to each of the 3 recommendations. We concur with each of the recommendations.

1. DDA should develop and use performance metrics to evaluate how well its process works for clients and improve timeliness.
 - DDA agrees that a more robust system for evaluating how long it takes for eligibility determinations, the assessment process, and for an individual to begin receiving services is needed. DDA already tracks how long it takes for an eligibility determination. DDA also sends surveys to collect data from clients after an eligibility determination is made and after every annual assessment. Feedback is also received from clients through National Core Indicator surveys.
 - DDA does not currently track how long the assessment process takes or how long it takes for people to receive services but has already taken steps to collect data for both. As the report highlights, the consideration of making the evaluation process less bulky and easier for the individual to complete should be a part of DDA's systematic review of efficiencies.
2. DDA should implement quality controls to ensure the reliability and accuracy of data used for reporting and performance management.

- DDA identified these issues prior to JLARC's involvement and started assessing and implementing them in September 2023:
 - Development of an end-to-end procedure for the production and publication of information utilizing modern best practices.
 - Formal Business Requirements Documentation of all data queries.
 - Measures and methods to ensure data and information are properly prepared in accordance with Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act and Protected Health Information policies.
 - Formal quality code reviews performed by data analysts and engineers independent of DDA; and,
 - Initiatives to re-examine previously utilized data queries to discover and address any erroneous query logic.
 - As the report highlights, critical and overdue Information Technology investments affect many areas and are insufficient to meet the need. DDA is committed to process improvement within limitations of, and subject to, available budget and resources.
3. DDA should use a workforce planning approach to determine the number of case managers and other staff it needs.
- DDA has experienced an increase in positive client outcomes due to reducing caseloads but agrees that a workforce planning approach to detail our staffing needs would be beneficial.

Thank you again for your analysis, partnership and commitment to ensuring the success of the Department's vision of supporting individuals to find human services to shape their own lives.

Sincerely,



Cheryl Strange
Acting Secretary