

PERFORMANCE AUDIT

Work in progress: Audit description

Evaluating Success of the Restoring Quality Home Care Initiative (I-1163)

Home care aides provide support for people who need help meeting their health or personal care needs due to age or disabling conditions. They help their clients with eating, bathing, dressing and carrying out many activities of daily life, either in their clients' homes or in residential facilities.

To better protect these vulnerable people, Washington voters twice approved stricter qualifications for those who want to become home care aides, first in 2008 and again in 2011 with Initiative 1163. To become certified as a home care aide, applicants must submit to a more extensive background check, complete 75 hours of training, and pass two exams.

The eight earlier performance audits on this topic identified persistent challenges applicants faced in the certification process, including difficulty in scheduling tests and limited access to test sites. Our 2016 audit found that these issues can discourage people from becoming home care aides.

Due to these problems, and also considering the continuing shortage of long-term care workers in our state, the Legislature temporarily extended mandatory certification timelines. Legislators also asked the State Auditor's Office to determine whether this certification system is achieving its intended result: protecting the vulnerable people who depend on home care aides.

Preliminary scope and objectives

This audit will examine the success of this initiative and review the home care aide certification process to see if any changes might be made to better meet the needs of prospective home care aides and their clients.

The audit seeks to answer the following questions:

1. Has the home care aide certification increased the safety of Washington's vulnerable clients?
2. To what extent have home care aide certification requirements affected people's ability to obtain the support they need?
3. Has the certification process deterred potential home care aides from entering this field? What changes would improve the process?



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