



Office of the
Washington
State Auditor
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PERFORMANCE AUDIT

Report Highlights

Law Enforcement Training and Community Safety Act:

Progress on training

The nation's first police accountability law requires officers to take violence de-escalation and mental health training. It started as a citizens' initiative known as I-940 and became law in 2019 as the Law Enforcement Training and Community Safety Act. The Criminal Justice Training Commission administers this law. To fulfill its new responsibilities, the commission established training timing, content, duration and deadlines.

The commission was required to develop the curriculum and establish training cycle deadlines for continuing training. The 40 hours of training included 16 hours of mostly online, self-paced community and cultural awareness training and 24 hours of in-person patrol tactics training. The commission's "train-the-trainer" approach addresses the patrol tactics training. While it does not deliver the patrol tactics training itself, the commission supports this training by providing facilities and equipment at several locations around the state. This audit examined progress made by the commission and officers toward completing required continuing training.

While the commission has developed most required trainings, a more systematic approach would help future training development

The commission developed an extensive list of continuing training topics for legally required curricula, which it used to create more than 40 hours of available courses. Community and cultural awareness trainings cover most but not all topics required by law. For patrol tactics, the commission has fully developed training for all but one topic. However, better planning could have helped the commission develop all required topics and review its trainings. With a more systematic approach, the commission could develop future trainings more effectively.

The law requires compliance, but most officers did not make sufficient progress, and the commission lacks effective tools to ensure participation

The law requires all police officers to complete 40 hours of continuing training, but the deadline for completion depends on when the officer graduated from basic academy and received initial certification.

- As the graphic illustrates, only 16% of veteran officers completed 40 hours of continuing training; 42% are at least halfway through completing training required by the 2028 deadline.
- Furthermore, only 14% of new officers had completed 40 hours of continuing training by their required deadlines.

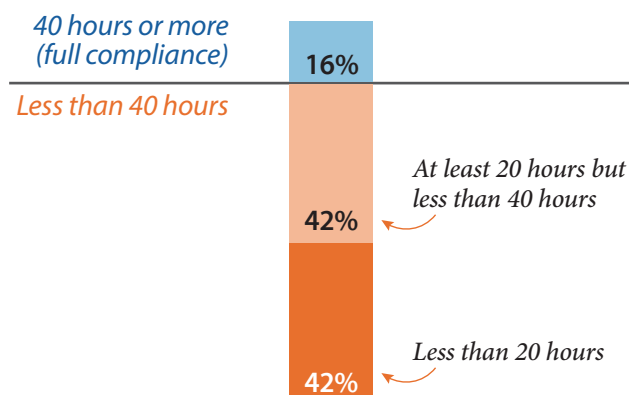
At the current rate of completing patrol tactics training, about half of all officers will be noncompliant in 2028 and beyond. The commission's train-the-trainer program for patrol tactics struggles in part due to low cooperation from police agencies. In addition, unenforced expectations mean the commission has few tools to encourage participation from uncooperative officers or agencies.

Police representatives offered their opinions about barriers to completing all required training. For patrol tactics, police agencies struggle to commit sufficient resources in terms of both cost and officer-hours for train-the-trainer program success. For community and cultural awareness training, two courses require in-person attendance, making them more difficult to schedule. Some officers are resistant to community and cultural awareness training for personal and political reasons. The commission's communication has also been ineffective, compounding barriers for police agency training managers and officers alike.

Lack of necessary data about officers' progress with required training makes it difficult to see whether legal intent is being met

The commission does not require or review compliance with the 40 hours of training, unlike its other programs. While it has data to determine officers' compliance, its reports do not provide this information. In turn, agencies face barriers to tracking their officers' training compliance using the commission's IT system: the commission's inaccurate due dates and incomplete instructions, and agencies' own uncertainty about program structure and varying capacity. Public accountability on officers' progress with the state law is key to meeting legal intent.

Percentage of veteran officers completing more or less than 40 hours of continuing training As of May 31, 2025; Out of 7,410 eligible veteran officers



Source: Auditor analysis of commission training data.

State Auditor's Conclusions

With the passage of Initiative 940 in 2018, Washington voters transformed police accountability in our state. For example, the standards of I-940 form the basis for our use of deadly force investigation audits, which are unique in the nation.

With this performance audit, we look at another aspect of this landmark law: increased standards for police violence de-escalation and mental health training. Applying both patrol tactics and cultural awareness trainings, the law's intended goal is to improve interactions between officers and community members.

We found that, for the most part, officers in the state are not meeting the requirements established in state law and administered by the Criminal Justice Training Commission.

This report describes obstacles to compliance with the law, including the commission's lack of enforcement ability. Police agencies described problems, too, such as the costs of attending training and covering local duty rosters while officers are attending courses, and the perceptions of some officers that the courses are not relevant. We also documented challenges particular to the training curriculum, including the possibility that the total list of complex topics – 46 – is overly ambitious for 40 hours of training.

Therefore, while the commission has created most of the training courses required, our analysis shows that just 16% of veteran officers and 14% of new officers have completed their required 40 hours of continuing training. At the current rate of officers completing patrol tactics training alone, half of all officers will be noncompliant in 2028.

Our recommendations include increased transparency through better public reporting of data showing officer compliance with the required training. Because many of the issues we identified are intertwined, we also recommend the Legislature convene a work group to address compliance holistically, encompassing officer feedback and financial support for law enforcement agencies to send officers to trainings; it should also clarify the consequences for police agencies and officers that have not complied with training requirements. By addressing the issues raised by our findings, Washington can continue to build better relationships between our law enforcement agencies and the diverse communities they serve.

Recommendations

We made a recommendation to the Legislature to establish a work group that includes stakeholders from the commission, law enforcement and the original citizens' initiative to make the necessary statutory changes to ensure all officers receive training. We also made a series of recommendations to the commission related to updating rules to better reflect current practices. We also recommended it create a project management plan for developing future trainings, improve communication with law enforcement agencies, increase agencies' ability to monitor compliance, and report publicly on officers' statewide compliance with required training.