



STATE OF WASHINGTON
OFFICE OF FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

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April 25, 2013

The Honorable Troy Kelley
Washington State Auditor
P.O. Box 40021
Olympia, WA 98504-0021

Dear Auditor Kelley:

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the State Auditor's Office performance audit report on Enhancing Background Checks in Washington. The Office of Financial Management worked with the Washington State Patrol and Department of Social and Health Services to provide this consolidated response.

Washington state agencies use background checks to assist with screening applicants applying for many positions requiring a level of public trust. State laws dictate which positions require background checks and how often checks should be performed. Statute also specifies whether background checks are run against Washington state criminal history data using the applicant's name and date of birth, or if the checks require a more accurate fingerprint check against state and federal criminal history systems. Background checks primarily include applicants for positions working with children and vulnerable adults. A secondary group includes applicants for a wide range of licensing and employment positions.

A "rap back" service has the potential to improve public safety and enhance Washington's background check process. Rap back services essentially retain and monitor fingerprints, and are able to provide real-time notifications of new criminal activity – both state and federal – to employers subscribed to the service. While the performance audit revealed start-up costs of \$300,000 and \$350,000 for annual maintenance, more information is needed about the potential costs to applicants and/or state agencies before the Washington State Patrol can begin offering a rap back service. State laws also would need to be changed to allow fingerprint checks to be stored and used in a rap back service.

We appreciate your collaborative efforts with the Washington State Patrol and Department of Social and Health Services during this audit and would like to thank the members of the audit team for their work.

Sincerely,

David Schumacher
Director

Enclosure



cc: John Batiste, Chief, Washington State Patrol
Kevin Quigley, Secretary, Department of Social and Health Services
Mary Alice Heuschel, Chief of Staff, Office of the Governor
Ted Sturdevant, Executive Director, Legislative Affairs and Policy Office, Office of the Governor
Wendy Korthuis-Smith, Acting Director, Accountability and Performance, Office of the Governor
Tammy Firkins, Performance Audit Liaison, Accountability and Performance, Office of the Governor
Dr. Donald Sorenson, Commander, Risk Management Division, Washington State Patrol
Jim Anderson, Administrator, Criminal Records Division, Washington State Patrol
Alan Siegel, External Audit Compliance Manager, Department of Social and Health Services

OFFICIAL STATE CABINET AGENCY RESPONSE TO PERFORMANCE AUDIT ON ENHANCING BACKGROUND CHECKS

APRIL 25, 2013

This coordinated management response to the audit report received on April 11, 2013, is provided by the Office of Financial Management on behalf of the Washington State Patrol and the Department of Social and Health Services.

RECOMMENDATION: To improve safety and enhance current background check processes, 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 authorizes civil fingerprint retention and participation in a state and federal rap back service, we recommend the Washington State Patrol:

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

RESPONSE

We agree that enhancing required background checks with a state and federal rap back service could be beneficial. However, more needs to be known about:

- The cost to applicants
- The cost to the state agencies that would use the service
- The state laws that would need to be changed to allow a rap back service to be used on fingerprint background checks.

Action Steps and Time Frame

- None applicable
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