

**Cabinet and Governor Appointed Agencies' Performance Audit Action Item(s) & Status****I-1163: Addressing Testing Barriers for Home Care Aides**

(See also [cabinet agency response](#) for full context to Washington State Auditor's Office (SAO) report, September 2022)

The Department of Health (Health) was included for this performance audit.

SAO Conclusion (summary statement): Prospective home care aides face a number of barriers to becoming certified in Washington. The report offers recommendations to legislators and the Department of Health.

SAO Recommendations to Health (Rec) Summary:

1. Introduce legislation requesting similar authority and discretion in testing home care aides as the Nursing Commission has for testing certified nursing assistants.
2. Work with the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS), the SEIU 775 Benefits Group, Prometric, and community trainers to:
  - a. Develop and implement a plan to integrate testing into training, allowing applicants to test at the same location where they train.
  - b. Allow remote testing within home care aide training programs, immediately after graduation or shortly after completion of the program.
  - c. Determine the benefits and costs of having home care aide training programs authorizing applicants to test instead of DOH.
3. Work with Prometric to allow applicants to schedule tests during training, so they can plan on testing shortly after completing training.
4. Develop objective criteria (such as applicant travel times and availability of testing for comparable professions) to determine how many sites are needed and where to locate; how often test sites should be available; if there are areas of the state where it would be best to provide stipends for travel expenses.
5. Based on the analysis described in Recommendation #4, determine costs for additional test sites; work with partners to establish test sites; establish protocols to apply for travel stipends; determine how often applicants' test are delayed due to insufficient testers and how much it would cost to subsidize; and work with the legislature to acquire the necessary funding.
6. Within a new or existing action plan, establish goals related to reducing time between training and testing and increasing the number of test sites.
7. Establish performance measures for the goals in recommendation #6.
8. Assign one of the two offices responsible for aspects of home care aide credentialing responsibility for monitoring overall length of time between training and testing.
9. Establish accountability mechanisms for the overall training to testing process.
10. In future contract amendments, comply with state law by including all key performance measures, defining what sufficient access to test sites entails, and moving towards a performance-based contract.
11. Detail the costs Prometric is expected to bear, and which are the state's responsibility, so contract management will not have to rely on the benevolence of the vendor.

The table below shows the current status of action items the agency initiated to address issues identified in the performance audit report. Please see the [cabinet agency response](#) for additional context and any additional steps already taken.

For an explanation of the columns below, [see the legend](#).

Issue/ Rec	Status	Action Steps	Lead Agency	Due Date	Current Resources?	Budget Impact?	Legislation Required?	Notes
Rec 1,2	In Progress	Work with DSHS, the Training Partnership, community trainers, and Prometric to evaluate the viability of integrating testing into training and allowing remote testing.	Health	Jan. 31, 2023	No	Yes – Depends on DOH role in pilot	Yes	<p>6/2024: DOH has met with community partners, DSHS, WABON, and stakeholders to form an implementation workgroup that is in the early planning stages. The workgroup is currently discussing aspects such as test site space, supplies and requirements, scoring matrices, and data sharing agreements with DOH.</p> <p>The exam vendor, Prometric, has been notified about the legislative pilot, indicating that it would occur in one or two locations and aiming towards rural areas where Prometric test sites have limited availability or test site locations. Prometric is currently updating the contract to include remote testing for the Knowledge exam.</p>
Rec 1,2	Completed	Conduct a cost-benefit analysis of having trainers (rather than the department) authorize applicants to test.	Health	June 30, 2023	No	Yes – Depends on DOH role in pilot	Yes	<p>6/2024: DOH worked with Prometric to determine if the home care aide training programs could notify prometric directly of an applicant’s authorization to test. Prometric does not have a system capability to allow for training programs to authorize. They will only contract with state agencies for this authorization. Implementation of moving the exam into the training programs would meet this goal. We hope that the pilot to move the exam into the training program will provide more information on the ability to allow training programs to authorize the exam within the next six to eight months. The workgroup is working to determine:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trainer and administrative expenses</li> </ul>

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								<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training materials and technology or resources required</li> <li>• Quality control, responsibilities/roles, and accountability</li> <li>• Data-sharing elements to DOH on approvals and/or exam results</li> <li>• Scheduling strategies or automation system(s) and whether DOH will be involved – discussed further with WABON.</li> </ul>
Rec 3	Completed	Work with Prometric, DSHS, SEIU, the Training Partnership and community trainers to allow applicants to schedule their own exam.	Health	June 30, 2023	No	Yes – change order fee	Yes	6/2024: In February 2024 Prometric launched their new online portal for applicants to schedule their own exams.
Rec 4,5	Completed	Conduct work sessions with Prometric, DSHS, SEIU, the Training Partnership, community trainers, and other interested parties to develop criteria.	Health	Jan. 31, 2023	No	Yes – Depends on DOH role in pilot	Yes	<p>6/2024: The workgroup looked into population density and geographical distribution of home care aides and applicants by county and zip code. The group considered input from other interested parties. Five counties (Clark, Cowlitz, Grant, Skagit, and Walla Walla) were initially considered. Since the initial stages of the workgroup, four new test site were opened, three in Clark and one in King counties.</p> <p>After a survey, the greatest stakeholder support was to incorporate the testing into the training. This would allow several benefits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Test proctored by trainers.</li> <li>• Feedback from applicants and trainers to adjust training/testing methods.</li> </ul>

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								<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce test anxiety which will increase pass rates.</li> <li>• Reduce lack of accessibility for test site locations and language services.</li> <li>• Delays between training and testing if testing immediately after training.</li> <li>• Additional travel time for the applicant to take the exam.</li> </ul>
Rec 4,5	Completed	Explore with our partners which agency could best administer a stipend program and the resources needed.	Health	Jan. 31, 2024	No	Yes – Depends on DOH role in pilot	Yes	<p>6/2024: Considering the costs and complexity to administer and manage a travel reimbursement or stipend program, all parties involved feel strongly that it is not within their purview to participate and be responsible for this service without established funds for the following resources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eligibility criteria</li> <li>• Application process</li> <li>• Fund disbursement</li> <li>• Monitoring and reporting</li> <li>• Supply and equipment</li> <li>• Full time employees (staff)</li> <li>• Technology</li> <li>• Contract or outsource services</li> </ul> <p>SEIU 775 Benefits Group requested a decision package.</p> <p>DSHS requested additional FTEs to manage the increased workload and administrative costs in order to help address direct services worker close gaps</p>

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								that include transportation assistance. The decision package did not pass.
Rec 4,5	Completed	Explore with our partners the cost and viability of supplying additional test sites.	Health	June 30, 2023	No	No	Yes	<p>6/2024: Working with our partners, it was estimated that \$40,000 would be needed to set up and start the testing component within the training program. It was noted that a pilot program must be completed to provide a more accurate figure which may be significantly higher. Basic set up costs would include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Start-up and maintenance costs for the facility</li> <li>• Space rental fees</li> <li>• Testing supplies and equipment</li> <li>• Adequate space for a minimum number of candidates</li> <li>• Trainer/proctor wages</li> <li>• Language/translation services</li> <li>• Technology</li> <li>• Available facilities for those waiting to test or to receive results</li> </ul> <p>Prometric has stringent test site requirements that may not be plausible for some training programs to test.</p>
Rec 4,5	Completed	Work with our partners to evaluate the requirement of having four applicants to conduct a test and determine what resources are needed to lower the four-applicant threshold.	Health	June 30, 2023	No	No	Yes	<p>6/2024: We hope that the implementation workgroup will accomplish these goals within the next six to eight months with the volunteer organization.</p> <p>The current exam vendor Prometric will not be able to reduce then number of minimum candidates for long periods of time, or only at specific locations.</p>

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Rec 6-9	Completed	Engage applicants and stakeholders for feedback on the customer experience to inform DOH's improvement efforts, performance metrics and accountability mechanisms.	Health	June 30, 2023	No	Yes – Depends on DOH role in pilot	Yes	<p>6/2024: Performance metrics and candidate satisfaction surveys were addressed in the change order request and will be added to the contract. Applicants now schedule their own test dates, so no metrics are available for time between DOH approving the application and the applicant scheduling their exam. This is up to the applicant.</p> <p>This will need to be addressed with the pilot within the next six to eight months. With these metrics in place, it will reduce the time between training and testing and potentially increase the pass rates.</p>
10-11	Completed	Identify performance measures to add in future contract amendment.	Health	Jan. 30, 2024	No	Yes	Yes	6/2024: Performance metrics and candidate satisfaction surveys were addressed in the change order request and will be added to the contract.
10-11	Completed	Evaluate and identify the costs and resources needed to support testing.	Health	June 30, 2023	No	Yes – Depends on DOH role in pilot	Yes	6/2024: An estimated \$40,000 would be required in order to set-up and start the test site process. We hope that the implementation workgroup will work to establish clearer costs throughout the pilot, to accomplish this goal within the next six to eight months with the volunteer organization.
10-11	Completed	Once the above actions are completed, DOH will put forward funding requests to ensure that implementation can be completed.	Health	June 2024	No	Yes – Depends on DOH role in pilot	Yes	The department recommends incorporating the test into the training program, which necessitates securing funding for successful implementation. The funding request is currently being developed, and a definitive answer will be

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								available once the pilot program is completed.