

Human Services: Reducing the burden of multiple audits. HB 2856

Testimony, House of Representatives

This bill was developed from a unanimous recommendation reported by the Government Efficiency Task Force, which included state, county and other local representation.

State funded human service programs are subject to multiple, often redundant, audits by various state authorities, counties, and other coordinating and funding organizations. Excess audits consume time and significant staff resources of public and private agencies. We're talking about services provided for children, seniors, adults with addiction or mental health issues.

We heard from organizations operating programs in many counties all around the state. Some say that they are gathering the same information for each site visit and each group of individuals review the same information when it comes to administration, financial management, human resources and client services.

- Homestead Youth and Family Services, in Pendleton, says: "These reviews have significant overlap in the site visits, facility features, operations and documentation they require. Each one costs us, and the reviewing agency, thousands of dollars per visit."
- Morrison Child and Family Services, in Portland: "During the past two years, 44 requests for desk audits from 4 state agencies."
- Klamath Lake County Youth Ranch, in Bonanza: "The agency is reviewed, certified, and inspected routinely by the following governmental agencies... " they go on to list 6 state agencies, 2 local, and other organizations and commissions.
- Springwater Transitional Living, in Milwaukie: "This program went through 6 reviews during a recent 12 month period, and 3 that looked at housing conditions."
- The Next Door: "Each year, my agency devotes a minimum of 720 hours of staff time doing the reports and staffing the audits. The duplication in these efforts costs our agency money that would be better spent directly on the children we serve."

So, the objectives of this bill are to:

Reduce the number and redundancy of unnecessary audits required by human service program providers,

Establish a uniform audit program for human service program providers, to the greatest extent possible, and

Provide ability for abbreviated, less frequent audits of programs with a proven track record of meeting audit requirements.

This bill requires the Department of Human Services to lead the work to coordinate among other state agencies, counties, and providers.

There are LOTS of things that create administrative burdens. Through their work on Continuous Improvement, the department has been looking into and starting to work on reducing administrative burdens in other system processes. With this bill the department is directed to work on getting improvement in this particular area, redundant audits and reports. "Audits" is used in a broad sense, and includes, for example, financial audits, program performance audits, and compliance audits. It also says that agencies shall share information with each other, to reduce the need to ask for the same information again.

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This kind of overhead is a cost to local providers, to local government, and to the state – every time another one of those required reports arrives in the mail and passes through how many desks. Without compromising oversight, we can reduce costs for the state and our local government partners, and we can make help our human service providers to what they want to do: provide services.