



Washington State Auditor's Office Performance Audit Description

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Prioritizing workload assignments at the Office of Fraud and Accountability

Program background

The Office of Fraud and Accountability (OFA), under the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS), plays a key role in government oversight by conducting investigations when it suspects or receives allegations of fraud or abuse of public assistance programs. Many of these fraud investigations are referred to OFA by other DSHS employees who make eligibility determinations of applicants for public assistance. Some legislators and recent media reports have expressed concerns about OFA's investigative procedures.

In 2011, DSHS hired a contractor to review OFA, then known as the Division of Fraud Investigations. The contractor released a report criticizing the agency's fraud-fighting operations and the organization's leadership. This led to a complete restructuring of the Office. DSHS replaced the Division of Fraud Investigations with OFA and appointed new leadership to run it. The Legislature put the new structure into law and made fraud investigations an OFA priority. Despite these changes, the office continues to face legislative and media scrutiny. Concerns include purging the backlog of possible fraud cases, and the timeliness of investigations.

The number of DSHS safety net program participants has increased greatly in the last several years. However, due to a lack of funding, the number of OFA investigators has not kept pace with the growing caseload. This and competing OFA priorities have potentially contributed to a backlog of fraud cases.

These issues prompted the Legislature to request a performance audit of the Office of Fraud and Accountability by the State Auditor's Office.

Scope and objectives

The performance audit will examine how OFA prioritizes and processes these cases.

The audit will seek to answer the following question:

- Can OFA reduce its backlog of fraud referrals by improving methods for determining the closing of cases, workload allocation, performance reporting and coordination with its partner organizations?

Timing

We estimate audit results will be released in summer 2015.