

PERFORMANCE AUDIT

Work in progress: Audit description



Office of the
Washington
State Auditor
Pat McCarthy

Law Enforcement Training and Community Safety Act: Progress on Training

Citizen Initiative 940, passed in 2018, sought to make Washington communities safer by requiring law enforcement officers to take trainings in violence de-escalation and mental health. Their purpose: to give officers better skills in resolving conflicts without use of physical or deadly force. I-940 was led by the Puyallup Tribe of Indians and De-Escalate Washington.

The initiative became law in 2019 as the Law Enforcement Training and Community Safety Act; among its provisions were the establishment of police training requirements. Included among the topics the trainings should address are: De-escalating situations that could lead to violence, interacting with people with disabilities or mental health challenges, the historical intersection of race and policing, and building trust with different cultures and communities. All officers are required to take this training within the first 15 months of employment, then every three years as part of continuing education. Officers who were already employed when the act took effect were required to complete their first cycle of continuing training by January 1, 2028.

The Washington State Criminal Justice Training Commission is responsible for developing and delivering officer trainings. The May 2020 graduating class was the first to have the act's requirements integrated into the basic law enforcement academy curriculum. However, the Commission's 2024 annual report to the Legislature and the governor stated that, at the current training rate, about 2,500 officers (from a total of about 11,000) would still be out of compliance by the 2028 deadline.

The Commission has opened three regional training centers since 2023, for a total of five academies. However, some community members are concerned that not all eligible officers would meet the training deadline. They were also interested in learning about the law enforcement officers and CJTC's training progress.

Preliminary scope and objectives

This audit will examine the progress made by the Commission and police agencies on training officers according to the act's requirements. It will determine the reasons for noncompliance or other barriers, and risks for officers and communities when training has not been completed. It will also consider what the Commission, police departments and officers themselves can do to increase compliance with the training law before the deadline. The audit seeks to answer the following question:

- What progress has the Criminal Justice Training Commission and law enforcement officers made on training as required by the Law Enforcement Training and Community Safety Act?

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