

# PERFORMANCE AUDIT

Work in progress: Audit description



Office of the  
Washington  
State Auditor  
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## Improving Washington's Human Trafficking Awareness Efforts

Human trafficking is an illegal trade that exploits people, often those who are more vulnerable. It is defined as using force, fraud or coercion to compel a person into any form of work. This work may be in the commercial sex industry, but labor trafficking also occurs in industries as diverse as hospitality, agriculture and domestic services. The secretive nature of the crime and a general lack of awareness of its characteristics mean people may not recognize human trafficking when they see it.

Washington state law currently assigns several state agencies specific responsibilities related to human trafficking awareness, including the departments of Commerce, Labor and Industries, Transportation, and Children, Youth and Families, as well as the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction. Some of them are required to administer awareness trainings for certain groups, for example Commerce's training for criminal justice personnel. Other agencies have requirements related to informational notices or posters. For example, the Department of Transportation must install posters at rest areas.

However, initial reviews of leading practices and tactics used in other states suggest Washington might have opportunities to expand its human trafficking awareness efforts and requirements. Increased awareness of the crime's characteristics and how to report it could help connect survivors with services they need and lead to more investigations that bring criminals to justice.

### Preliminary scope and objectives

This audit will assess Washington's state-level human trafficking awareness campaigns and trainings. We plan to evaluate how well selected state agencies meet relevant requirements and identify any challenges they face in doing so. We also plan to review leading practices and tactics used in other states to find opportunities to improve Washington's efforts to identify human trafficking.

The audit seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What state-level human trafficking awareness activities does Washington state law require, and which agencies participate in those efforts?
2. What practices related to human trafficking awareness do other states use or leading practices recommend?
3. How might Washington improve its efforts to identify human trafficking compared to state law, other states or leading practices?

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