

**RCW 74.04.012 Office of fraud and accountability.** (1) There is established an office of fraud and accountability within the department for the purpose of detection, investigation, and prosecution of any act prohibited or declared to be unlawful in the public assistance programs administered by the department. The secretary will employ qualified supervisory, legal, and investigative personnel for the program. Program staff must be qualified by training and experience.

(2) The director of the office of fraud and accountability is the head of the office and is selected by the secretary and must demonstrate suitable capacity and experience in law enforcement management, public administration, and criminal investigations. The director of the office of fraud and accountability shall:

(a) Report directly to the secretary; and

(b) Ensure that each citizen complaint, employee complaint, law enforcement complaint, and agency referral is assessed and, when risk of fraud or abuse is present, is fully investigated, and is referred for prosecution or recovery when there is substantial evidence of wrongdoing.

(3) The office shall:

(a) Conduct independent and objective investigations into allegations of fraud and abuse, make appropriate referral to law enforcement when there is substantial evidence of criminal activity, and recover overpayment whenever possible and to the greatest possible degree;

(b) Recommend policies, procedures, and best practices designed to detect and prevent fraud and abuse, and to mitigate the risk for fraud and abuse and assure that public assistance benefits are being used for their statutorily stated goals;

(c) Analyze cost-effective, best practice alternatives to the current cash benefit delivery system consistent with federal law to ensure that benefits are being used for their intended purposes; and

(d) Use best practices to determine appropriate utilization and deployment of investigative resources, ensure that resources are deployed in a balanced and effective manner, and use all available methods to gather evidence necessary for proper investigation and successful prosecution.

(4) By December 31, 2011, the office shall report to the legislature on the development of the office, identification of any barriers to meeting the stated goals of the office, and recommendations for improvements to the system and laws related to the prevention, detection, and prosecution of fraud and abuse in public assistance programs. [2011 1st sp.s. c 42 s 22; 2008 c 74 s 3.]

**Findings—Intent—Effective date—2011 1st sp.s. c 42:** See notes following RCW 74.08A.260.

**Finding—2011 1st sp.s. c 42:** See note following RCW 74.04.004.

**Finding—2008 c 74:** See note following RCW 51.04.024.