



STATE OF WASHINGTON
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

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October 30, 2023

The Honorable Annette Cleveland, Chair
Senate Health and Long-Term Care Committee
Post Office Box 40466
Olympia, Washington 98504-0466

The Honorable Marcus Riccelli, Chair
House Health Care and Wellness Committee
Post Office Box 40600
Olympia, Washington 98504-0600

Dear Senator Cleveland and Representative Riccelli:

I am submitting this information as required in [Engrossed Substitute House \(ESHB\) Bill 1120](#), codified as [RCW 18.88B.021\(3\)\(b\)](#), which states the Department of Health (DOH) may:

- (1) Adopt rules determining under which circumstances a home care aide may have more than one date of hire, restarting the person's 200-day period to obtain certification as a homecare aide; and
- (3) During a pandemic, natural disaster, or other declared state of emergency that impacts the ability of home care aides to complete certification, adopt rules to allow long-term care workers additional time to become certified.

This statute requires DOH to conduct a review of certification compliance with the above-referenced rules and provide a report to the legislature within 12 months of the termination of the pandemic, natural disaster, or other declared state of emergency. The state of emergency ended October 31, 2022. This letter addresses certification during and in the months following the end of the COVID-19 pandemic. Due to the waivers of certification timelines and requirements, there was no certification compliance to track.

Background

On February 29, 2020, Governor Inslee issued Proclamation 20-05 declaring a state of emergency in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result of the pandemic, home care aide test sites closed on March 13, 2020. To help ensure residents continued to receive care in their communities, the Governor followed up with [Proclamation 20-10](#) on March 13, 2020, which waived and suspended the following requirements until April 9, 2020:

- The 200-day period to obtain home care aide certification
- The requirement to submit an application to DOH
- The timeline to complete training

Proclamations 20-52 through 20-52.9 extended the waivers month-by-month. On January 19, 2021, House and Senate leaders signed [Senate Concurrent Resolution 8402](#), upholding the Governor's proclamations, waiving and suspending requirements until the end of the state of emergency and

[Proclamation 20-52.10](#) (also signed January 19, 2021) extended the waivers through termination of the state of emergency. DOH adopted emergency rules as needed through the pandemic to implement the waivers and suspension of requirements as authorized by ESHB 1120.

Training sites began reopening in mid-July 2020 with reduced capacity due to social distancing requirements. Testing was similarly impacted with reduced access impacting applicants.

To avoid thousands simultaneously seeking training and certification at the end of the state of emergency (October 31, 2022), DOH and Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) adopted and then renewed emergency rules to create cohorts based on date of hire or rehire with extended timelines to complete training and become certified. In addition, DOH has also worked with our vendor to increase testing opportunities, and the vendor has increased proctors and exam opportunities to meet the large wave of candidates.

Table 1 shows the due dates for training and certification, which can be found in [emergency rule WAC 246-980-011](#) filed on May 12, 2023:

Table 1

Worker hired or rehired during the time frame of:	Must complete basic training no later than:	Must be certified** no later than:
As Pandemic began 8/17/2019 to 9/30/2020	1/31/2023	8/31/2023
10/1/2020 to 4/30/2021	4/30/2023	11/27/2023
5/1/2021 to 3/31/2022	7/31/2023	11/27/2023
4/1/2022 to 9/30/2022	10/31/2023	2/27/2024
10/1/2022 to 6/30/2023	11/30/2023	3/28/2024
Beginning 7/1/2023	Standard training requirements	Standard certification requirements

Report of certification compliance

Due to the waivers of certification timelines and requirements, there was no certification compliance to track. However, Table 2 shows the impact on the number of applications received, certification examinations taken, and certifications issued for the one year preceding the pandemic and the three years of the pandemic.

Some attrition is normal between when an application is received (during the first 14 days of employment) and training completion (by day 120), as workers leave for various reasons. However, the four-month closure in 2020 followed by reduced capacity due to social distancing measures to reduce the viral transmission resulted in a much larger reduction in certification examinations taken.

Table 2

	Applications Received	Exams Taken*	Certifications Issued
Before the Pandemic 3/1/19--2/28/20	12289	8527	7581
During the Pandemic 3/1/20--2/28/21	8689	2968	2638
During the Pandemic 3/1/21--2/28/22	8377	3352	2662
During the Pandemic 3/1/22--2/28/23	8570	4067	3080

* Includes pass and fail results

Ongoing work

The department holds weekly calls with the test vendor, Prometric, and increasing test site capacity has been a top priority. Four new test sites, three in Vancouver (Clark County) and one in Skagit County, have increased testing capacity and provided critical access in areas that previously did not have a test site. Finally, Prometric continues to recruit additional proctors to further expand test site capacity.

For questions about this report, please contact Melissa Green, Executive Director for Home Care Aides, at melissa.green@doh.wa.gov or 564-669-3164.

Sincerely,



Shawna K. Fox, MA
Director, Office of Health Professions

cc: The Honorable Annette Cleveland, Senate Health Care Committee
The Honorable Marcus Riccelli, House Health Care and Wellness Committee
Amber Leaders, Governor's Policy Office
Christie Spice, Department of Health
Melissa Green, Department of Health