RCW 10.77.605 Competency to stand trial, admissions for inpatient competency restoration services—Performance targets and maximum time limits—Duties of the department—Report—New entitlement or cause of action not created—No basis for contempt or motion to dismiss. (1)(a) The legislature establishes a performance target of seven days or fewer to extend an offer of admission to a defendant in pretrial custody for inpatient competency evaluation or inpatient competency restoration services, when access to the services is legally authorized.

(b) The legislature establishes a performance target of 14 days or fewer for the following services related to competency to stand trial, when access to the services is legally authorized:

(i) To complete a competency evaluation in jail and distribute the evaluation report; and

(ii) To extend an offer of admission to a defendant ordered to be committed to the department for placement in a facility operated by or contracted by the department following dismissal of charges based on incompetency to stand trial under RCW 10.77.645.

(c) The legislature establishes a performance target of 21 days or fewer to complete a competency evaluation in the community and distribute the evaluation report.

(2)(a) A maximum time limit of seven days as measured from the department's receipt of the court order, or a maximum time limit of 14 days as measured from signature of the court order, whichever is shorter, is established to complete the services specified in subsection (1)(a) of this section, subject to the limitations under subsection (9) of this section.

(b) A maximum time limit of 14 days as measured from the department's receipt of the court order, or a maximum time limit of 21 days as measured from signature of the court order, whichever is shorter, is established to complete the services specified in subsection (1)(b) of this section, subject to the limitations under subsection (9) of this section.

(3) The legislature recognizes that these targets may not be achievable in all cases, but intends for the department to manage, allocate, and request appropriations for resources in order to meet these targets whenever possible without sacrificing the accuracy and quality of competency services.

(4) It shall be a defense to an allegation that the department has exceeded the maximum time limits for completion of competency services described in subsection (2) of this section if the department can demonstrate by a preponderance of the evidence that the reason for exceeding the maximum time limits was outside of the department's control including, but not limited to, the following circumstances:

(a) Despite a timely request, the department has not received necessary medical information regarding the current medical status of a defendant;

(b) The individual circumstances of the defendant make accurate completion of an evaluation of competency to stand trial dependent upon review of mental health, substance use disorder, or medical history information which is in the custody of a third party and cannot be immediately obtained by the department, provided that completion shall not be postponed for procurement of information which is merely supplementary;

(c) Additional time is needed for the defendant to no longer show active signs and symptoms of impairment related to substance use so that an accurate evaluation may be completed;

(d) The defendant is medically unavailable for competency evaluation or admission to a facility for competency restoration;

(e) Completion of the referral requires additional time to accommodate the availability or participation of counsel, court personnel, interpreters, or the defendant;

(f) The defendant asserts legal rights that result in a delay in the provision of competency services; or

(g) An unusual spike in the receipt of evaluation referrals or in the number of defendants requiring restoration services has occurred, causing temporary delays until the unexpected excess demand for competency services can be resolved.

(5) The department shall provide written notice to the court when it will not be able to meet the maximum time limits under subsection (2) of this section and identify the reasons for the delay and provide a reasonable estimate of the time necessary to complete the competency service. Good cause for an extension for the additional time estimated by the department shall be presumed absent a written response from the court or a party received by the department within seven days.

(6) The department shall:

(a) Develop, document, and implement procedures to monitor the clinical status of defendants admitted to a state hospital for competency services that allow the state hospital to accomplish early discharge for defendants for whom clinical objectives have been achieved or may be achieved before expiration of the commitment period;

(b) Investigate the extent to which patients admitted to a state hospital under this chapter overstay time periods authorized by law and take reasonable steps to limit the time of commitment to authorized periods; and

(c) Establish written standards for the productivity of forensic evaluators and utilize these standards to internally review the performance of forensic evaluators.

(7) Following any quarter in which a state hospital has failed to meet one or more of the performance targets or maximum time limits under subsection (1) or (2) of this section, the department shall report to the executive and the legislature the extent of this deviation and describe any corrective action being taken to improve performance. This report shall be made publicly available. An average may be used to determine timeliness under this subsection.

(8) The department shall report annually to the legislature and the executive on the timeliness of services related to competency to stand trial and the timeliness with which court referrals accompanied by charging documents, discovery, and criminal history information are provided to the department relative to the signature date of the court order. The report must be in a form that is accessible to the public and that breaks down performance by county.

(9) This section does not create any new entitlement or cause of action related to the timeliness of competency to stand trial services, nor can it form the basis for contempt sanctions under chapter 7.21 RCW or a motion to dismiss criminal charges. [2023 c 453 s 4; 2022 c 288 s 3; 2015 c 5 s 1; 2012 c 256 s 2. Formerly RCW 10.77.068.]

Findings—2023 c 453: See note following RCW 10.77.400.

Purpose—2012 c 256: "The purpose of this act is to sustainably improve the timeliness of services related to competency to stand trial by setting performance expectations, establishing new mechanisms for accountability, and enacting reforms to ensure that forensic resources are expended in an efficient and clinically appropriate manner without diminishing the quality of competency services, and to reduce the time defendants with mental illness spend in jail awaiting evaluation and restoration of competency." [2012 c 256 s 1.]

Effective date—2012 c 256: "This act is necessary for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health, or safety, or support of the state government and its existing public institutions, and takes effect May 1, 2012." [2012 c 256 s 14.]