



# Washington State Auditor's Office

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## Whistleblower Investigation Report **Washington School for the Deaf**

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November 30, 2015

Rick Hauan, Director  
Washington School for the Deaf

### Report on Whistleblower Investigation

Attached is the official report on Whistleblower Case No. 15-019 at the Washington School for the Deaf.

The State Auditor's Office received an assertion of improper governmental activity at the Agency. This assertion was submitted to us under the provisions of Chapter 42.40 of the Revised Code of Washington, the Whistleblower Act. We have investigated the assertion independently and objectively through interviews and by reviewing relevant documents. This report contains the result of our investigation.

Questions about this report should be directed to Whistleblower Manager Jim Brownell at (360) 725-5352.

Sincerely,

JAN M. JUTTE, CPA, CGFM  
ACTING STATE AUDITOR  
OLYMPIA, WA

cc: April Lynch, Human Resources Manager  
Governor Jay Inslee  
Kate Reynolds, Executive Director, Executive Ethics Board  
Jennifer Wirawan, Investigator

# WHISTLEBLOWER INVESTIGATION REPORT

## Assertion and results

Our Office received a whistleblower complaint asserting a school administrator for the Center for Childhood Deafness and Hearing Loss (Center) placed the health and well-being of students at risk by allowing individual staff members to continue to administer medications after making multiple errors.

We found no reasonable cause to believe an improper governmental action occurred.

## Background

The Center (formerly Washington School for the Deaf) is a fully accredited K-12 school for approximately 100 deaf and hard of hearing students. Students come from all over the state to attend school on weekdays and return home on the weekends.

The Center employs two full-time nurses who work in the Student Health Center. Due to the large student body and the number of extracurricular activities, it is impractical for a nurse to be present every time a student needs medication. Because of this, a school nurse will train staff in the administration of medication and delegate that duty to those trained staff members. These staff may administer scheduled, as needed or emergency medications. The delegates operate under the authority of the nurse's professional license and the nurse has the discretion to rescind the delegation at any time.

When an extracurricular activity is planned that involves students who take medications or have emergency care plans, the nurse prepares a first aid kit that includes all necessary medications and gives it to the delegated staff for that field trip. During the field trip the delegated staff must administer the medication to the student(s) within the prescribed time frame and document the medication administration on the envelope that had contained the medication. At the time our Office received this complaint, Center procedures required two delegated staff to be present when medication was administered.

When delegated staff makes an error in the administration of medication, the nurse documents it on a medication error report form. Depending on the severity of the error, the affected student's parents and physician may be notified.

## **About the Investigation**

We reviewed medication error documentation, Center procedures and email communications from September 2013 through January 2015.

We found the Center had approximately 25 staff medically delegated by the Center nurse. During the review period, six staff members were responsible for more than one medication error each. In four of these instances the nurse rescinded the staffs' delegation because of the errors. We did not find any medication errors that resulted in injury to a student.

During an interview, the subject said she has never done anything to influence a medical decision made by the school nurse. She said she does not decide who is trained for medical delegation or if delegation is rescinded.

We did not find any evidence the subject directed or allowed non-delegated staff to dispense medication.

## **State Auditor's Office Concluding Remarks**

We thank Agency officials and personnel for their assistance and cooperation during the investigation.

## WHISTLEBLOWER INVESTIGATION CRITERIA

We came to our determination in this investigation by evaluating the facts against the criteria below:

### RCW 42.40.020 Definitions

As used in this chapter, the terms defined in this section shall have the meanings indicated unless the context clearly requires otherwise.

(6)(a) “Improper governmental action” means any action by an employee undertaken in the performance of the employee’s official duties:

(iii) Which is of substantial and specific danger to the public health and safety.

(8) “Substantial and specific danger” means a risk of serious injury, illness, peril, or loss, to which the exposure of the public is a gross deviation from the standard of care or competence which a reasonable person would observe in the same situation.