



Office of the Washington State Auditor
Pat McCarthy

Whistleblower Investigation Report
Department of Social and Health
Services

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April 10, 2017

Patricia Lashway, Secretary
Department of Social and Health Services

Report on Whistleblower Investigation

Attached is the official report on Whistleblower Case No. 16-027 at the Department of Social and Health Services.

The State Auditor's Office received an assertion of improper governmental activity at the Department. 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.

If you are a member of the media and have questions about this report, please contact Assistant Director for Communications Kathleen Cooper at (360) 902-0470. Otherwise, please contact Whistleblower Manager Jim Brownell (360) 725-5352.

Sincerely,

Pat McCarthy
State Auditor
Olympia, WA

cc: Governor Jay Inslee
Andrew Colvin, Public Disclosure/Ethics Administrator
Kate Reynolds, Executive Director, Executive Ethics Board
Jennifer Wirawan, Investigator

WHISTLEBLOWER INVESTIGATION REPORT

Assertion and results

Our office received a whistleblower complaint asserting a Department of Social and Health Services administrator (subject) at the Lakeland Village Nursing Facility (facility) grossly mismanaged state resources by permitting staff to order and consume food intended for residents.

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

Background

The facility provides care for individuals with intellectual disabilities. Onsite cottages house eight to 12 residents each.

The main kitchen at the facility prepares and delivers three meals a day to the residents. In addition to the meals, cottage staff may order food from the main kitchen for snacks or for residents who do not want a particular meal.

About the Investigation

The complaint asserted that cottage staff were ordering large quantities of food for staff preparation and consumption. We examined all cottage food orders from June 1, 2015 through June 1, 2016, and found no evidence of excessive ordering.

We visited five cottages, surveyed the kitchen areas, including the contents of the refrigerators, cupboards and trash receptacles, and spoke with staff. We found minimal amounts of food in the kitchens. Staff said they only keep what they need for one or two days, enough to prepare food for the residents.

Witnesses said they have heard rumors that staff ordered food for their own consumption, but have never seen it. They said when a staff member works overtime they receive the same meal as the residents. This may appear as if a staff member is consuming resident food, when they are not.

We found there is no oversight or approval process for cottage orders and the main kitchen does not track the orders. The kitchen manager told us that in July 2017, a new system will be introduced that will require supervisory approval of each order and will track the orders.

The subject said he does not “micromanage” the kitchen manager and he has not witnessed cottage staff eating the residents’ food.

State Auditor’s Office Concluding Remarks

We thank Department 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.

(4) “Gross mismanagement” means the exercise of management responsibilities in a manner grossly deviating from the standard of care or competence that a reasonable person would observe in the same situation.