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**SENATE BILL 6344**

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**State of Washington**

**69th Legislature**

**2026 Regular Session**

**By** Senators Christian and J. Wilson

1 AN ACT Relating to establishing an office of fraud and  
2 accountability within the department of children, youth, and  
3 families; amending RCW 74.04.014; and adding new sections to chapter  
4 43.216 RCW.

5 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

6 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** A new section is added to chapter 43.216  
7 RCW to read as follows:

8 (1) There is established an office of fraud and accountability  
9 within the department for the purpose of detection, investigation,  
10 and prosecution of any act prohibited or declared to be unlawful in  
11 the programs administered by the department. The secretary must  
12 employ qualified supervisory, legal, and investigative personnel for  
13 the program. Program staff must be qualified by training and  
14 experience.

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

20 (i) Report directly to the secretary; and

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

5 (b) The director of the office of fraud and accountability shall  
6 establish a 24-hour citizen's hotline capable of receiving both  
7 telephone calls and text messages for complaints.

8 (3) The office of fraud and accountability shall:

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

13 (b) Recommend policies, procedures, and best practices designed  
14 to detect and prevent fraud and abuse, mitigate the risk for fraud  
15 and abuse, and ensure that department programs are being used for  
16 their statutorily stated goals;

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

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

25 (4) By December 31, 2027, the office of fraud and accountability  
26 shall report to the legislature on the development of the office,  
27 identification of any barriers to meeting the stated goals of the  
28 office, and recommendations for improvements to the system and laws  
29 related to the prevention, detection, and prosecution of fraud and  
30 abuse in department programs.

31 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 43.216  
32 RCW to read as follows:

33 (1) In carrying out the provisions of this chapter, the office of  
34 fraud and accountability established in section 1 of this act shall  
35 have prompt access to all individuals, records, electronic data,  
36 reports, audits, reviews, documents, and other materials available to  
37 the department of revenue, department of labor and industries,  
38 department of social and health services, employment security  
39 department, department of licensing, and any other government entity

1 that can be used to help facilitate investigations of fraud or abuse  
2 as determined necessary by the director of the office of fraud and  
3 accountability.

4 (2) The investigator shall have access to all original child care  
5 records maintained by licensed and unlicensed child care providers  
6 with the consent of the provider or with a court order or valid  
7 search warrant.

8 (3) Information gathered by the department or the office of fraud  
9 and accountability must be safeguarded and remain confidential as  
10 required by applicable state or federal law. Whenever information or  
11 assistance requested under subsection (1) or (2) of this section is,  
12 in the judgment of the director, unreasonably refused or not  
13 provided, the director of the office of fraud and accountability  
14 shall report the circumstances to the secretary immediately.

15 **Sec. 3.** RCW 74.04.014 and 2018 c 58 s 9 are each amended to read  
16 as follows:

17 (1) In carrying out the provisions of this chapter, the office of  
18 fraud and accountability shall have prompt access to all individuals,  
19 records, electronic data, reports, audits, reviews, documents, and  
20 other materials available to the department of revenue, department of  
21 labor and industries, department of children, youth, and families,  
22 employment security department, department of licensing, and any  
23 other government entity that can be used to help facilitate  
24 investigations of fraud or abuse as determined necessary by the  
25 director of the office of fraud and accountability.

26 ~~(2) ((The investigator shall have access to all original child  
27 care records maintained by licensed and unlicensed child care  
28 providers with the consent of the provider or with a court order or  
29 valid search warrant.~~

30 ~~(3))~~) Information gathered by the department, the office, or the  
31 fraud ombuds shall be safeguarded and remain confidential as required  
32 by applicable state or federal law. Whenever information or  
33 assistance requested under subsection (1) ~~((or (2))~~) of this section  
34 is, in the judgment of the director, unreasonably refused or not  
35 provided, the director of the office of fraud and accountability must  
36 report the circumstances to the secretary immediately.

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