



Office of the Washington State Auditor
Pat McCarthy

Whistleblower Investigation Report

Department of Social and Health Services

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**Office of the Washington State Auditor
Pat McCarthy**

June 30, 2025

Bea Rector, Acting Secretary
Department of Social and Health Services

Report on Whistleblower Investigation

Attached is the official report on Whistleblower Case No. 25-007 at the Department of Social and Health Services.

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 results of our investigation.

If you are a member of the media and have questions about this report, please contact Assistant Director of Communications Adam Wilson at (564) 999-0799. Otherwise, please contact Assistant Director for State Audit and Special Investigations Jim Brownell at (564) 999-0782.

Sincerely,

Pat McCarthy, State Auditor
Olympia, WA

cc: Governor Bob Ferguson
Andrew Colvin, Discovery & Ethics Administrator
Kate Reynolds, Executive Director, Executive Ethics Board
Aaliyah Gillett, Investigator

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WHISTLEBLOWER INVESTIGATION REPORT

Assertion(s) and Results

Our Office received a whistleblower complaint asserting a Security Guard at Western State Hospital falsified time sheets by leaving early, arriving late and not submitting appropriate leave.

We found reasonable cause to believe an improper governmental action occurred.

Background

The Department of Social and Health Services' Behavioral Health Administration operates three state psychiatric hospitals including Western State Hospital (WSH). WSH cares for adult psychiatric inpatients at its Lakewood campus.

As part of its building security measures, WSH uses KeyWatcher, which is an electronic key management system that tracks key custody in and out times for keys that access the lobby and certain vehicles. When security guards begin an assigned shift, they are responsible for logging into the system to pick up building keys and logging out of the system when they return their keys at the end of their shift.

WSH also uses the Scheduler system to track when security guards work. The Scheduler system documents when a guard was absent from work, or if they came in later than their scheduled shift. A security guard will contact the control officer if they cannot work their shift. The control officer will note in the Scheduler security log that the guard called out and then transfer them to the supervisor on duty. The supervisor will then note it in Scheduler. When reviewing the Scheduler log, we noted the subject's daily working hours were 10:00 p.m. to 6:30 a.m. Saturday through Wednesday.

The subject of this investigation works as a Security Guard within the forensic security department.

About the Investigation

We received a whistleblower complaint asserting the subject falsified their timesheets and was paid for time not worked.

To determine whether an improper governmental action occurred, we obtained and reviewed the following data for the period of December 2023 to December 2024:

- Subject timesheets
- Subject leave summary
- KeyWatcher audit user transaction report
- Scheduler log
- Security log

We also interviewed witnesses who confirmed that security guards must have keys on their person for the entire shift, so the KeyWatcher system should accurately record the start and end of employee shifts. The Department's policy states employees must return keys, but it does not explicitly state that employees must remove keys at the beginning of the shift.

We analyzed the KeyWatcher system's entry and exit times and compared the information to the subject's timesheets and leave usage.

We reviewed 284 working days during the investigation period and found:

- The subject arrived to work late or left early on 80 days (28%) totaling 199 hours
- The subject did not access the KeyWatcher system on a scheduled workday for 137 days (47%)
- Seventy-one days (25%) totaling 507 hours for which we were unable to determine when the subject worked because they did not return keys to the secured storage location or never removed them from the secured storage location

We also reviewed data from the Scheduler system and analyzed the following:

- Scheduler time in/out
- Hours worked per scheduler
- Timesheet in/out
- Hours worked per timesheet
- Variance between timesheet and scheduler
- Scheduler hours over/under timesheet
- Employee leave usage

We reviewed 284 working days during the investigation period and found:

- The subject arrived to work late or left early 18 days (6%) totaling 19 hours
- The subject did not work 138 days (48%)
- We were unable to determine when the subject worked for 16 days (5%) totaling 25 hours because they called out of work, but no leave was recorded for the time

We interviewed witnesses who said supervisors can manually change the times when security guards actually start and end their shift in the Scheduler system, depending on when they report to work. During our analysis, we found the Scheduler records reconciled with the timesheet more often than not.

When the subject calls out or does not show up for their scheduled shift, the Department assigns leave without pay (LWOP) for the employee. We found five days when the subject called out or did not show up for work and LWOP was not assigned.

During interviews with the Director of Security and the Security Supervisor, we noted the following:

- They both said the subject is supposed to submit her timesheet daily. However, she did not do so. If the subject does not submit her timesheet, another employee will submit her timesheet on her behalf, using unauthorized LWOP.
- They both said the subject takes her keys home regularly. Department policy states that employees must pick keys up when their shift starts and return them at the end; but the subject does not always follow the policy.
- They both said WSH has had issues trying to get the subject to show up for her scheduled shift. The subject calls out of work frequently.
- The Security Supervisor said the subject regularly makes incorrect entries on her timesheets. The Security Supervisor detects and manually corrected these errors.

We made several attempts to contact the subject for an interview, but she did not respond to our requests.

Based on our analysis and interviews, we found reasonable cause to believe the subject submitted erroneous timesheets and was paid for time not worked.

Department's Plan of Resolution

Thank you for the opportunity to review and respond to the State Auditor's Office (SAO) draft report on Whistleblower Case No. 25-007. The Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) appreciates the assistance of the State Auditor's Office in developing important facts in its investigation.

The Department will review the information provided by your office. In accordance with applicable collective bargaining agreements and agency policy, the Department will afford the employee an opportunity to respond to the Auditor's report. At that time the Department will take appropriate action, including any discipline deemed appropriate. The Department will notify the State Auditor of the outcome of its review and resulting actions.

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 42.52.160 Use of persons, money, or property for private gain - (1) No state officer or state employee may employ or use any person, money, or property under the officer's or employee's official control or direction, or in his or her official custody, for the private benefit or gain of the officer, employee, or another.

WAC 292-110-010(1) and (3) – Use of state resources - (1) Statement of principles. All state employees and officers are responsible for the proper use of state resources, including funds, facilities, tools, property, and their time. This section does not restrict the use of state resources as described in subsections (2) and (3) of this section.