

Letter from the Assistant Secretary



Every year I send a message to my staff reminding them to make sure the licenses of their personal healthcare providers are active and in good standing. This year, I wish to remind our stakeholders as well.

If you are seeing a healthcare provider for the first time, or if you want to research your current provider, you may first want to see if he or she has an active license. You can also learn whether the provider has been disciplined, and if so, why. But don't just stop with your regular family doctor. This is a great time to look up your osteopath, veterinarian, counselor, nurse, dentist, podiatrist, or any medical provider you intend to see for yourself, family members, or even pets.

You can get answers to these important questions about your providers by visiting the Department of Health's [Provider Credential Search](#). You can find healthcare provider or healthcare facility information such as name, license number and status, and whether we've taken disciplinary action against the individual or the facility. And if we have, you can view all of the pertinent legal documents. You can even find out if your local pharmacy or clinic has an active license. This is one of the most used applications on our website. Each month, we have 300,000 to 500,000 search requests.

Please remember to take care of yourself and your family during this heavy flu season. If a practitioner or facility has provided substandard care, you can [file a complaint](#) with the HSQA Customer Service Office.

Take care!

Karen Jensen

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Featured Performance Measure

Cost and time involved with recruiting healthcare providers

Recruiting healthcare providers is expensive and time-consuming. Healthcare facilities save time and money when their providers stay for many years. So learning what affects clinicians' decisions to stay or leave, and then acting upon that information, is vital for healthcare workforce managers.

In early 2012, we joined with 10 other states to study the retention of National Health Service Corps (NHSC) healthcare providers. NHSC is a federal program that awards scholarships and loan repayments to eligible providers who commit to serving at least two years at an approved site.

The goal is to learn what factors relate to people staying at the same location after their contract ends. There were 1,558 responses, including 187 from our state. Some of the key findings include:

- Nearly half the respondents plan to stay at their service site for at least three years after the end of their contract.
- Twenty percent say they plan to remain at least 10 years.
- Clinicians who were satisfied with management, salary/income, and access to specialists planned to remain at their sites the longest.
- But clinicians strongly motivated by NHSC's financial support were less likely to say they would stay at their service site.
- Good news for rural health: The fact their site was in an urban or rural county did not seem to be a factor in retention.

This information can prove helpful to employers interested in learning more about what affects a clinician's decision to quit or stay. The Department of Health will use this study to help our Washington State NHSC sites retain their clinicians.

The [complete report](#) is available on our website.

Updates

Updated website goes live! – The Department of Health’s new website went “live” on July 1, 2012. Since then we’ve had more than 10 million hits. Most of the people who visit the website live in Washington State, but there are tens of thousands more from throughout the U.S. and Canada who are turning to www.doh.wa.gov each month for information. But taking it a step further, our frequent visitors aren’t limited to just this continent. In the past six months our Web users have included: 25,000 people from South-east and Southern Asia; more than 12,000 people from Northern Europe; 6,000-plus users from Australia and New Zealand; more than 1,000 visitors from Northern Africa; and 48 people from Polynesia. You can send your feedback to: <https://fortress.wa.gov/doh/opinio/s?s=6365>.

Call for volunteers – We are again looking for members of the public to serve on 26 health-related boards, commissions, and committees. Some have immediate vacancies; others need a pool of qualified candidates for future openings. Appointees must be U.S. citizens and residents of Washington State. Regular meeting attendance is expected and is vital to the success of each team. Members are reimbursed for certain expenses related to travel, and are compensated for time spent at meetings and for other approved activities. Information and applications are available at 360-236-4887 or by visiting:

<http://www.doh.wa.gov/AboutUs/ProgramsandServices/HealthSystemsQualityAssurance/BoardsCommissionsandCommittees.aspx>.

Tobacco Quitline – In 2011, funding cuts eliminated the free [Washington State Tobacco Quitline](#). Then on July 1, 2012, the Washington State Legislature approved \$1.7 million to fund it for fiscal year 2013. The new funding from the Legislature, and from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, meant that we could once again provide help quitting for all interested adult tobacco users in the state. In the six months since restoring funding, 12,764 people used the quitline for help; 5,067 had Medicaid coverage or private insurance; and 7,697 were uninsured and would not have been eligible before. In the previous 12 months, 6,500 people had called but didn’t qualify for services. The benefits of quitting tobacco are immense and immediate. When a person quits, his or her body starts to respond within 20 minutes as positive health effects begin. Quitting lowers the risk of lung cancer, heart attack, stroke, chronic lung disease, and other cancers. The quitline (1-800-QUIT-NOW, 1-877-2NO-FUME in Spanish) provides free counseling, a personal quit plan, a quit kit, and referrals to local resources. Eligible callers can also get a supply of nicotine patches or gum.

Tsunami debris – The earthquake and tsunami that struck Japan on March 11, 2011, destroyed or damaged countless buildings, sweeping about 5 million tons of debris into the Pacific Ocean. While an estimated 70 percent of the debris sank near Japan’s shore, the remainder dispersed in the northern Pacific Ocean. Some of it has made its way to U.S. and Canadian shores, including Washington. There is no estimate of how much debris is still floating. While there is no longer a “debris field,” items are instead scattered across a vast ocean area about three times the size of the continental United States. Unfortunately, synthetic debris items such as Styrofoam, plastic, glass, metals, and treated wood wash up on our shores daily. You can report potential tsunami debris sightings by calling 1-855-WACOAST or going to DisasterDebris@noaa.gov. The [National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration](#) (NOAA) likes to know about debris sightings as soon as possible. Check out this recent story from the Peninsula Daily News: <http://www.peninsuladailynews.com/article/20130109/NEWS/301099992/officials-to-look-for-washed-up-debris>.

Teen Driving and the Role of Medical Providers – Car crashes are the leading cause of death for young people ages 15 to 24. In our state from 2006-2010, this age group incurred more than 51 deaths per year. Another 2,870 youths were injured badly enough to be hospitalized, some with lifelong disabling injuries. The crash rate for teens is the highest among all drivers, representing 6 percent of all drivers, yet they account for about 14 percent of all crashes per million miles driven. Healthcare providers have opportunities during well-child and back-to-school visits to talk with teen drivers and their parents about driving risks. Possible questions and related information from the Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia to help guide these discussions are available at: <http://www.chop.edu/professionals/childrens-doctor/articles/adolescent-medicine.html#assessing>. Additional information to support families is available at:

- www.teendriversource.org/support_parents
- www.aaafoundation.org
- www.allstatefoundation.org/teen-driving

Online renewals – More than 300,000 Washington State healthcare providers can now renew their licenses online. So far 66 of the 83 healthcare professions are included, totaling 310,958 providers. The plan is to provide 24-hour online access for renewals, seven days a week, by June 2013. Also by that date *new applications* for licenses will be available online for eight categories of providers.