

Letter from the Assistant Secretary

When I look around my yard I am starting to see the new life in the flowers, the buds of the trees and the fresh green leaves. It reminds me that summer is on its way. With summer comes outside activities, water fun, hot summer days and get-togethers with friends and family.



As we emerge from our houses and spend more time outside, we need to remember to be safe. The Department of Health has many resources for you and your families to use for summer safety.

The [Washington State Safe Kids Coalition](#) is a resource for children's safety. We have information on [water safety](#) and [bicycle safety](#). Our [Injury Prevention Program](#) has a comprehensive [safety guide](#).

Along with the new life of spring, we are also celebrating a long life of public health. This year is the 20th anniversary of the Department of Health. There have been many changes and challenges in public health over the years, but the same mission has been the backbone of all the work we do. We have been working to protect and improve the health of the people of Washington State for 20 years and I hope we will continue to do so for many years to come.

Karen Jensen

Karen Ann Jensen, Assistant Secretary
Health Systems Quality Assurance
Washington Department of Health

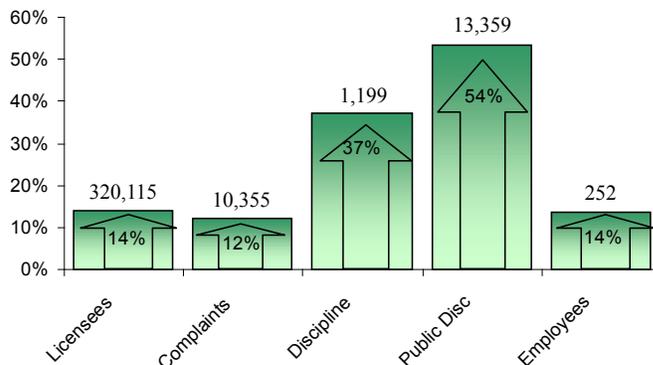
Budget News

We are reviewing our recently approved 2009-11 biennial budget. The budget reduces funding for some of our programs. These include emergency medical services, rural health care and other state funded programs. The budget did not include general fee increases for health profession and facilities licenses. It did add fees for a few new professions and to pay for specific legislation.

We are updating our revenue projections and examining what we will need to do to keep our budget in balance. We have already taken steps to maintain vacant positions until the hiring freeze ends, cut administrative expenses and reduce discretionary expenses such as travel and equipment purchases.

Featured Performance Measure

Rise in Disciplinary Workload



This measure shows the percentage increase for 2008 in workload and staff in the disciplinary process. Each has increased over the past four years. You can view the [overall discipline performance](#) and [performance by professional board or commission](#) on the [HSQA portal](#) of the agency [Internet](#).

Updates

Keeping Farmworker Housing Safe - We work with other agencies to assure safe housing for farm workers. Our department is now conducting pre-occupancy inspections of [temporary worker housing](#). We approve more than 200 facilities. They house nearly 9,000 workers and family members across the state. This helps prepare for the upcoming agricultural season. The inspections assure the housing meets health and safety standards before workers arrive. With the outbreak of the new strain of swine flu (H1N1), we began leaving English and Spanish information pamphlets for the workers.

Ambulatory Surgery Facilities must be Licensed by July - The department adopted new rules for [ambulatory surgical facilities](#) in April. This follows up on legislation passed in 2007. We worked closely with stakeholders to develop and refine the rules. These rules require each facility to be licensed by July 1. They must be regularly inspected. We estimate 125 facilities will be licensed under the rules. Additionally, the medical, podiatry and osteopathic medicine professions are developing office-based surgery rules. These rules will complement those for the surgery facilities. They are important steps in improving patient safety.

*This is a quarterly communication published by the Health Systems Quality Assurance division of the Department of Health.

Updates (continued)

Safe Rooms Important during Travel Season - Our department licenses and regulates nearly 1,700 [hotels and motels](#) across the state. They offer about 90,000 rooms. We regularly inspect them. This helps assure they meet health and safety standards. We encourage people to call our complaint hotline at 1-800-633-6828, if they have concerns about the cleanliness or safety of a facility. The public may also check the license status of a facility at <https://fortress.wa.gov/doh/providercredentialsearch/>.

Change in Adverse Events Reporting - Revised hospital licensing regulations became effective April 13. For more information and reporting forms, please visit our [Web site](#).

New Fingerprint-Based Background Checks - We now require fingerprint-based federal [background checks](#) for certain license applicants. These include all out-of-state applicants and some applicants with a criminal background history in Washington. We will notify the applicant if they are required to submit their fingerprints. Applicants submitting fingerprints should expect a longer processing time for their application.

New Counselor Credentials Coming in July - On July 1, 2009, we will have eight new counseling professions to replace the former registered counselor credential. Current registered counselors will have one year to transition to a new credential. The existing credential will be abolished in July 2010. New counselor applicants will apply for one of the new credentials depending on their type of practice. Additional information is available on the [registered counselor](#) Web page.

Certificate of Need Effort will Improve Applications and Rules - We are finalizing a major quality improvement plan for the Certificate of Need program. Under the plan, a team will update application materials to make them easier to complete and use for decisions. Staff will also begin a regular cycle of rule development to keep the rules up to date. Some of our rules have not been updated for many years. We expect to revise all of our rules over about five years. Nineteen staff worked on this project over the last 14 months. We expect to release the plan soon.

HSQA Internet Portal

We have begun updating all of the [health profession](#) and [facility](#) pages on the [HSQA portal](#) of the agency [Internet](#). We are updating these pages to make it easier for users to find information. We formed two workgroups to review the pages and determine how the new pages should look and feel. Usability statistics and agency standards were used to create the new page templates. The first pages to be completed by the health professions workgroup will be the [nursing](#), medical and registered counselor professions. We will then begin the transition for all other professions. [Ambulatory surgical facilities](#) is the first of the facilities pages to be transitioned. Keep your eye out for the updates.

Legislative Session 2009

Changes to Licensed Health Professions - The legislature created two new professions. These are speech language pathology assistants and genetic counselors. The legislature expanded the scope of practice for three professions. These include [health care assistants](#), [occupational therapists](#) and [veterinary technicians](#). They can now administer certain prescription and over-the-counter drugs.

Cost Recovery for Dental Discipline - Beginning in July the [dental commission](#) will assess cost recovery amounts against dentists who commit unprofessional conduct. This is on top of administrative fines. The change may lead to more cases going to hearing. The higher costs may reduce the number of dentists who voluntarily pay the cost recovery as part of a settlement. Several other professions are monitoring this situation and may introduce similar legislation.

Registered Counselors now under UDA - Our division's sole piece of agency request legislation passed without controversy. It places the eight new [counselor professions](#) under the [Uniform Disciplinary Act](#). The legislature created these positions in 2008 to replace the registered counselor credential.

Fee Raised for Impaired Physicians - [Medical physicians](#) had two changes. First, the surcharge for the impaired physician program was raised to \$50 for doctors and physician assistants. Second, retired active physicians living and practicing in Washington no longer have to pay licensing fees. They must continue to take 50 continuing education credits per year.

Tamper-resistant Prescriptions - Starting July 1, 2010, prescriptions must be written on tamper-resistant prescription pads. This will reduce the opportunity for alteration or other fraudulent activity.