



STATE OF WASHINGTON
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
101 Israel Road S.E • Olympia, Washington 98504

November 8, 2024

Dear Provider/Administrator,

The Washington State Department of Health recognizes that current credentialing backlogs for both Nursing Assistants and Home Care Aides may be causing hardships for skilled nursing, assisted living, and other home and community-based care settings, as well as those individuals attempting to become credentialed. The department issued a letter addressing credentialing timelines in March 2024, this communication is designed to provide further clarification and updates.

RCW 18.88A.040: [Registration and certification. \(wa.gov\)](#) states (in part) that no person may practice as a Nursing Assistant Certified (NAC) or Nursing Assistant Registered (NAR) without a credential from the department. Therefore, this statute requires the certification or registration by the department prior to performing work as an NAC or NAR; however, if employed as a long-term care worker and working in a defined Long Term Care (LTC) facility, the employee may begin work upon submitting an application i.e., Home Care Aide (HCA) certification to the department (see [RCW: 18.88B](#)); however, this employment may not include nurse-delegated tasks unless a NAR, NAC or HCA credential is obtained.

The department has worked diligently to reduce the credentialing backlog that was incurred during COVID waivers and other extended timeframes for training completion. This work has included hiring temporary credentialing specialists, and the realignment within the department of the credentialing unit, which has moved to the Office of Health Professions. These changes have resulted in reducing the backlog and improving credentialing timelines.

The NAC credentialing team has made positive strides to reduce application backlogs and have met the Department's goal of processing applications received within 5-7 business days. The backlog of processing NAR applications has been reduced by half in the beginning of November and are targeted to meet the Department's goal by the end of the month.

The HCA credentialing team has caught up to the Department's goal of processing the pending intake of *online* applications received within 5-7 business days. The paper application backlog has been reduced from 5,800 paper applications awaiting intake and processing to 1,969 applications currently awaiting intake and processing. At the current rate of improvement, we project that the HCA paper application backlog will be eliminated by February of 2025.

New streamlined services are in place with HELMS (Health Enforcement Licensing Modernization System) that allow for automatic issuance of these applications as part of the completed process for online applications, due to this efficiency, we encourage all providers to submit applications online, when possible.

We appreciate your patience as we continue to work to improve our credentialing processes and timelines for these important health care workers, we value their dedication to the care of Washingtonians.

Sincerely,

/s/ Harold Wright Jr.

Harold Wright Jr.
Deputy Director, Office of Health Professions
Health Systems Quality Assurance
Department of Health