STATE OF WASHINGTON
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL AND HEALTH SERVICES
Home and Community Living Administration
Residential Care Services • P.O. Box 45600 • Olympia, Washington 98504

06/10/2026

HCLA: NH #2026-025
Clarifying Background Check Requirements on Veteran Staff in Nursing Homes

Dear Nursing Home Administrator:

The Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) would like to take this time to clarify and provide guidance on the specific time requirements for when performing background checks on veteran staff (staff with longevity) in nursing homes (NH). DSHS recognizes that there is some confusion around the timeframe.

Washington Administrative Code (WAC) 388-97-1800 requires the nursing home to (a) have a valid criminal history background check for any individual employed, directly or by contract, or any individual accepted as a volunteer or student who may have unsupervised access to any resident; and (b) ***repeat the check every two years***.

NH background checks are required to be repeated every two years, which means that ***the nursing home must have a valid WA state name and date of birth (NDOB) check completed every 2 years from the date the previous one was conducted. In special circumstances, such as the suspicion of new criminal record or charge under 388-97-1800, a background check may be completed sooner than 2 years.***

In addition, some facilities conduct annual background check reviews on veteran staff on an annual basis rather than bi-annually but may choose to even though it is not an annual requirement.

Please also know that this is how Residential Care Services (RCS) Surveyors and Investigators conduct the facility personnel reviews and determine required time frames with background checks. This is not a new requirement, but clarification of the current requirement.

Thank you for your commitment to resident health and safety. For more information on background checks, please also refer to Dear Provider Letter NH# 2026-001. For questions related to the information in this letter, please contact RCSPolicy@dshs.wa.gov.

Sincerely,

Amy Abbott, Director
Residential Care Services

DSHS: *"Partnering with People"*