



STATE OF WASHINGTON  
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL AND HEALTH SERVICES  
*Aging and Long-Term Support Administration*  
*PO Box 45600, Olympia, Washington 98504-5600*

April 2, 2024

**AL TSA: AFH #2024-014**  
**AL TSA: ALF #2024-012**  
**AL TSA: CCRSS #2024-012**  
**AL TSA: ESF #2024-013**  
**AL TSA: ICF/IID #2024-009**  
**AL TSA: NH #2024-017**

**NAC AND HCA CREDENTIALING BACKLOGS**

Dear Administrator/Provider/Superintendent:

The Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) recognizes the current credentialing backlogs for both nursing assistant certified (NAC) and home care aides (HCA) is causing hardships for long-term care (LTC) facilities as well as for those individuals attempting to become credentialed.

Currently, the pending HCA applications include individuals who applied as early as 2020, who are moving through processes under the COVID-19 public health emergency rules. Pending NAC applications are being processed for initial review approximately 60 days after submission.

The NAC and HCA workforce is critical to the vulnerable adults served in LTC facilities and the Department of Health (DOH) is focused on addressing the credentialing backlog. A large portion of the legislative funding appropriated for credentialing in fiscal year 2024 is currently being directed to make improvements to credentialing processes within the DOH. Changes include adding additional staffing, development of improved performance measures, and organizational changes to better align with efficient and expedient process changes.

The DOH is working closely with DSHS and with contracted training and testing providers to make improvements to the larger system. Planned improvements include:

Home Care Aide Certification:

- Increasing the number of credentialing staff dedicated to processing applications from seven to 23.
- Automatic approval of HCA applicants to test as soon as the application is received, and the ability of applicants to self-schedule testing during their training.
- Adding four additional HCA testing sites across the state to improve access.
- Forming a workgroup to pilot moving the HCA exam into the training programs.
- Forming a workgroup to revise the HCA skills exam making it more relevant for working HCAs and assisting in capturing knowledge to potentially increase pass rates.

Nursing Assistant Certification:

- Increasing the number of credentialing staff dedicated to processing applications from eight to 12.
- Eliminating the requirement that applicants must take and pass the NNAAP skills exam prior to submitting a certification application.
- Expanding the skills exam location options and improving score result transferability.

Both NAC and HCA applicants are encouraged to submit applications online, rather than submitting paper applications. Online applications are processed faster than paper applications, therefore reducing wait times. To allow for simultaneous processing, NAC applicants are encouraged to complete their application at the same time they register with Credentia for the written and skills testing.

The DOH may be able to expedite applications for those individuals who are within two weeks of their credentialing deadline and submitted their application with all required documentation at time of hire. For assistance with this, please contact:

- Home Care Aide Program at [HomeCareAide@doh.wa.gov](mailto:HomeCareAide@doh.wa.gov) or 360-236-2700.
- Nursing Assistant Program at [HSQARReview4@doh.wa.gov](mailto:HSQARReview4@doh.wa.gov) or 360-236-2700.

Additionally, we would like to provide you with some information on the DOH HELMS project:

**What is HELMS?** Healthcare Enforcement and Licensing Management System (HELMS) is a new electronic licensing system that will replace the outdated system currently in use and will match the growing requirements and expectations of customers.

**What are the benefits?** HELMS will expand the online capabilities for health care providers, facility operations, educational programs, and the public. There will be greater access to DOH data, as well as faster transmission of information using email and websites. For example, HELMS will:

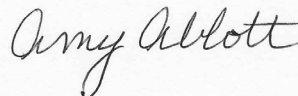
- Modernize credentialing services, processes, and capabilities.
- Expand mobile capabilities for the professions and the public.

**When is HELMS launching?** The first release, HELMS Lite, is scheduled to launch on **4/24/2024**. It will replace the current initial application process.

For more information, please visit the [website](#), sign-up for [Gov Delivery Bulletins](#) (Subscription topic: HELMS) or email at [HELMS@doh.wa.gov](mailto:HELMS@doh.wa.gov).

If you have any questions, please contact Tamara Tredo, at [RCSPolicy@dshs.wa.gov](mailto:RCSPolicy@dshs.wa.gov).

Sincerely,



Amy Abbott, Director  
Residential Care Services

DSHS: “Transforming Lives”