Washington State Institute for Public Policy

Current Projects

Cannabis

Cannabis Legalization Evaluation

In November 2012, Washington State voters passed Initiative 502 to regulate and tax the use and sale of cannabis for persons twenty-one years of age and older. As part of I-502, WSIPP was directed to "conduct cost-benefit evaluations of the implementation" of the law. The evaluations must include measures of impacts on public health, public safety, cannabis use, the economy, the criminal justice system, and state and local costs and revenues.

A preliminary report was released in September 2015. The second required report was released in September 2017, and the third required report was released in September 2023. The last mandated report is due in 2032.

Previous Findings
Supplemental to the ongoing benefit-cost evaluation of cannabis legalization authorized by Initiative 502 in 2012, the 2018 Washington State Legislature directed WSIPP to conduct additional cannabis research. WSIPP was directed to update its inventory of programs for the prevention and treatment of youth cannabis use; examine current data collection methods measuring the use of cannabis by youth and potential ways to improve on these methods; and identify effective methods used to reduce or eliminate the unlicensed cultivation or distribution of marijuana in jurisdictions with existing legal marijuana markets.

Related reports:
Monitoring Trends in Use Prior to Implementation of I-502 and Employment and Wage Earnings in Licensed Marijuana Businesses.

Recent Findings
Initiative 502 and Cannabis-Related Public Health and Safety Outcomes: Third Required Report
We describe findings from analyses of the relationship between non-medical cannabis legalization or licensed retail operations and various outcomes. First, we examined how cannabis possession misdemeanor conviction rates changed in Washington after the passage of I-502. Second, we examined how reported cannabis use has changed in Washington after the passage of I-502 compared to non-legalizing states. Last, we specifically focused on the impact of local access to licensed non-medical retailers. For these analyses, we examined how retail access relates to substance abuse and traffic safety outcomes within the state over time.

Reported Substance Use: Using national survey data, we compared changes in the rates of reported cannabis, alcohol, and other substance use in Washington after the enactment of I-502 and the start of a licensed retail market, relative to changes in comparable states that did not legalize non-medical cannabis.

Cannabis-Related Convictions: We examined how rates of cannabis possession misdemeanor convictions have changed since the enactment of I-502. We examined conviction rates separately for different ages, sex, and racial groups.

Traffic Fatalities: We examined the relationship between greater access to licensed non-medical cannabis retailers and the prevalence of fatal traffic collisions. We also examined the relationship between retail accessibility and the prevalence of drivers involved in a fatal crash who test positive for THC both alone and in combination with alcohol.

Substance Use Disorder Diagnoses: We examined the relationship between greater access to licensed non-medical cannabis retailers and the probability of cannabis use disorder, alcohol use disorder, or opioid use disorder diagnoses.

High School Outcomes: We examined the relationship between school proximity to an operational non-medical cannabis retailer and high school outcomes, including attendance, disciplinary outcomes, and high school graduation.

Amani Rashid, (360) 664-9804

Criminal justice

Effectiveness of the drug offender sentencing alternative (DOSA)

The 2020 Washington State Legislature directed WSIPP to evaluate the effectiveness of the drug offender sentencing alternative (DOSA). DOSA allows individuals to participate in treatment and community supervision in lieu of some (Prison DOSA) or all (Residential DOSA) of their incarceration sentence. This evaluation will examine whether participation in DOSA reduces recidivism and whether those effects vary for prison- and residential-based DOSA programs. The legislature directed WSIPP to repeat these evaluations on a regular schedule to continuously monitor the effects of the program.An introduction to the ongoing report series that describes the development of DOSA can be found here. The initial evaluation report can be found here. Additional evaluation reports are due to the governor and the legislature on November 1, 2028, and every five years thereafter.

Nathan Adams, (360) 664-9070

Creating Prison to Postsecondary Education Pathways

The 2021 Legislature passed 2SHB 1044 expanding the types of postsecondary education programs eligible for state funding in the Department of Corrections' (DOC) incarceration facilities. The bill directs WSIPP to study recidivism, enrollment, and completion rates of incarcerated persons in the postsecondary education system after release from incarceration. The study will use data from DOC, the Washington Student Achievement Council, and the State Board of Community and Technical Colleges. The study must include the following:

- Patterns and effects on post-release enrollment and participation in the community and technical college sector by individuals who, while incarcerated, participated in postsecondary education;
- Differential outcomes for individuals participating in different types of postsecondary education courses, certificates, and degree programs;
- Changes in enrollment and completion of postsecondary education courses, certificate programs, and degree programs due to the expansion in postsecondary education programming; and
- Recidivism outcomes other than incarceration for those individuals who participated in postsecondary education while incarcerated.

A preliminary report is due to the Legislature on October 1, 2024, and a final report is due October 1, 2027.

Julia Cramer, (360) 664-9073

Evaluation of the Reentry Community Services Program

The 2021 Legislature passed E2SSB 5304 which modified the state's Reentry Community Services (RCS) program. The bill includes an assignment for WSIPP to update its evaluation of the RCS program and to broaden its benefit-cost analysis to include impacts on the use of public services and other factors. In addition, the bill directs WSIPP to examine the potential cost, benefit, and risks involved in expanding or replicating the RCS program. Finally, the bill asks WSIPP to examine what modifications to the program are most likely to improve outcomes associated with program participation based on current knowledge about evidence-based, research-based, and promising programs. WSIPP will consult with the Reentry Services Work Group (administered by the Health Care Association) in 2022 to determine any additional research parameters for the final report.
The preliminary report can be found here. A final report was originally due November 1, 2023. In September 2023, the WSIPP Board of Directors voted to shift the deadlines to June 30, 2024.

Nathan Adams, (360) 664-9070

Jail and Juvenile Facility Study

The 2023 Washington State Legislature directed WSIPP to conduct a study of the Washington jail system and county juvenile justice facilities. As part of the study, WSIPP will contract with the Washington State Association of Counties (WSAC) to survey Washington jail and juvenile detention facilities. For more information on the elements that must be included in the survey, please see the study assignment language in the legislation linked below.
To the extent possible, the report should include the following:

- An examination of the availability of criminal justice training commission classes for corrections officers.

The report is due to the governor and the legislature by December 1, 2024.

Corey Whichard, (360) 664-9075

Exclusive Adult Jurisdiction

The 2018 Washington State Legislature directed WSIPP to assess the impact of changes to the Juvenile Justice Act (JJA), as outlined in E2SSB 6160. To the extent possible, the study should include impacts to community safety, racial disproportionality, recidivism, state expenditures, and youth rehabilitation.

The 2019 Legislature amended WSIPP's assignment to include an assessment of additional components contained in Sections 2-6 of E2SHB 1646. WSIPP must also conduct a benefit-cost analysis which includes the health impacts and recidivism effects of extending the JJA to include all offenses committed under the age of twenty-one.

A preliminary report was originally due to the legislature by December 1, 2023. In September 2023, the WSIPP Board of Directors voted to shift the deadlines to June 30, 2024. A final report is due to the governor and the legislature by December 1, 2031.

Morgan Spangler, (360) 664-9807

Evaluation of Washington's Housing Voucher Program

In 2022, the Washington State Legislature passed 2SHB 1818, which expanded the use of rental vouchers for individuals leaving incarceration in state prisons from three to six months. As a part of this bill, the Legislature directed WSIPP to conduct an evaluation and benefit-cost analysis of Washington's Housing Voucher Program, accounting for the new expansion to six months. The assignment directs WSIPP to consider not only recidivism outcomes, but also impacts on homelessness, use of public services, and other factors WSIPP deems relevant.
A final report is due to the governor and the Legislature by November 1, 2025.

Nathan Adams, (360) 664-9070

DOC Assessments and Charges

The 2023 Washington State Legislature directed WSIPP to review all assessments and charges imposed on individuals incarcerated in Department of Corrections (DOC) facilities and their family members and the effect of assessments and charges on the financial status of incarcerated individuals.
For more information on the items that must be included in WSIPP's review, please see the study assignment language in the legislation linked below.
The report is due to the governor and the legislature by June 30, 2025.

Nathan Adams, (360) 664-9070

Adult Corrections Inventory

The 2023 Washington State Legislature directed WSIPP to update its adult corrections inventory of evidence-based, research-based, and promising programs, and to expand the inventory to include new programs not included in the last WSIPP inventory. The update must focus on programs for incarcerated individuals in prison facilities, including family and relationships programs, learning and working programs, and therapeutic and support programs. WSIPP was directed to prioritize programs currently offered by the Washington State Department of Corrections (DOC).
A preliminary report will identify the programs currently offered in DOC prison facilities and list the new programs to be reviewed for the updated adult corrections inventory. The preliminary report must also indicate whether DOC programs have ever been evaluated for their effect on recidivism. The preliminary report was originally due to the legislature on December 31, 2023. In September 2023, the WSIPP Board of Directors voted to shift the deadlines to June 30, 2024.
A final report of the updated adult corrections inventory will also list programs currently offered in DOC prison facilities and will include a determination of each program's likely effectiveness in reducing recidivism based on WSIPP's analysis of available evaluation studies. The final report is due by December 31, 2024.

Rebecca Goodvin, (360) 664-9077

Evaluation of DOC Community Services Experiment

After individuals are transferred out of incarceration to partial confinement or released to the community, case managers refer these individuals to reentry service providers. The Washington State Department of Corrections (DOC) is conducting an experiment to examine methods to increase access to community providers to reduce the likelihood of recidivism. WSIPP's Board of Directors approved a contract with DOC for WSIPP to evaluate this experiment. The final report is due December 1, 2025.

Travis Taniguchi, (360) 664-9805

Contracting Processes of Correctional Industries

The 2023 Washington State Legislature directed WSIPP to study the contracting practices for goods and services and manufactured products made or offered by Correctional Industries (CI) to state agencies and others within the state. The report must address the following:

- Provide the number of individuals who have positions upon release that were obtained with skills obtained through work at CI.

For more information on the items that must be included in WSIPP's review, please see the study assignment language in the legislation linked below.
The report is due to the governor and the legislature by June 30, 2025.

Travis Taniguchi, (360) 664-9805

Employment/Welfare

The Needs of Farmworkers

The 2022 Washington State Legislature directed WSIPP to conduct a comprehensive study of the needs of farmworkers in the state to help policymakers determine whether those needs are being met by state-administered programs, policies, and statutes. WSIPP must focus on needs related to health and safety in the workplace, payment of wages, and preventing harassment and discrimination of, and retaliation against, farmworkers for asserting their rights regarding health and safety standards, wage and hour laws, and access to services. The information must be based on surveys or interviews conducted by Latino nonprofit agencies with well-established connections to farmworkers.
WSIPP must also examine how relevant state agencies coordinate with each other and federal agencies in enforcing the laws and policies related to farmworkers and review available data and research on programs intended to provide farmworkers access to services and benefits.
A preliminary report can be found here, and a final report is due to the legislature by June 30, 2025.

Cory Briar, (360) 664-9801

General government

Conservation District Elections

The 2023 Washington State Legislature directed WSIPP to examine the costs associated with conservation district elections under current law and the projected costs and benefits of shifting conservation district elections to be held on general election ballots. The study must include the following:

- An overall description of potential nonmonetary costs and benefits associated with switching conservation district supervisor elections to the general election ballots and incorporating the abovementioned changes.

A preliminary report was originally due to the Legislature by December 1, 2023, and a final report was due by June 30, 2024. In June 2023, the WSIPP Board of Directors voted to shift the deadlines to December 1, 2024, and June 30, 2025.

Cory Briar, (360) 664-9801

Health care

Traumatic Brain Injury Services

The 2023 Washington State Legislature directed WSIPP to study the potential need for developing specialized long-term services and supports for adults with traumatic brain injuries (TBIs). At a minimum, the study must include the following:

- Other states' methods to provide long-term services and support to individuals with TBIs including the rates paid for these services and a description of any specialized facilities established to deliver these services.

The report is due to the governor and the legislature by June 30, 2025.

Nathan Adams, (360) 664-9070

Hospital Staffing Standards

The 2023 Washington State Legislature directed WSIPP to study hospital staffing standards for direct-care registered nurses and direct-care nursing assistants. As part of the study, WSIPP must review current and historical staffing plans filed with the Washington State Department of Health (DOH) and describe the following:

- Relevant professional association guidance, recommendations, or best practices.

The report is due to DOH and the legislature by June 30, 2024.

Cory Briar, (360) 664-9801

Higher education

Evaluation of the Guided Pathways Model

The 2021 Washington State Legislature directed WSIPP to evaluate the Guided Pathways Model. Guided Pathways is a community and technical college reform that aims to improve student experience and outcomes through changes to academic program structure, advising, instruction, and progress monitoring.
WSIPP's preliminary report will review the implementation of the Guided Pathways Model in Washington and any available evidence of the effectiveness of the Guided Pathways Model. If possible, this report will also evaluate the effect of the Guided Pathways Model on early student outcomes, including, but not limited to, student retention and persistence, college-level English and math within the first year, graduation and transfer rates. The preliminary report was originally due to the Legislature by December 15, 2023. In September 2023, the WSIPP Board of Directors voted to shift the deadlines to June 30, 2024.
A final report will evaluate the effect of Guided Pathways on longer-term student outcomes including, but not limited to, degree completion, time to degree, transfer to four-year institutions, employment, and earnings, to the extent possible. The final report is due in December 2029.

Julia Cramer, (360) 664-9073

Pre-K-12 education

Community and Technical Education Skill Centers

WSIPP receives funding from the legislature to conduct research on K-12 education topics that are relevant to Washington. In 2024, WSIPP will study Career and Technical Education (CTE) skill centers. CTE skill centers are regional secondary schools that serve high school students across multiple school districts and provide programs that are too expensive or specialized for school districts to operate individually. WSIPP's report will focus on student access to CTE skill centers, student characteristics, and student outcomes such as graduation and employment. The report will be published by October 15, 2024.

Rebecca Goodvin, (360) 664-9077

LAP Inventory: Effective Practices to Assist Struggling Students

The 2013 Washington State Legislature directed WSIPP to prepare an inventory of evidence- and research-based practices, strategies, and activities for school districts to use in the Learning Assistance Program (LAP).

The state program provides supplemental academic support to eligible K-12 students achieving below grade level or not on track to meet local or state graduation requirements. LAP funds may support programs in reading, writing, mathematics, and readiness, as well as programs to reduce disruptive behavior.

An initial report was released in July 2014. Updates were published in July 2015, July 2016, June 2018, and July 2020. The inventory will be updated every two years thereafter.
WSIPP was scheduled to update the inventory in 2022. Instead of an updated, WSIPP assessed the use of the inventory. In the absence of the regular update, WSIPP published a historical review of the LAP inventory, describing potential changes resulting from 2021 legislation, and offering a discussion of options regarding the future of the inventory.

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Washington State Institute for Public Policy

The Washington State Legislature created the Washington State Insititute for Public Policy in 1983. A Board of Directors-representing the legislature, the governor, and public universities-governs WSIPP and guides the development of all activities. WSIPP's mission is to carry out practical research, at legislative direction, on issues of importance to Washington State.