

AG Investigations and Reform

THE PROBLEM

Systemic misconduct by law enforcement and local corrections agencies in Washington state erodes public trust and hinders effective policing. Existing mechanisms for addressing law enforcement and corrections misconduct are insufficient to ensure consistent, constitutional practices across the state.

THE SOLUTION

Clarifying and strengthening the Attorney General's authority to address systemic misconduct promotes transparency, accountability, and improved practices within law enforcement and local corrections agencies across Washington state. The ultimate goal is to enhance public safety, build trust, and ensure that these agencies operate in a manner consistent with the Constitution and the rights of all Washingtonians.

KEY PROVISIONS

EMPOWER THE ATTORNEY GENERAL TO INVESTIGATE AGENCIES

Grant the Attorney General the authority to investigate and initiate legal action against law enforcement and local corrections agencies for violations of the Washington State Constitution or state law, particularly when systemic issues within the agencies contribute to these violations. When an investigation is initiated, the AG will send a detailed letter to the local agency, explaining the process, what to expect, and request a meeting. The objective is to seek a remedy to address the issues as early as possible in the process.

FOCUS ON SYSTEMIC REFORM

The bill explicitly states that this authority is not intended to address isolated acts of misconduct or hold individual officers liable. It emphasizes seeking systemic relief to promote consistent, constitutional policing, detention, and incarceration practices statewide.

DEVELOP MODEL POLICIES FOR ACCOUNTABILITY

The bill mandates that the Attorney General develop and publish model policies for law enforcement agency accountability systems, including complaint procedures, investigations, discipline, and appeals. These policies aim to promote transparency, fairness, and effectiveness in addressing misconduct while upholding civil and constitutional rights

PROMOTE COLLABORATION AND AVOID DUPLICATION

The Attorney General is directed to collaborate with the U.S. Department of Justice to ensure efficient use of resources and avoid conflicts with federal investigations. The Attorney General must also consult with the Office of Independent Investigations to prevent interference with ongoing investigations.