

Auditory Screening Rules Hearing

Chapter 246-760 WAC

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June 4, 2025

Overview

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- Engagement and Rule Development
- Proposed Rule Changes
- Summary of Feedback and Staff Recommendations
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Overview of Washington Auditory Screening Rules

- Washington law requires that the Board make rules for the yearly hearing screenings done in Washington schools (RCW 28A.210.020).
- Chapter 246-760 WAC outlines the requirements for these screenings.
- Screenings are required for students in kindergarten, grades 1-3, and grades 5 and 7.
- Schools may expand these screenings to other grade levels if resources permit.
- The Board last updated the hearing sections of the rule in 2002 (vision screening sections were updated in 2017).

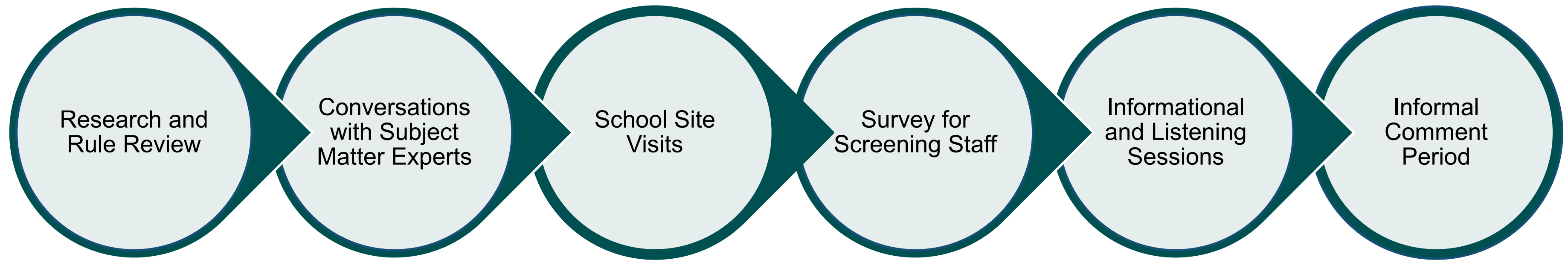


Rulemaking Background

- The Board received a petition for rulemaking from the Lake Chelan Lion's Club asking to add otoacoustic emission (OAE) screening technology to chapter 246-760 WAC.
- The Board accepted this request and directed staff to start the rulemaking process to explore options for possibly including OAE technology in the rule, and to make other technical or editorial changes.



Engagement and Rule Development



Proposed Rule Changes

Revisions to chapter 246-760 WAC include:

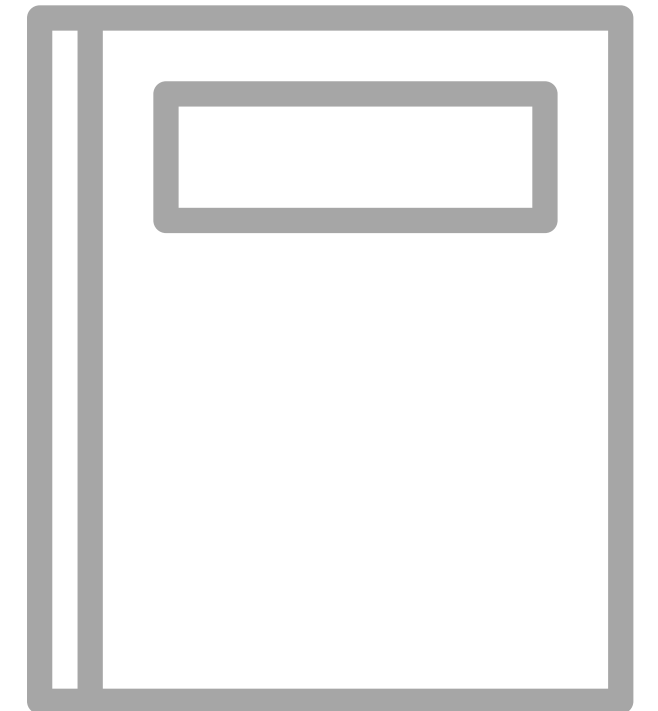
Updating hearing section titles and content to align with vision sections

Adding a new section, “Hearing Screening,” to align with WAC 246-760-070

Including definitions/abbreviations for hearing screenings

Removing deficit-based terminology and updating language for clarity

Updating ANSI standards for hearing screening equipment and including OAE devices as an optional screening technology



Public Comments

- The draft proposed rules and notice of rules hearing were published on April 22, 2025, under WSR 25-09-146 (CR-102).
- The public comment period ran from April 24, 2024, through May 23, 2025.
- Staff received comments from 9 members of the public.
- Based on the comments received, staff recommend 5 technical and clarifying edits to the proposed rules.
- Key themes from public comments included:
 - Support for OAE screening to better serve nonverbal students and reduce access barriers.
 - Equity concerns for rural, neurodivergent, immigrant, and refugee students.
 - Importance of informed consent and culturally responsive communication.
 - Need for consistent and clear terminology across WAC sections.
 - Preference for practical language that reflects real school conditions.
 - Appreciation for flexibility in screening tools and methods.
 - Suggested edits to clarify language, reduce administrative burden, and address access to care considerations.

Staff Recommended Changes

WAC 246-760-001: Purpose and application of hearing and vision screening standards for school districts.

- **Comment:** Why do the terms auditory and visual acuity remain in this section when they've changed in other places in this section and the WAC?
- **Staff Recommendation:** Update the terms in this section to maintain consistency with other proposed changes. Staff proposed changes: "Each board of school directors in the state shall provide for and require ~~screening of the auditory~~ **hearing** and **vision screening** ~~visual acuity~~ of children attending schools in their districts to determine if any child demonstrates reduced **hearing** ~~auditory~~ or ~~visual acuity~~ **vision** that may negatively impact their learning.

Staff Recommended Changes

WAC 246-760-030: Required and alternative hearing screening tools.

- **Comment:** (ii) 80 dB for transitory evoked otoacoustic emissions (TEOAEs). (b) For a pass result, the screening device must show a response at least three dB louder than the background noise at a minimum of three different frequencies, ranging from 2,000 Hz to 8,000 Hz. Recommended change: Remove [transitory], replace with [transient] transient evoked otoacoustic emissions.
- **Staff Recommendation:** Update to reflect appropriate terminology. Staff propose changing “transitory evoked otoacoustic emissions” to “transient evoked otoacoustic emissions.”

Staff Recommended Changes

WAC 246-760-040: Hearing screening procedures.

- **Comment:** Free of extraneous noise - should make it "in as quiet an area as possible." There is almost nowhere in our school to find a place free of extraneous noise. It is unrealistic to think that most schools will have an area fully free of extraneous noise. Even the quietest places I can find have fans I can't turn off, heating/cooling systems that noise, etc.
- **Staff Recommendation:** Update language to reflect comment. Staff proposed changes: (2) The screener shall: (a) Conduct screenings in an environment free of extraneous noise, **to the extent possible in a school setting.**

Staff Recommended Changes

WAC 246-760-050: Hearing screening referral procedures.

- **Comment:** (1) (c) If the student's results indicate the need for additional assessment or follow-up, the school shall notify the parents or legal guardian ((of the need for audiological evaluation if the student fails the second screening)) that a comprehensive audiological assessment is necessary. Again, schools generally get better results referring to the primary care provider. Many times the issue can be resolved at that level. And even if it can't be resolved by the Primary Care Provider (PCP), the PCP needs to make the referral to an audiologist for most insurance plans. We don't want to stick parents with bills for care that aren't paid for by insurance that would have been if they had followed the usual pathway. Maybe there can be language about a comprehensive audiologist exam when districts have an audiologist on staff whose job includes doing a comprehensive exam. Few do any more.
- **Staff Recommendation:** Propose updating the language in this subsection for clarity. Staff proposed changes: (c) If a student's results suggest the need for further assessment or follow-up, the school shall notify the parents or legal guardian that a comprehensive ~~audiological assessment~~ **evaluation may be required** ~~assessment is necessary.~~ **This evaluation may be preceded by a medical assessment to rule out other factors and to access audiology services as needed.**

Staff Recommended Changes

WAC 246-760-050: Hearing screening referral procedures (Continued).

- **Comment:** (2) The school((s)) shall notify parents or legal guardians ((of the need for)) if a medical evaluation is needed if: (a) ((Indicated by audiological evaluation)) The results of a hearing screening suggest it; or (b) ((A)) An audiological evaluation is ((not available)) unavailable. This seems at odds with section c. In c we are directing people to audiology. In this section we are directing them to medical care. Which is it? Few parents are going to do both based on what the school says. They are more likely to do the audiology based on what the provider says. “medical evaluation is needed”. Using language like that may put districts on the hook for paying for it. I’m guessing that no budget comes to pay for medical evaluations that school say are needed (as opposed to “we recommend that you follow up with a provider?”
- **Staff Recommendation:** Propose updating the language in this subsection for clarity. Staff proposed changes: (2) The school shall notify parents or legal guardians if a ~~medical~~ **comprehensive** evaluation is needed if: (a) The results of a hearing screening suggest it; or (b) **A school or school district does not have access to an audiologist on staff.** ~~An audiological evaluation is unavailable.~~

Next Steps

- A public hearing on the rules will take place after this presentation.
- If the Board approves the proposed rule, staff will file a CR-103 form with the Code Reviser.
- Staff will continue to offer technical support to OSPI and screening staff as needed.

Rules Hearing



THANK YOU

To learn more about this project, email Molly Dinardo at molly.dinardo@sboh.wa.gov
OR

**SCAN
ME!**



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