

Washington State Judicial Branch

2025-2027 Biennial Budget

Parents for Parents Statewide Operations

Agency: Office of Public Defense

Decision Package Code/Title: 1P – Parents for Parents Statewide Ops.

Agency Recommendation Summary Text:

The Office of Public Defense (OPD) requests funding to maintain the legislatively created Parents for Parents (P4P) peer mentoring program and stabilize statewide operations. OPD contracts with nonprofit Akin to engage community host organizations and county coordinators, and to serve as the P4P statewide technical administrator. Hiring and retaining the P4P coordinator position in each county has become increasingly difficult as available funding significantly lags behind livable wages. The P4P program also faces challenges in locating and maintaining quality host organizations. This is the first phase of a four-year funding proposal.

Fiscal Summary: Funding is requested to contract for P4P services statewide.

	FY 2026	FY 2027	Biennial	FY 2028	FY 2029	Biennial
Staffing						
FTEs	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Operating Expenditures						
Fund 001-1	\$1,250,000	\$1,250,000	\$2,500,000	\$2,250,000	\$2,250,000	\$4,500,000
Total Expenditures						
	\$1,250,000	\$1,250,000	\$2,500,000	\$2,250,000	\$2,250,000	\$4,500,000

Package Description:

Background and current situation

The 2015 Legislature passed and Governor Inslee signed SSB 5486 establishing the Parents for Parents (P4P) program. The legislation directed statewide implementation by the end of the 2019-2021 biennium. Current funding levels are inadequate to sustain stable statewide operations.

The P4P program is a peer mentor, education, professional training, and family reunification program that serves parents and their families involved in child dependency and termination of parental rights cases. P4P's primary components include: early engagement; education classes; and ongoing reunification support provided by parent allies who have successfully navigated the child welfare system. An independent evaluation found that 79 percent of parents who took P4P's Dependency 101 class and received additional mentoring reunified their families compared to 53 percent of non-participants. [Parents For Parents Outcome Evaluation Report](#), Trescher and Summers, (2020). Research also shows that P4P improves parent engagement in the dependency court process, increases the likelihood of family reunification, and decreases termination of parental rights for families. Despite inadequate funding causing 11 counties to be vacant of an active P4P program for more than six months in 2023, parents had meaningful interactions with the program 19,118 times that year.

Problem

Since the Legislature established P4P in statute 10 years ago, chronic underfunding has challenged the program's ability to sustain effective services in every county.

Hiring and retaining the P4P coordinator position in each county has become increasingly difficult as program funding significantly lags behind livable wages. According to the [National Low Income Housing Coalition's Out of Reach 2023 report](#), among the 21 host organizations providing P4P around the state, the gap between current coordinator pay and the livable wage with health benefits is nearly \$40,000 on average. In one county, this gap is as high as \$81,000. In addition, many host organizations are unable to hire the county P4P coordinators on a full-time basis to qualify them for employee benefits. The lack of a livable wage and benefits perpetuates the cycle of poverty that contributes to engagement in the child welfare system. Economic and material hardship (for example, having insufficient resources to meet basic needs, experiencing economic shocks, and experiencing housing instability) are some of the most consistent and significant predictors of child welfare involvement (Hunter & Flores, 2021; Kim & Drake, 2018, as cited in *Economic and concrete supports: An evidence-based service for child welfare prevention* (2023), Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago.)

The P4P program also faces challenges in locating and maintaining quality host organizations, particularly nonprofit human service organizations, in counties across the state. According to data about the sector, one in eight human service organizations is insolvent and 30 percent have been losing money on operations for three years or more. (<https://bravecommitments.org/2021/03/14/example-post-2/>). For nonprofit human service organizations, 75 percent of revenue comes from government contracts, but these contracts only cover 70 percent of direct expenses and 33-44 percent of indirect expenses. (<https://www.social-current.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/A-National-Imperative-Joining-Forces-to-Strengthen-Human-Services-in-America-.pdf>).

Six P4P host organizations have ended or reduced their local contracts in the past three years, impacting service delivery to 17 counties, and they indicated that this is due to a lack of adequate funding. Courts hosting the P4P program have also indicated that current funding levels are a significant challenge. Host organizations have attempted to secure other public and private resources to supplement the lack of state funding, with limited success.

Current state funding also does not fully support the program's statewide technical administrator, Akin (formerly Children's Home Society of Washington), to advance systemic outcomes, quality improvement, and data and evaluation that would benefit all P4P sites and demonstrate and promote statewide impact for the program. Alongside the local P4P programs, the technical administrator is vital to achieving the overall outcomes of family reunification and a decrease in out-of-home placement; these outcomes achieve significant long-term foster care savings for the state of Washington. In addition, dedicated positions with specific expertise for quality improvement, data, and evaluation are needed for P4P to continue providing high-quality services based on the voices of parents and communities.

A significant increase in funding is needed to stabilize effective statewide operations for this pivotal program that has been shown to increase reunification rates for families.

Solution

To provide a high-quality P4P program across the state, \$4.5 million in additional funding is needed over the next four years with \$2.25 million for the 2025-2027 biennium. This incremental funding approach is designed to achieve livable wages for local P4P coordinators, enhance administrative support for program host organizations, and support the technical assistance organization to drive systemic outcomes, quality improvement, and robust data evaluation across P4P sites. The ultimate goal is to elevate the program's statewide impact and ensure sustainable, equitable support for families involved in child welfare litigation in every county.

Fully describe and quantify expected impacts on state residents.

If P4P was reliably available to all dependency-involved parents throughout Washington state, more families would reunify, which would reduce out-of-home placement, adoption expenses, and the long-term health and social implications of family separation. An independent evaluation found that 79 percent of parents who took P4P's Dependency 101 class and received additional mentoring reunified their families compared to 53 percent of non-

participants. [Parents For Parents Outcome Evaluation Report](#), Trescher and Summers, (2020). Research also shows that P4P improves parent engagement in the dependency court process and increases the likelihood of reunification and decreases termination of parental rights for families.

Explain what alternatives were explored by the agency and why this was the best option.

OPD consulted with the contracted statewide technical administrator Akin (formerly Children’s Home Society of Washington) regarding the best approach to address ongoing funding challenges for P4P. OPD agreed to present a decision package because the P4P program is authorized in OPD’s enabling statute at RCW 2.70.060-100.

A total of \$4.5 million is needed to address the multiple challenges of statewide implementation, and it was decided to take an incremental approach over the next four years with \$2.25 million being advanced for the 2025-27 biennium. This allows for the technical administrator to create a statewide data, evaluation, and quality improvement structure to support all host organizations and increase capacity and stability in targeted counties with the highest dependency cases in the state.

What are the consequences of not funding this request?

Not funding this decision package jeopardizes the ability of P4P to stabilize effective operations statewide. Not funding this decision package likely will result in further reductions in the number of local host organizations and P4P coordinators.

Is this an expansion or alteration of a current program or service?

This decision package provides maintenance-level funding to support an existing underfunded program established in statute.

Decision Package expenditure, FTE and revenue assumptions:

Staffing Assumptions

Job Title Classification	#s of FTE Round to Nearest Tenth				Workload Assumptions/Description
	FY 26	FY 27	FY 28	FY 29	
No OPD FTEs					

Use Standard Costs?

No.

If No, Explain Additional Costs	Round to Nearest \$1,000				Description/Assumptions
	FY 26	FY 27	FY 28	FY 29	
Contracts	\$1,250,000	\$1,250,000	\$2,250,000	\$2,250,000	Contract with nonprofit Akin to administer the Parents for Parents program statewide, as provided in RCW 2.70.060-100.

PRP Projections							
	FY26	FY27	25-27	FY28	FY29	27-29	Note
SGF	\$1,250,000	\$1,250,000	\$2,500,000	\$1,250,000	\$1,250,000	\$2,500,000	25-27 Request
SGF	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000	\$2,000,000	27-29 Request
TOTAL	\$1,250,000	\$1,250,000	\$2,500,000	\$2,250,000	\$2,250,000	\$4,500,000	Increase by 27-29

How does the package relate to the Judicial Branch principal policy objectives?

Fair and Effective Administration of Justice

This decision package supports parent engagement in the dependency court process. P4P increases parental engagement in child welfare services and participation in the dependency court process, according to evaluations conducted in 2011 and 2020. By educating parents on court structure, professional roles, child welfare policies, services, and expectations, parents are provided with key information to inform and encourage their participation. Evaluation of Parent to Parent Program, King County, WA, National Council on Juvenile and Family Court Judges, (2011), [Parents For Parents Outcome Evaluation Report](#), Trescher and Summers, (2020).

Accessibility

This decision package ensures that P4P services are available statewide to all dependency-involved families throughout their court case. The program engages parents at their discretion and offers multiple methods for meaningful participation. Materials are designed by parent allies intentionally simplifying complex information.

Access to Necessary Representation

This decision package supports a meaningful client-attorney relationship. The P4P Dependency 101 class includes a learning objective on the roles of court professionals. This ensures parents understand how to collaborate and communicate effectively with their attorneys and other court professionals, empowering them to have meaningful access and working relationships.

Commitment to Effective Court Management

Parents often face hidden barriers that hinder their full participation in the dependency court process. This decision package adequately funds parent ally activities to help promote parent engagement in court proceedings. An early P4P evaluation states that the program may help parents understand the juvenile dependency process to increase active participation, reduce case continuances or contested hearings, educate parents on the role of Child Protective Services (CPS) in protecting the safety of the child, and increase parents' sense of support. Evaluation of Parent to Parent Program, King County, WA, National Council on Juvenile and Family Court Judges, (2011).

How does the package impact equity in the state?

Address any target populations or communities that will benefit from this proposal.

As shown by child welfare data in Washington state and nationally, out-of-home placements disproportionately impact Native America/Alaska Native, Black and Hispanic families compared to White families (<https://www.dcyf.wa.gov/practice/oiaa/agency-performance/racial-equity>). In addition, P4P coordinators and parent allies have lived experience with the child welfare system and come from marginalized backgrounds, and will greatly benefit from this livable wage proposal. Additional funding will particularly support:

- Minority communities by reducing financial disparities and creating economic opportunities.
- Low-income families, potentially allowing them to consolidate multiple jobs and improve personal and family development.

- Formerly incarcerated individuals, offering them a second chance and decreasing recidivism.
- People with disabilities, providing skills and leadership growth toward stability and economic opportunities.
- Survivors of domestic violence, offering crucial financial stability during recovery and fresh starts.

Supporting individuals who have personally experienced the child welfare system benefits stigmatized parents by offering empathy and understanding that only lived experience can provide. This peer support can significantly enhance the confidence and resilience of parents navigating the system. Additionally, this approach benefits both the parents receiving support and the lived experts offering it, by promoting economic mobility and breaking the cycle of poverty and harm.

Moreover, feedback from partners indicates that P4P has been beneficial to courts, attorneys, and community agencies.

Describe how the agency conducted community outreach and engagement.

OPD partners with P4P to support parents in the dependency system. P4P coordinators and client participants in the P4P program regularly share their experience about the dependency court process and the funding challenges related to the program. OPD also works closely with the technical administrator that hires those with lived experience to manage and implement the P4P program and coordinates with host organizations to address ongoing challenges related to P4P.

Consider which target populations or communities would be disproportionately impacted by this proposal.

Explain why and how these equity impacts will be mitigated.

OPD contractor Akin proposes to prioritize funding to counties with the highest dependency case rates, meaning rural counties may not be fully funded for a full-time P4P coordinator in the 2025-27 biennium. However, all host organizations throughout the state will benefit from more administrative support from Akin

Are there impacts to other governmental entities?

No.

Stakeholder response:

Courts have expressed the need for full-time P4P staffing to support court dockets and elevate parent voices in cross-system collaboration. P4P host organizations report that they are no longer able to absorb unpaid administrative costs. This effect is particularly pronounced in rural and Eastern Washington areas, which already suffer from resource deficiencies. One former P4P host organization stated, “We need to be able to pay fair and equitable wages to the P4P coordinators and the parent volunteers and the current funding does not allow for that standard to be met.”

Are there legal or administrative mandates that require this package to be funded?

The 2015 Legislature passed and Governor Inslee signed SSB 5486 establishing the Parents for Parents (P4P) program. The legislation directed statewide replication of the program by the end of the 2019-2021 biennium.

Does current law need to be changed to successfully implement this package?

No

Are there impacts to state facilities?

No.

Are there other supporting materials that strengthen the case for this request?

- [Parents for Parents Outcome Evaluation Report \(2020\)](#)

Office of Public Defense

Policy Level – 1P – Parents for Parents Statewide Ops.

- [National Low Income Housing Coalition's Out of Reach 2023 report](#)
- Evaluation of Parent to Parent Program, King County, WA, National Council of Juvenile & Family Court Judges (2011)
See Attachment A: 1P – Parents for Parents Statewide Ops – 2011 Process Evaluation
- P4P Flyer
See Attachment B: 1P – Parents for Parents Statewide Ops – P4P Information Sheet

Are there information technology impacts?

No.

Agency Contact:

Sophia Byrd McSherry

OPD Deputy Director for Government Relations

360-878-0550

Sophia.byrdmcsherry@opd.wa.gov