

**Washington State Supreme Court  
Commission on Children  
in Foster Care**

**5/08/2023  
1:00-4:00 p.m.**

**Attend Online at:**  
<https://wacourts.zoom.us/j/83504945915>

Meeting ID: 835 0494 5915  
Dial by your location:  
+ 1 253 215 8782

**Or In-Person at:**  
DCYF Headquarters  
1500 Jefferson Street SE  
Olympia, WA

**Agenda**

|                           |   |   |
|---------------------------|---|---|
| <p>1:00 pm<br/>12 min</p> | <p>1. Welcome and Introductions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Land and Forced Labor Acknowledgment</li> <li>• Please type your name and agency in the chat in lieu of roll call</li> <li>• If you have suggested agenda items for the next meeting, please type them into the chat or email Kelly Warner-King or the Co-Chairs by March 27, 2023.</li> </ul> | <p>Justice Barbara Madsen,<br/><i>Co-Chair</i></p> <p>Secretary Ross Hunter,<br/><i>DCYF; Co-Chair</i></p> <p>Jeannie Kee, <i>Foster Youth Alumni Representative</i></p>  |
| <p>1:12 pm<br/>3 min</p>  | <p>2. Approval of March 2023 Minutes</p>  | <p>Justice Barbara Madsen,<br/><i>Co-Chair</i></p>  |
| <p>1:15 pm<br/>55 min</p> | <p>3. 2023 Legislative and Budget Updates</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DCYF highlights of 2023 Legislative</li> <li>• OPD budget items</li> <li>• Child Welfare Advocacy Coalition (CWAC) highlights</li> <li>• AOC – Family Treatment Court Team</li> <li>• Questions &amp; Time for Discussion</li> </ul>   | <p>Secretary Ross Hunter,<br/><i>DCYF; Co-Chair</i></p> <p>Allison Krutsinger, <i>DCYF</i></p> <p>Larry Jefferson, <i>OPD</i></p> <p>Laurie Lippold, <i>Partners for Our Children/CWAC</i></p> <p>Kelly Warner-King, <i>AOC</i></p> |
| <p>2:10 pm<br/>30 min</p> | <p>4. AOC's <a href="#">Public Dependency Data Dashboard</a> Demonstration</p>  | <p>Matt Orme,<br/><i>AOC Washington State Center for Court Research</i></p>   |
| <p>2:40 pm<br/>10 min</p> | <p>BREAK</p>  |   |
| <p>2:50 pm<br/>15 min</p> | <p>5. Commission Workgroup Orientation – <a href="#">Family Well-Being Community Collaborative (FWCC)</a></p>   | <p>Kelly Warner-King &amp; Laura Vogel, <i>AOC</i></p>  |

| <b>New Business</b>       |  |   |
|---------------------------|--|---|
| <p>3:05 pm<br/>10 min</p> | <p>6. Upcoming Events:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mockingbird Youth Leadership Summit – Save the Date: August 1, 2023</li> <li>• Family Reunification Celebrations</li> </ul>  | <p>Natalie Lente, <i>The Mockingbird Society</i></p> <p>Tonia McClanahan, <i>Parent Advocate Representative</i></p> <p>Jenn Nguyen, AOC</p>                       |
| <p>3:15 pm<br/>45 min</p> | <p>7. CCFC Strategic Planning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DCYF Strategic Plan &amp; Goals – Jenny Heddin</li> <li>• December CCFC Summit – Group Exercise <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Working Together Differently</li> <li>○ Shared Outcomes &amp; Goals</li> <li>○ Projects</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Co-Design Team</li> </ul> | <p>Justice Barbara Madsen, <i>Co-Chair</i></p> <p>Secretary Ross Hunter, <i>DCYF; Co-Chair</i></p> <p>Jenny Heddin, <i>DCYF</i></p> <p>Kelly Warner-King, AOC</p> |
| <p><b>4:00 pm</b></p>     | <p><b>Adjournment</b></p>  |   |
|                           | <p><u>Upcoming 2023 Meetings:</u><br/> August 1, 2023 Mockingbird Youth Leadership Summit<br/> September 11, 2023<br/> December 4, 2023</p>  |   |



**Washington State Supreme Court  
Commission on Children in Foster Care  
March 13, 2023  
Meeting Minutes**

**Members Present:**

Justice Barbara Madsen, Washington State Supreme Court, Commission Co-Chair  
Ross Hunter, Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) Secretary, Commission Co-Chair  
Judge Sabrina Ahrens, Pierce County Superior Court (on behalf of Judge Alicia Burton, Designee for Superior Court Judges' Association President)  
Mike Canfield, Foster Parent Alliance of Washington State (FPAWS)  
Alyssa Connolly, Northwest Intertribal Council  
Sydney Doherty, Coordinated Care of WA; Foster Care Physical/Mental Health Representative  
Veronica Gallardo, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (Designee for Chris Reykdal)  
Larry Jefferson, Washington State Office of Public Defense (OPD) Director  
Jeannie Kee, Foster Youth Alumni Representative  
Laurie Lippold, Partners for Our Children  
Tonia McClanahan, Parent Advocate Representative  
Ryan Murrey, Washington Association of Child Advocate Programs (WACAP)  
Rachel Sottile, Center for Children & Youth Justice (CCYJ)  
Carrie Wayno, Attorney General's Office (Designee for Bob Ferguson)  
Bailey Zydek, Children's Representation Program Manager, OCLA

**Members Not Present:**

Jim Bamberger, Director, Office of Civil Legal Aid (OCLA)  
Jolie Bwiza, Tacoma Chapter Leader, Mockingbird Youth Network  
Beth Canfield, Foster Parent Allies of Washington State  
Jill May, Washington Association for Children & Families  
Representative Tana Senn, Washington House of Representatives  
Emily Stochel, Youth Who Has Been Reunified; College Success Foundation  
Senator Claire Wilson, Washington State Senate

**Guests Present:**

Jeffrey Adams, Children's Representation Program Training Coordinator, OCLA  
Katie Anderson, Early Childhood Courts Statewide Coordinator, AOC  
Eleanor Bosman-Clark, DCYF  
Sarah Burns, Statewide Innovation Coordinator, Family & Youth Justice Programs, AOC  
Jacob D'Annunzio, Washington State OPD, Parents Representation Program  
Cynthia Delostrinos, Office of Court Innovation Associate Director, AOC  
Patrick Dowd, Office of the Family and Children's Ombuds  
Jana Huffman, Washington CASA Association  
Sally Mednansky, FJCIP Coordinator, Pierce County Superior Court  
Erin Shea McCann, Legal Counsel for Youth & Children  
Dawn Marie Rubio, State Court Administrator, AOC  
Kelly Ryan, Washington Association of Juvenile Court Administrators  
Jarel Sanders, Policy Associate, Partners for Our Children  
Laura Vogel, CIP Director & Training Specialist, AOC  
Julie Watts, DCYF Government Affairs  
Cheryl White, Washington CASA Association Executive Director

**Staff Present:**

Kelly Warner-King, Family & Youth Justice Programs, AOC  
Susan Goulet, Family & Youth Justice Programs, AOC  
Barbara Murphy, DCYF

**Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 1:04 p.m. Introductions and roll call were conducted virtually through the Zoom meeting chat box.

Larry Jefferson, OPD Director, provided a Land Acknowledgement which included a PowerPoint (PPT) presentation. Members thanked Larry for the information and requested a copy of the PPT slides so they can access the information and links in it.

**Next Steps:**

Larry's Land Acknowledgement PPT slides will be sent to the Commission listserv.

**Approval of the Minutes**

Justice Madsen invited a motion to approve the December 2022 meeting minutes. The motion to approve the minutes passed.

**DCYF Presentation and Discussion on Kinship Placement and Licensing**

Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) Secretary Ross Hunter presented to the Commission regarding DCYF relative placements and licensing. His presentation included a PowerPoint (PPT) presentation titled "Progress Toward Permanency: Relative placements, kinship, and licensing to safely reduce children in care." He provided a DCYF data chart showing the number of children entering and exiting out of home care 2010-2022. Secretary Hunter shared that DCYF's goal is to safely reduce the number of children in care and that the Department monitors the return to care rate as an indicator of how well the system is operating. He explained that, for the last five years, the number children in care has decreased from 9,000 in 2010 to about 6,100 at the end of 2022. This reflects national trends and intentional work by DCYF to reduce filings. From 2010-2022, DCYF data does not show a significant change in the return to care numbers, which leads Secretary Hunter to conclude that DCYF is successfully achieving its goal by bringing fewer lower-risk children into care.

Secretary Hunter then described DCYF's child welfare strategy to prevent child abuse and neglect by focusing on children at high risk. He shared that DCYF has identified 22 areas in the state with high density removal rates where they are focused on secondary prevention – creating safety plans and connecting families to services – to prevent removal in specific cases. These efforts leverage high value activities that provide safety in the home, such as FAR and Family Voluntary Services.

If DCYF concludes that removal is necessary to ensure child safety, the goal is placing a child with kin and working to reunify children with parents as soon as reasonably possible. DCYF's definition of kin is family or unrelated others who are suitable, who children know and trust, and who often share the same culture as the child. Research shows that children almost always fare better on many measures – including behavioral health, number of placements and permanency – when they are placed with kin. If a child cannot ultimately be safely returned home, DCYF aims to support kin as the long-term family for the child. To understand the importance of staying connected to kin for children and youth in care, Secretary Hunter recommended reading Sixto Cancel's guest essay in the New York Times, titled "[I Will Never Forget That I Could Have Lived With People Who Loved Me.](#)"

DCYF is working to promote a Kin First culture. A key component of this effort is ensuring that kin receive adequate support to care for a child placed with them. Secretary Hunter explained the work that DCYF has undertaken to bring about this change:

- Licensing changes being co-designed with relatives and kin, in partnership with New America's New Practice Lab
  - Streamlining placement and home study processes
  - Piloting ways to make relative searches more effective
- Changes to initial license practice
  - After an initial safety assessment, place child with kin and start foster care maintenance payments using state funds
  - When families qualify for a child-specific foster care license, DCYF has requested a change to federal rules that will allow the agency to receive federal IV-E funding to match the state's investment
- DCYF developing new Family Practice Model
  - Incorporates the new legal requirements established by the WA Supreme Court and the Legislature over the past several years
  - Regina McDougall, who leads the Family Practice Model, can present at a future Commission meeting.

Placement with kin is a top priority for DCYF. Changes to the placement process will include:

- Family engagement
  - Family Team Decision Meetings (FTDM) will be utilized to identify family and suitable others as safe options in case a child has to be removed
  - Address complicated laws related to confidentiality
  - Look for more than one family member at a time
  - Acknowledge generational fears and the reasonable reluctance that families often have when dealing with DCYF
- Placement process that prioritizes kin
  - The Keeping Families Together Act (HB 1227) requires DCYF to prioritize placement with kin
  - Make it easier for caseworkers to place children with kin – change DCYF rules to enable supervisors to approve kin placements, and make it harder to get approval to place in stranger foster care
- Shelter Care hearings
  - With implementation of HB 1227, DCYF will have to demonstrate to the court that there is no relative or suitable other who can care for the child
  - Some courts are already asking for this.

Secretary Hunter then shared DCYF data on placement trends. Washington State is one of the top five states for kinship placements in the nation, with the current kin placement rate of 55%. His goal is to increase that number to 65-70% licensed kinship placements and increase the number of licensed kin. However, for children and youth with severe behavioral problems, DCYF recognizes the need for placement in well-trained, professional foster homes. He also discussed racial/ethnic disproportionality data for intakes and for removals, sharing that removal statistics for American

Indian/Alaska Native children are moving in the wrong direction, with a disproportionality index of 2.41.

Secretary Hunter acknowledged that recent legislation and a number of court decisions provide pressure on the agency to go in the direction it was already heading. This pressure can help DCYF request the resources it needs from the Legislature.

Next steps for DCYF:

- Initial license process goes live on July 1, 2023
- D.S. settlement
- 2023-25 biennium budget requests for care giver supports will be related to the needs of the child rather than a caregiver's ability to navigate the system
- Upcoming ACF rule change, will allow DCYF to create a separate kin-specific licensing process and provide access to Title IV-E funds (the comment period is open now, and they anticipate the rule going into effect by July 2024).

Secretary Hunter said the ACF just announced the rule change, so they will wait and see what the rule looks like when it goes into effect, and then figure out what to do in response to the changes after that. He would like the Commission to invite his team back in the fall to discuss their progress on current initiatives.

Jacob D'Annunzio asked if, under the current law and policy, suitable others are not able to serve as placement options for Voluntary Placement Agreements. Secretary Hunter responded that yes, that is the case and he thinks it is terrible. DCYF has a bill before the Legislature seeking authorization to voluntarily place children with suitable placements, and they hope that will change in July of this year.

Larry Jefferson asked what DCYF is doing to engage communities and the resources they have available. Secretary Hunter stated that DCYF is studying community interventions to understand which ones produce better outcomes and targeting new resources in high risk area. He also supported the concept of targeted universalism to drive investments that help all families.

Tonia McClanahan asked about addressing delays in permanency when a child is ready to return home, but the system requires a background check be completed before return. Secretary Hunter and Julie Watts offered to follow up on Tonia's question.

More detailed information regarding Secretary Hunter's presentation is available in his PPT slides, and those will be sent out to the Commission listserv. If members have additional questions, they may contact Julie at [Julie.Watts@dcyf.wa.gov](mailto:Julie.Watts@dcyf.wa.gov).

**Next Steps:**

- Secretary Hunter's DCYF Presentation PPT slides will be sent to the Commission listserv.
- Invite Regina McDougall to present on the DCYF Family Practice Model at a future Commission meeting
- Secretary Hunter and Julie Watts to follow up on background checks for parents when child is scheduled to reunify.

## **Reports from Commission Workgroups**

### *Children's Legal Representation Update*

Bailey Zydek, OCLA Legal Representation Program Manager, provided an update on the Children's Representation Program (CRP). Bailey reported that implementation of the CRP's HB 1219 program expansion went live on January 1<sup>st</sup> of this year for Yakima, Benton, Franklin, Walla Walla, and Kittitas Counties, and they are now working on the next seven counties. The biggest impacts observed so far in implementation are related to addressing caseloads and providing training for attorneys. Bailey described a situation in Yakima, where the only youth attorney had a caseload that exceeded the new standards. The CRP was able to reassign some of that attorney's cases to other attorneys prior to the program implementation date, allowing the attorney to meet the standard caseload limits when the program officially started in Yakima. The CRP has also provided a statewide training to youth attorneys to address a critical knowledge gap they identified in several counties.

Bailey shared that the CRP is finding it more difficult to find attorneys in rural counties, but they are doing all they can. The next seven CRP counties – Thurston, Mason, Adams, Grays Harbor, Pacific, Klickitat, Skamania – will go live on January 1, 2024. Bailey reported that they have held some initial meetings with judicial officers, AAGs, and parent attorneys to answer questions that the counties have. The CRP is also adding new brown bag implementation sessions, which will be advertised most aggressively for the new seven counties, but anyone can attend.

Jeff Adams, OCLA's new CRP Training Coordinator, introduced himself to the Commission. Jeff joined OCLA in January, and since then he has reviewed the OCLA training curriculum and is building on it to capture the standards developed by the Commission workgroup. They now have a framework for child representation, centered around three pillars—legal expertise, trauma and development, and equity informed advocacy. The CRP trainings and resources for attorneys include an introductory academy, annual trainings, a mentorship program, and a CRP Newsletter (with up-to-date and time sensitive information). Jeff is excited to get the training program up and running with curricula that meets the needs of the contracted attorneys. The ultimate goal is to capture the standards, and to make sure all contractors are getting the best information possible.

Jeff was asked if they have a mechanism to track success. He reported that they have some broad-based metrics to show progress, but they want to improve and refine the measures. The CRP plans to create a dashboard to track progress in each initiative. Bailey added that CRP staff monitor and oversee contracts, which includes an annual review of attorneys (testing their knowledge) and in-court observation. They also communicate with judicial officers to get feedback about attorney performance and areas in need of support. Jeff said they are also in the process of creating a training advisory committee, which will include judicial officers, practitioners, and people with lived experience.

Bailey and Jeff were asked about how the standards are used in the recruitment process. Bailey reported that the CRP has been responsive and flexible in their approach while maintaining fidelity to the standards. Jeff reported that the new training program will have an introductory component, a 40-hour academy, and a mentorship component that will pair new youth attorneys with experienced attorneys who provide guidance around practice. Youth with lived experience will have input into the training. Larry stated that he is impressed by the resources and organization that OCLA is leveraging to implement the program. It's important that we have new standards, and he commends the job CRP is doing to implement them.

### *Family Well-Being Community Collaborative Update*

Laura Vogel, CIP Director & Training Specialist with AOC's Family & Youth Justice Programs (FYJP), provided an update on the work of the Family Well-Being Community Collaborative (FWCC) to prepare the child welfare court system to implement the new Keeping Families Together Act.

Laura reported the following progress in developing tools to support court communities:

- Statutory crosswalks – Each of the four FWCC workgroups have completed their statutory crosswalks, which identify all of the legal and court process changes required by the new law. These crosswalks were developed by cross-system workgroups through many hours of discussion and negotiation over the past 18 months.
- The crosswalk information is being used to develop the iDecide tool for judicial officers, which continues to be updated and refined, based on the feedback from the workgroups.
- The HB 1227 Court Readiness Toolkit is a suite of tools created for local court systems to help them prepare for implementation of the new law. The toolkit helps courts assess their current shelter care capacity and identify areas where they might need to make changes to comply with the new legal requirements.

All HB 1227 tools are now available on the FYJP website here: <https://www.wacita.org/hb-1227-keeping-families-together-act/>. Laura provided a tour of the webpage, including short demonstrations of the Toolkit and the iDecide tool. She also noted participants from all agencies around the state have helped develop the tools, and that even after the July 1<sup>st</sup> date, the FWCC will continue to help courts understand and implement the law. A new FWCC Data & Evaluation workgroup is being formed to create a plan for assessing implementation and short- and long-term outcomes.

Laura also reported on the Keeping Families Together training opportunities being planned for the child welfare court system, which include:

- Multiple 30-minute virtual trainings for local court systems, organized through the Family and Juvenile Court Improvement Program (FJCIP);
- Coordinating training with AGO, DCYF Region 4, OPD, OCLA, Court Administrators, and Judicial Officers (annual academy);
- Working with DCYF to plan Regional training webinars; they would like to include regional DCYF co-training component.

Justice Madsen thanked Laura and expressed her appreciation for the work the FWCC is doing. She also thanked Judge Burton for her help facilitating the Commission's input on HB 1227 pattern forms.

Several Commission members expressed the need for consistency across courts in implementing and applying the new law, to avoid the problem of justice by geography. Kelly responded that the intent of this work is to support a common understanding of the law and its application. FYJP approaches this work from a continuous quality improvement mindset, so the training and engagement with courts and system partners will not be finished on the implementation date. The FWCC data and evaluation workgroup is identifying metrics and processes to assess the implementation of key components of the new law and to evaluate practice change over time. Outcomes, disaggregated by race, will also be tracked. The challenges of implementing a significant practice change within a non-unified court system were acknowledged and all players in the system were encouraged to support good information gathering and collaboration at the local level.



## **Court Improvement Updates – Family & Youth Justice Programs**

Kelly Warner-King shared that the Commission serves as the oversight committee for the Court Improvement Program (CIP) grant, a federal grant that funds court improvement work that AOC's Family & Youth Justice Programs (FYJP) does. FYJP will provide the Commission a draft of their CIP Strategic Plan for 2023-24 and hold a CIP Strategic Plan Feedback Session on June 5<sup>th</sup>, from 12:00pm-1:30pm, to seek input from the Commission. Kelly expressed her appreciation to the Commission for their support and looks forward to input. A save-the-date meeting invitation will be sent to the Commission listserv to put the meeting date onto Commission members' calendars.

Sarah Burns, Statewide Innovation Coordinator, reported on FYJP's COVID Court Recovery project and products that were created as a result of what was learned from courts and court partners. The AOC received extra COVID project funding during the pandemic to help courts recover from the pandemic. As part of this work, Sarah Burns and Gia Valentine of FYJP surveyed over 200 judicial officers, DCYF staff, AAGs, parent and youth attorneys, OPD Social Service Workers, CASA/GALs and Parent Allies across the state to learn how the pandemic impacted hearings, access to justice and engagement for families, and court operations. It was clear from these interviews that professionals spent a lot of time helping court participants connect to virtual hearings and participate in a meaningful way.

To support courts and professionals, and to help improve court participants' experience in virtual and hybrid hearings, FYJP worked with consultants to create two videos. The videos are titled Part 1: Preparing for Your Dependency Hearing and Part 2: Connecting to Your Hearing using Zoom or WebEx, and they are available online for the public view on the FYJP website at <https://www.wacita.org/videos/>. Both videos were translated to include Spanish subtitles. Resources to help share the videos were created, including a business card, flyer, brochure, and a tip sheet for hearings, and are available to download from the website. The publications all include a QR code and URL with instructions for accessing the videos. The QR code and videos can be shared widely in lobbies, on websites, and other spaces where families can access them. FYJP staff is available to present the videos to partner agencies.

Sarah shared that Parent Allies helped to design the project, determining what information and support families need to prepare for a successful hearing. Both videos are under five minutes long and easily viewed on a smartphone. Sarah played the Part 1 video for the group, which includes tips and tricks on how to prepare for your hearing.

The AOC is exploring translating the videos into other languages to increase access for participants who do not speak/read English, or have limited proficiency. Justice Madsen suggested the videos seem generic enough that we may also want to see about getting this presentation onto the BJA agenda so the courts around the state could use them for non-dependency hearings too.

For questions, Sarah may be contacted at [Sarah.Burns@courts.wa.gov](mailto:Sarah.Burns@courts.wa.gov).

### **Next Steps:**

- A save-the-date meeting invitation for the CIP Strategic Plan Feedback Session on June 5, 2023, from 12:00pm-1:30pm, will be sent out to the Commission listserv.

## **Commission Structure & Priorities**

### *Results of Member Survey & Discussion*

Kelly Warner-King shared the results of the Commission member survey, which were included in the meeting materials. Dr. Arina Gertseva assembled the survey results, but was unable to attend the meeting today. Kelly reported that 19 people completed the survey and results showed that members value the Commission and appreciate the contributions of other members.

Respondents identified the Commission's strengths as:

- working well together
- attendance of meetings
- open and honest communication
- appreciation of one another's unique capabilities
- feeling that the time on the Commission is worth the effort.

Areas for improvement include:

- efficiency of meetings – agendas are overly ambitious
- clarity about the Commission's goals
- defined roles of the members.

Kelly provided a summary of the feedback:

- CCFC provides a forum for discussion and sharing what different parts of the system are doing. We have the ability to collaborate across systems. The CCFC provides an opportunity to collaborate with a wider range of partners and agencies than we typically interact with.
- People enjoy being part of this cross-system group, hearing different perspectives, and feeling like the group has some influence over what happens in the system.
- The potential exists to also be a catalyst for change in the child welfare court system – the CCFC needs more of a strategic plan and clear action items.
- CCFC members and guests would like more clarity about and progress updates from the workgroups.

Justice Madsen thanked Kelly for gathering this information. She noted that when she started with the Commission, the only resources and staff available were donated from Justice Bridge's non-profit, the Center for Children & Youth Justice (CCYJ). Unlike other Supreme Court commissions, the CCFC still lacks a real budget and staff. However, Justice Madsen has talked with the co-chairs of the Minority and Justice Commission and Gender and Justice Commission, and they are willing to share some resources.

While the CCFC does not have a history of being a product-oriented Commission, Justice Madsen sees value in the Commission's ability to provide a forum for people to convene and learn about other systems. Secretary Hunter acknowledged that he is relatively new to the CCFC, but the Commission is the only place he knows of that is an intersection for all the partners. He offered that it would be worthwhile for us to take on some projects that are informed by data about how the courts work and what is needed to make them work better for families and professionals.

Commission members agreed and suggested that we be willing to experiment around the edges and make incremental improvements. It was also suggested by Ryan Murrey that we define what a successful outcome in the child welfare court system would be and identify ways to measure progress toward that vision. Jacob D'Annunzio pointed out that many of the laws and policies are great, as written. But there is a disconnect when they are applied in practice, particularly in a non-unified court system. Practice differences across courts, frequent turnover on the bench, and a lack of required training for judicial officers all create barriers to good and consistent practice. Members acknowledged that there is power in this Commission and we should leverage it to build a better system.

Justice Madsen noted that we need better communication about what the CCFC is doing – both internally to our members and partners, and externally to the Supreme Court and other system players. Larry Jefferson suggested that a new member orientation would also be helpful.

### *State Team Proposal*

Justice Madsen provided a brief overview of the State Team, which was created as part of the 2019 National Judicial Leadership Summit IV on Child Welfare and resulted in an action plan to address racial disproportionality and inequities in the Washington child welfare court system. More information about the State Team and the Action Plan can be found on the FYJP website here: [State Team Action Plan to Ensure Racial Justice in Child Welfare – Family and Youth Justice Programs \(wacita.org\)](https://www.wacita.org). The State Team has recently discussed an idea for a child welfare court system summit modeled on the national summit, highlighting areas where our agencies and systems can collaborate, and resulting in a plan for the CCFC. Justice Madsen suggested that the CCFC host a one-day summit every two years, highlighting national experts and people directly affected by the system, that produces an action plan for the next two years. We will need to identify funding for this effort. Secretary Hunter expressed interest in participating and offered to identify funding to support it. He suggested that using Appreciative Inquiry in this context would be powerful and having a professional facilitator is useful.

Ryan shared an idea he has had for an “unconference”, a 2-3 day conference where people get to vote on what they think we should focus our work on. Members generally agreed that getting everyone in the room to talk about where we are going would be really beneficial. Jeannie Kee commented, as a person with lived experience, what Ryan said about identifying successful outcomes of child welfare is a start, but we also have to have safe conversations about equity, poverty, and supporting happy healthy families. Can we ask, listen, and hear what families and children want to see in child welfare and partner to create change? Other Commission members agreed and emphasized that we need to make sure that parents, youth, and caregivers are actively included.

Larry offered that this may also be an opportunity to change the Commission’s name, given that a goal of many CCFC members, and certainly OPD’s, is to avoid foster care whenever possible. Justice Madsen noted that there have been a lot of changes since the Commission started, so it is time for the Commission’s name to reflect that shift. She knows the bigger the group, the harder it is to coordinate, but she thinks we should all agree on an agenda if that is what the Commission wants to do.

Commission attendees were supportive of the summit and goal setting proposal, and several offered to contribute financial support to help make it happen. Carrie Wayno requested that we make sure to clarify how we are working and using people’s time, answering the questions: what do we expect the group to do, and how do we know when we got it done?

Ryan suggested that we focus on developing a shared, positive vision for what we are trying to do for children in the system. Secretary Hunter asked if Commission members would be willing to have him and Justice Madsen propose something to the Commission between now and the next CCFC meeting. Members liked the idea, and there were no objections. Kelly suggested that Commission members could co-design the summit with a start from the Co-Chairs. Members should email Kelly ([Kelly.Warner-King@courts.wa.gov](mailto:Kelly.Warner-King@courts.wa.gov)) if they are interested in being part of the co-design of the summit.

*Policy Regarding Formal Endorsement of Legislative & Budget Items*

Secretary Hunter and Justice Madsen discussed the Commission's policy regarding formal endorsement of legislative and budget items, and explained why they decided not to send out the letters of support that were voted on in the December meeting. They acknowledged that it is awkward and problematic for them to take positions on legislation, but when the topics came up in the last meeting they were both caught off guard. After talking with each other and colleagues, they decided that providing formal endorsement of legislation is not an appropriate role for the Commission, but Commission members are encouraged to advocate on behalf of their interests.

**Next Steps:**

An email will be sent to the Commission listserv to remind members where the discussion of a possible summit left off, and Justice Madsen and Secretary Hunter will be in contact with their proposal.

**Closing & Adjournment**

Justice Madsen thanked everyone for attending. Ideas for future agenda items may be sent to Kelly. The next Commission meeting is on May 8, 2023.

**Adjourned at 4:02 p.m. by Justice Barbara Madsen.**

DRAFT

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# 2023 Session

## DCYF Investment Overview

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Allison Krutsinger  
*Director of Public Affairs*

*May 8, 2023*



Washington State Department of  
**CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILIES**



# Realities going into 2023 session

Budget Setting Session

+

DCYF implementing significant  
investments and policy changes

+

COVID impacts for clients and providers

+

Mixed budget/economic realities

=

***Strong position for the Legislative Session***



# Child Welfare Agency Request Legislation

| Bill # | Title                                  | Summary   | Amount          |
|--------|--|---|-----------------|
| 1204   | <b>Family Connections</b>              | To maintain the Family Connections Program, to facilitate interactions between foster families and birth families when a child is dependent and in out-of-home care.  | <b>\$1.308M</b> |
| 5256   | <b>Housing Access and Supports</b>     | Funding is provided for implementation of Substitute Senate Bill 5256 (Child welfare housing), which makes the Child Welfare Housing Assistance Program pilot permanent and allows for eligibility expansion.   | <b>\$5.255M</b> |
| 5124   | <b>Guardianship Assistance Program</b> | Funding is provided for implementation of Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill 5124, which expands guardianship assistance subsidies to non-IV-E eligible children, certain nonrelative guardians, as well as expands placement options to suitable persons under voluntary placement agreements. | <b>\$2.609M</b> |

# Bill Highlights

| Bill # | Abbrev. Title                           | Description  | Amount            |
|--------|---|--|-------------------|
| 1168   | Prenatal substance exposure             | Providing prevention services, diagnoses, treatment, and support for prenatal substance exposure.  | \$2.312M (at HCA) |
| 1188   | Child Welfare Services/DD               | Requires DDA to modify federal waivers in order to provide services to children with developmental disabilities who are dependent.   | \$148K            |
| 5515   | Child abuse and neglect                 | Protecting children from child abuse and neglect by expanding investigative authority and directing DCYF to develop licensing standards for residential schools.                                 | \$831K            |
| 5683   | Child Specific Licenses/Indian Children | Authorizes DCYF to provide child specific licenses for caregivers of Indian children in the care and custody of tribes.  | \$3.47M           |
| 1580   | Children in Crisis                      | Creating a system to support children in crisis. Creates a multi-system care coordinator position in the Governor's Office, allocates dollars to meet the needs of children and youth in crisis. | \$303K            |



# Housing Access and Supports

## *Decision Package*

### DCYF Strategic Priority Alignment

- Safely reduce the number/rate of children in out-of-home care
- Create successful transitions to adulthood for youth and young adults in our care

### **What?**

Supportive housing services for youth exiting child welfare and juvenile rehabilitation, as well as statewide support for families to obtain housing when there is an imminent risk of an out-of-home placement or to aid in reunification.

### **Why?**

- Young people exiting foster care and juvenile rehabilitation continue to enter homelessness within 12 months after exit, even after the passage of HB 6560
- Stable housing can support a speedier reunification and prevent entry to child welfare where housing instability is a factor in removal

| Title  | Description   | Amount          |
|--|---|-----------------|
| <b>Youth Housing Support Services</b>        | Funding is provided for housing support services for youth exiting foster care.   | <b>\$2.374M</b> |
| <b>Housing Access and Supports (SB 5256)</b> | Funding is provided for implementation of Substitute Senate Bill 5256 (Child welfare housing), which makes the Child Welfare Housing Assistance Program pilot permanent and allows for eligibility expansion. | <b>\$5.255M</b> |

# Combined In Home & Transition Services

## Decision Package

### DCYF Strategic Priority Alignment

- Eliminate racial disproportionality and advance racial equity
- Safely reduce the number of children and youth in out of home care
- Improve quality and availability of provider services
- Create successful transitions to adulthood for youth and young adults in our care

### What?

Investments in combined in-home and transition services allowing for increased access to services for DCYF clients across divisions.

### Why?

- DCYF is seeking to lay the foundation for a robust continuum of services and move toward service integration
- Recent legislation and court cases continue to create demand for additional services to be provided to DCYF clients

| Component                        | Description  | Amount          |
|----------------------------------|--|-----------------|
| <b>Combined In-home Services</b> | Funding is provided to expand Combined In-Home Services to meet the anticipated increase in families needing services and for DCYF to build on its expansion of culturally relevant in-home services in partnership with tribes and recognized Indian organizations. | <b>\$9.693M</b> |
| <b>YV LifeSet</b>                | Funding is provided to expand the current LifeSet program and teams.   | <b>\$4.176M</b> |

# Caregiver Placement Supports

## Decision Package

### DCYF Strategic Priority Alignment

- Advance racial equity and reduce racial disproportionality
- Reduce the number of children in out of home care by half

### What?

Support for kinship caregivers and family foster homes to meet the needs of children/youth in foster care. This will result in more equitable redistribution of financial assistance and support services to kinship caregivers.

### Why?

- The current foster care rate system directs more resources to non-relative, mostly white family foster homes
- A root cause of placement instability in the foster care placement continuum is inadequate supports for caregivers, particularly when children have high levels of behavioral and mental health support needs

| Title                        | Description  | Amount  |
|------------------------------|--|---------|
| Caregiver Placement Supports | Funding is provided for indirect agency costs related to the transition from a 4-level to a 7-level foster care support system, that includes placement supports for all levels and case aides for levels 3 through 7. | \$21.9M |

# D.S. Compliance

## Decision Package

### DCYF Strategic Priority Alignment

- Reducing the number of children in out-of-home care by half
- Improving quality and intention of practice

### What?

Investment to meet obligations under the settlement agreement in the D.S. lawsuit on behalf of youth experiencing placement instability through night-to-night placements and hotel and overnight stays in offices.

### Why?

- In June 2022, DCYF reached a settlement agreement which DCYF to make system improvements and offer services and supports to class members

| Title                                  | Description   | Amt.            |
|--|---|-----------------|
| <b>Adolescent Transitional Housing</b> | For supported housing programs for hard-to-place foster youth age 16 and above, including case management and supports  | <b>\$4.962M</b> |
| <b>Implementation and Monitoring</b>   | Implementation and monitoring, which includes receiving recurring updates, requesting data on compliance, reporting on progress, and resolving disputes that may arise. | <b>\$1.207M</b> |
| <b>Hub Home Model</b>                  | To develop and adapt the existing hub home model to serve youth as described in the settlement agreement.   | <b>\$4.496M</b> |
| <b>Licensing Standards</b>             | To establish a negotiated rule-making method to align & update foster care & group care licensing standards.  | <b>\$1.650M</b> |
| <b>Referrals and Transitions</b>       | For revised referral & transition procedures for youth entering foster care.  | <b>\$4.543M</b> |
| <b>Therapeutic Foster Care</b>         | To develop and implement a professional therapeutic foster care contract and licensing category.  | <b>\$5.263M</b> |
| <b>Qualified Residential TX</b>        | To update assessment and placement procedures prior to placing a youth in a QRTP, as well as updating the assessment schedule to every 90 days.                         | <b>\$2.125M</b> |

# Licensed Kinship Placements

## DCYF Strategic Priority Alignment

- Improve the quality and intention of practice
- Improve the quality and availability of provider services

## What?

Resources to support increased licensed kinship placements. Placements with licensed kin are increasing and will continue to increase with the implementation of the Keeping Families Together Act (HB 1227) and various court cases. This package lays out the first phase of a strategy to accomplish these goals.

## Why?

- Relative placement promotes stability, decreases likelihood of re-abuse and institutional abuse, and leads to better behavioral and mental health outcomes. Relatives/kin need supports to care for unexpected household members
- The D.S. settlement and advocacy from stakeholders are pushing DCYF to reframe its approach to placing children with kin and supporting those kin families through the life of the placement

| Title   | Description  | Amount           |
|---|--|------------------|
| <b>Licensed Kinship Placements - staffing</b> | <b>Kinship Caregiver Engagement Unit:</b> Funding is provided to increase the kinship caregiver engagement unit staffing by 7 FTE to support statewide implementation. | <b>\$1.826M</b>  |
|   | <b>Maintain Licensing Staff Ratios:</b> Additional 10 licensing FTEs funded to implement HB 1227.  | <b>\$2.97M</b>   |
| <b>Initial License Maintenance Payment</b>    | Funding issue foster care maintenance payments for up to 90 days to those kinship caregivers who obtain an initial license.  | <b>\$14.664M</b> |

# Family Time

## Decision Package

### DCYF Strategic Priority Alignment

- Safely reduce the number/rate of children in out-of-home care by half
- Improve quality and availability of provider services

### What?

Resources to support frequent and regular family visitation when children are placed out of home. In addition, DCYF will expand the Network Administrator model statewide for Family Time contracts.

### Why?

- Frequent and regular family visits result in stronger attachment, lower levels of depression and higher a likelihood that a child will be reunified with parents
- Without additional funding to cover certain costs, families will experience disruptions in their visit plans and DCYF may face potential non-compliance with court-ordered visitation

| Title       | Description  | Amount    |
|-------------|--|-----------|
| Family Time | For contracted visitation services for children in temporary out-of-home care. Intended to reimburse providers for certain services, which may include work associated with missed or canceled visits and reporting. | \$16.332M |

# Prevention

## Decision Package

### DCYF Strategic Priority Alignment

- Safely reduce the number of children and youth in out-of-home care by half

### What?

Investment in prevention services and interventions to reduce the number of families entering into child welfare and to promote child and family well-being.

### Why?

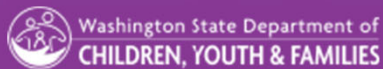
- Changing the trajectory of rates of child maltreatment and promoting well-being for children and families requires universal, targeted, and individualized approaches

|                                       | Description  | Amount          |
|---------------------------------------|--|-----------------|
| <b>SUD Prevention</b>                 | For DCYF to connect pregnant people to voluntary prevention services before birth and at the time of birth, and connect all DCYF-involved families with SUD supports aimed at reducing child placements. | <b>\$3.014M</b> |
| <b>Home Visiting Funding Increase</b> | Provided solely for a funding increase, including to increase funding for contracts to support wage and cost increases and create more equity in contracting among the home visiting workforce.          | <b>\$8.56M</b>  |
| <b>Home Visiting Slot Expansion</b>   | Provided solely for the expansion of visiting services.  | <b>\$1M</b>     |

# Rising Strong

## DCYF Strategic Priority Alignment

- Safely reduce the number of children and youth in out-of-home care by half



## What?

Capital funding for the construction of a site for the Rising Strong model on the west side of the state. Rising Strong is a holistic, family-centered drug treatment and housing program supporting families in staying together while they begin to recover from addiction and heal from trauma.

## Why?

- Substance use disorder is a top contributing factor for the placement of children into out-of-home care, especially young children
- Western Washington currently does not have any program where families can stay together while recovering from Substance Use Disorder

| Title   | Description   | Amount           |
|---|---|------------------|
| <b>Rising Strong Operating &amp; Sustainability</b> | One-time funding for a grant to a non-profit organization in Spokane with expertise in the Rising Strong model.   | <b>\$1.1M</b>    |
|   | One-time funding to lead development of a sustainable operating funding model for programs using the Rising Strong model that provides a family-centered drug treatment and housing program.                                  | <b>\$150K</b>    |
| <b>Rising Strong West</b>                           | To construct supportive transitional housing to support no fewer than 24 households in western WA to receive comprehensive family services as well as treatment for substance use disorders while preserving the family unit. | <b>\$13.356K</b> |



## Child Welfare – Other Investments

| Title  | Description   | Amount          |
|--|---|-----------------|
| <b>Continue Prevention Pilot</b>                 | One-time funding is provided for DCYF to contract with a nonprofit organization with early childhood expertise to extend the pilot project with the purpose of preventing child abuse and neglect in Pierce County.   | <b>\$1.742M</b> |
| <b>Foster Youth Mentoring Pilot</b>              | One-time funding is provided for a pilot program to mentor foster youth.  | <b>\$750K</b>   |
| <b>Children’s Advocacy Centers</b>               | Funding is provided for children's advocacy centers.  | <b>\$750K</b>   |
| <b>Child Placing Agency Incentive Rate</b>       | Funding is provided to increase the new foster home licensing incentive payment for child-placing agencies to \$1,000 per family licensed, effective July 1, 2023.  | <b>\$538K</b>   |
| <b>Modify SSI Reimbursement Process</b>          | Funding is provided to work on a plan to discontinue the practice of using any benefits, payments, funds, or accrual paid to or on behalf of a child or youth to reimburse itself for cost of care by the earliest date feasible. (HB 1405 - Did not pass and was converted to a proviso) | <b>\$159K</b>   |
| <b>Foster Care Maintenance Payment Increases</b> | Funding is provided to increase the basic foster care maintenance payment for children in all age groups and the supervised independent living payment for youth in extended foster care each by \$50 per month per youth.  | <b>\$5.161M</b> |

## Child Welfare – Other Investments

| Title                                   | Description   | Amount        |
|---|---|---------------|
| <b>Independent Living Services</b>      | Provided for DCYF to increase rates for independent living service providers.   | <b>\$1.5M</b> |
| <b>Foster Care Educational Outreach</b> | One-time funding is provided for a contract with an education advocacy provider with expertise in foster care educational outreach.                                 | <b>\$920K</b> |
| <b>The Breakfast Group</b>              | One-time funding is provided for an all-male, African American organization to provide youth ages 12 through 19 with educational activities and mentoring services. | <b>\$250K</b> |



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# THANK YOU

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Allison Krutsinger

[Allison.krutsinger@dcyf.wa.gov](mailto:Allison.krutsinger@dcyf.wa.gov)



Washington State Department of  
**CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILIES**

A photograph of a white card with the words "Thank you" written in blue cursive. The card is placed on top of a brown envelope. The background is a plain, light-colored surface.

Thank you



**WASHINGTON STATE  
OFFICE OF PUBLIC DEFENSE**

Larry Jefferson, Director

Email: [opd@opd.wa.gov](mailto:opd@opd.wa.gov)

(360) 586-3164  
FAX (360) 586-8165

## 2023-2025 Parent Representation Budget Items

**Pre-Filing  
Representation:  
\$2M**

- Maintain pre-filing representation in existing areas
- Expand pre-filing representation to additional counties

**Voluntary Placement  
Advice Hotline:  
\$2M**

- Establish a voluntary placement advice hotline to assist parents in this critical phase of the child welfare process

**6 Social Work  
Contracts:  
\$872,000**

- Add up to 6 social work contracts to assist the parent representation program contracted attorneys in dependency and termination cases

**Parents for Parents  
Program:  
\$2.8M**

- Increase funding for the parent for parent peer support program

**Vendor Rate  
Increase:**

- Increase vendor rates on average 15% in FY24 and 10% in FY25 across multiple programs, including the parent representation program

**Agency Contacts:** Director Larry Jefferson, [larry.jefferson@opd.wa.gov](mailto:larry.jefferson@opd.wa.gov); (360) 515-6900

Deputy Director Sophia Byrd McSherry, [sophia.byrdmcsberry@opd.wa.gov](mailto:sophia.byrdmcsberry@opd.wa.gov); (360) 878-0550

*Justice ♦ Service ♦ Equity ♦ Excellence*

**CWAC Budget Priorities & Support Items  
2023 Legislative Session**

| Issue   | Senate Budget                             | House Budget   | Final Budget   |
|---|---|--|--|
| Kinship navigators<br>\$2.467M                    | \$2.467M                                  | \$1.234m total   | \$2.467M   |
| Caregiver Support Package                         | \$58.286M                                 | \$35.036M<br><br>(did not include case aids for levels 1 &2) | \$35.036M<br><br>(did not include case aids for levels 1 &2) |
| Educational Advocates (\$920k)                    | Not funded                                | \$920K   | \$920k   |
| Parents 4 Parents (\$5M)                          | \$522k                                    | \$1.868M   | \$1M   |
| Independent Living Programs (\$7.2M)              | Not Funded                                | \$3.5M   | \$1.5M   |
| Home Visiting funding increase                    | \$9.3M                                    | \$8.56M  | \$8.56M  |
| Home visiting additional slots                    | Not funded                                | \$1M   | \$1M   |
| Graduation Success (\$6m)                         | \$3M                                      | \$2.21M  | \$2.21M  |
| OPD Pre-Filing Representation (3.42M)             | \$3.42M                                   | \$3.42M  | \$2M   |
| LifeSet Expansion (\$3.45m)                       | \$3.45M<br>(private dollars not included) | \$2.76M<br>(private dollars not included)                    | \$4.176M<br>(\$2.76M + \$1.416M in private dollars)          |
| Project education workgroup (\$150k)              | Not funded                                | \$150k   | \$150k   |
| Lifeline Project (\$1.5m)                         | Not funded                                | \$1.5M   | \$750k   |
| Rising Strong (Capital) (\$13.356m)               | \$13.356M                                 | \$13.356M  | \$13.4M  |
| Rising Strong (Spokane) Operating Budget          | Not funded                                | \$1.1M<br>\$150k- operating model development                | \$1.1M<br>\$150k- operating model development                |
| Children's representation Program – 2021 (\$6.1m) | \$2.41M                                   | \$2.11M  | \$2.441M   |
| Family Resource centers (\$10M)                   | \$2M                                      | Not funded   | \$2M   |
| Parent Mentoring Program (FPAWS)                  | Not funded                                | Not funded   | Not funded   |
| Family Time                                       | \$16.3M                                   | \$16.332M  | \$16.332M  |

## CWAC Budget Priorities & Support Items 2023 Legislative Session

| Issue                                | Senate Budget                   | House Budget                    | Final Budget                    |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Basic rate for foster care           | Not funded                      | \$5.161                         | \$5.161                         |
| Pacific Tower Property               | Not funded                      | \$900k<br>\$5M capital          | \$6.454M                        |
| Homeless Prevention & Diversion Fund | \$3M                            | Not funded                      | \$5M                            |
| Anchor community Initiative (\$8M)   | Not funded                      | \$2M                            | Not funded                      |
| Drivers Assistance program           | Requested language was included | Requested language was included | Requested language was included |
| Family Treatment Court               | Not funded                      | \$1.168M                        | \$1.168M                        |

CWAC bills in the budgets:

| Issue   | Senate Budget | House Budget | Final Budget  |
|---|---------------|--------------|---|
| Children in Crisis (HB 1580)                    | Not funded    | \$5.287M     | \$6M  |
| Prenatal Substance Exposure (1168)              | Not Funded    | \$2.347M     | \$2.312M  |
| Family Connections Program (1204)               | Not funded    | \$1.3M       | \$1.308M  |
| Child Welfare Services/ DD (HB 1188)            | Not funded    | \$2.22M      | \$148K - DCYF<br>\$294k – DSHS/LTC<br>\$1.770M – DSHS/DD                  |
| SSI Child Welfare (HB 1405)                     | Not funded    | \$321k       | \$159k<br>(bill did not pass, but funding was included for the workgroup) |
| Youth Seeking Housing (HB 1406)                 | Not funded    | \$3.124M     | \$1.562M  |
| Guardianship Assistance Program (SB 5124)       | \$2.609M      | Not Funded   | \$2.47M + \$139k  |
| Child Specific Foster Care (SB 5683)            | \$3.476M      | Not funded   | \$3.371M + \$105k   |
| Child Welfare Housing (SB 5256)                 | \$7.255M      | Not funded   | \$5.255M  |
| Workgroup for homeless & foster youth (HB 1679) | Not funded    | \$277k       | \$277k  |

## CWAC Budget Priorities & Support Items 2023 Legislative Session

|  |            |            |      |
|--|------------|------------|------|
| Voluntary Placement Agreements (HB 1295) | Not funded | Not funded | \$2M |
|--|------------|------------|------|

Other Items of interest:

| Issue                                | Senate Budget | House Budget | Final Budget |
|--------------------------------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|
| Child advocacy centers               | \$4M          | \$750k       | \$750k       |
| CPA incentive rate                   | Not funded    | \$1.076M     | \$538K       |
| D.S. vs DCYF compliance              | \$24.246M     | \$21.096M    | \$24.246M    |
| Combined in-home services            | \$9.693M      | \$9.693M     | \$9.693M     |
| Initial license maintenance payment  | \$14.664M     | \$14.664M    | \$14.664M    |
| Maintain Licensing Ratios            | \$2.97M       | \$7.26M      | \$2.58M      |
| Prenatal substance exposure services | Not Funded    | Part of 1168 | 2.312M       |
| Foster Youth Mentoring Pilot         | Not Funded    | \$750k       | \$750k       |
| SUD prevention-families              | Not Funded    | \$3.014M     | \$3.014M     |
| Youth Housing Support Services       | \$3.384M      | \$3.384M     | \$3.384M     |
| Team Child Project Services          | Not funded    | \$1.4M       | \$1.4M       |
| Juvenile Justice Partnership Council | \$600k        | Not funded   | \$600k       |
| Language Access Plan                 | \$1.948M      | \$2.706M     | \$1.948M     |

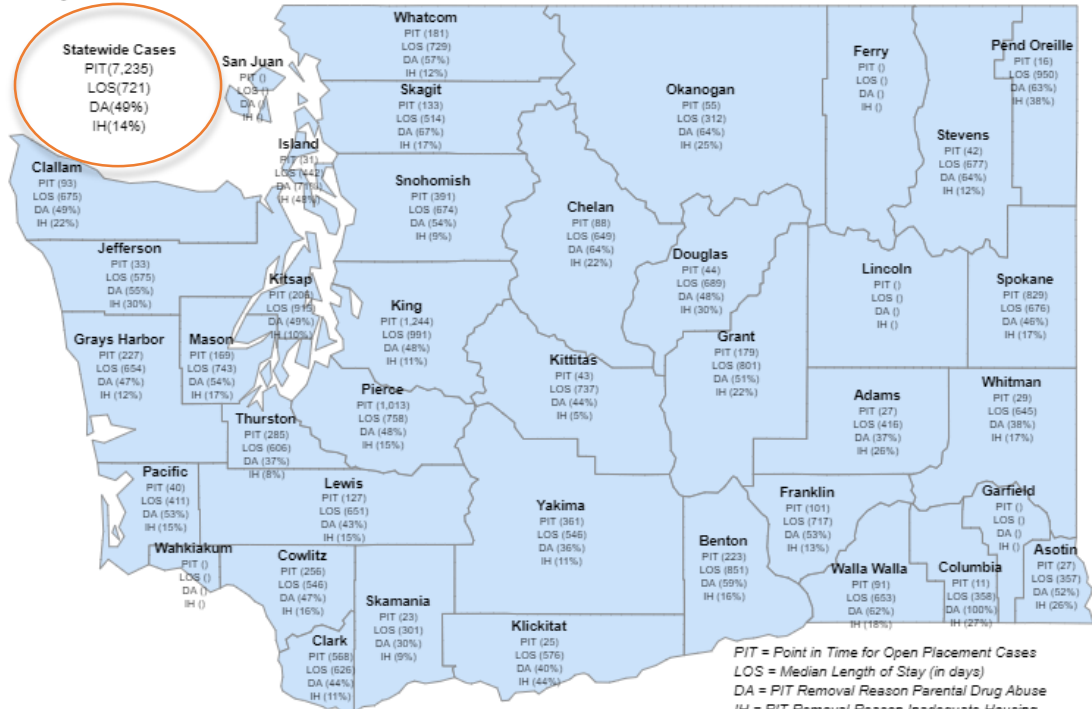
# WA State Reunifications



- March 2023, the number of current Dependency Cases open in Washington state was: 7,235
- These children had a median length of stay of 721 days.

**Washington State Current Open Cases, Median Length of Stay in Out-of-Home Placement, Percent of Open Cases with Removal Reason Parental Drug Abuse, and Percent of Open Cases with Removal Reason Inadequate Housing\* - by County**

To avoid potential identification of individuals, some counties will display a (\*) if Point-in-Time for Open Placement Cases (PIT) are less than 10 when pulled for the year.



PIT = Point in Time for Open Placement Cases  
 LOS = Median Length of Stay (in days)  
 DA = PIT Removal Reason Parental Drug Abuse  
 IH = PIT Removal Reason Inadequate Housing  
 (Placement removals may have multiple removal reasons)

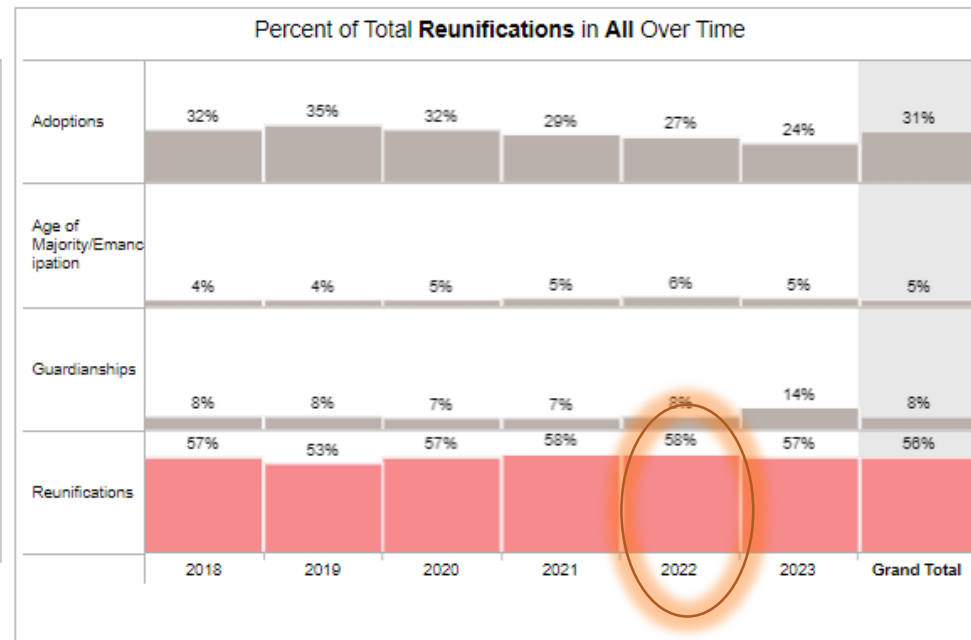
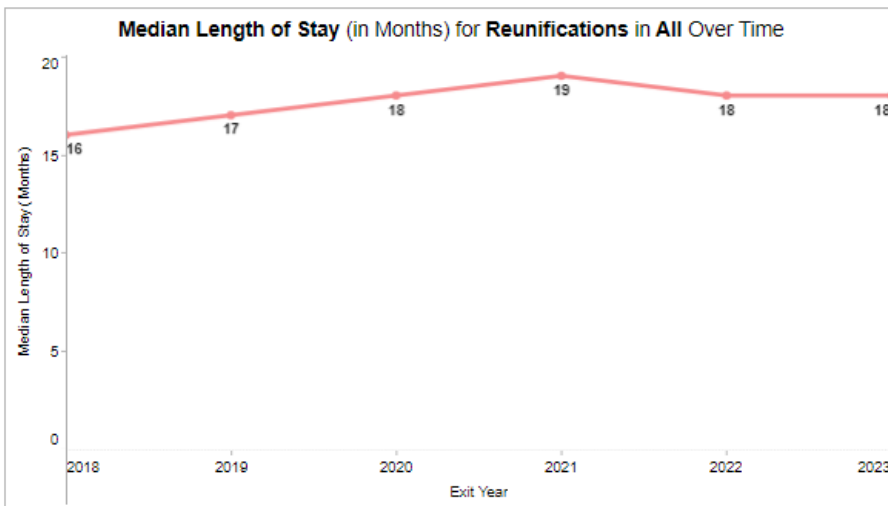


# WA State Reunifications

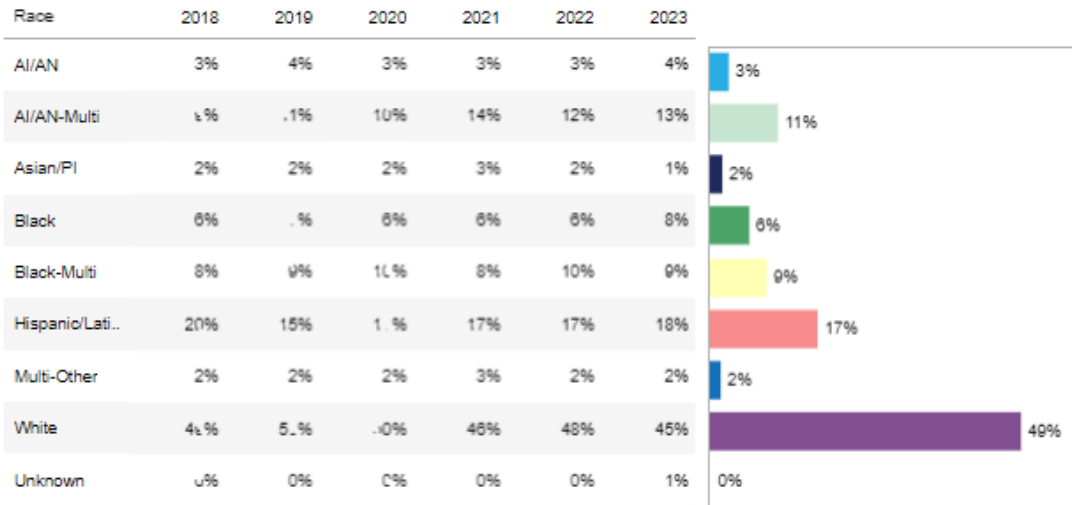


## Reunifications!

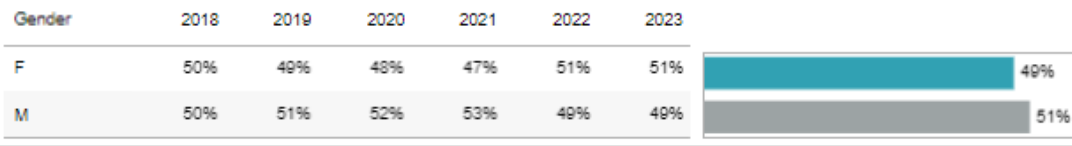
- For **2022**, in Washington State
  - Percent of reunifications in ALL over time was 58%
  - Median length of stay in care: 18 months



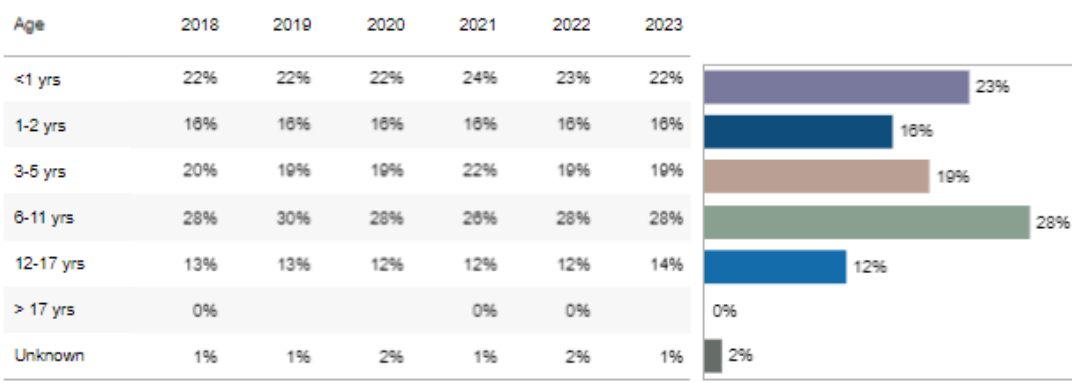
**% of Total Reunifications by Year in All | Race**



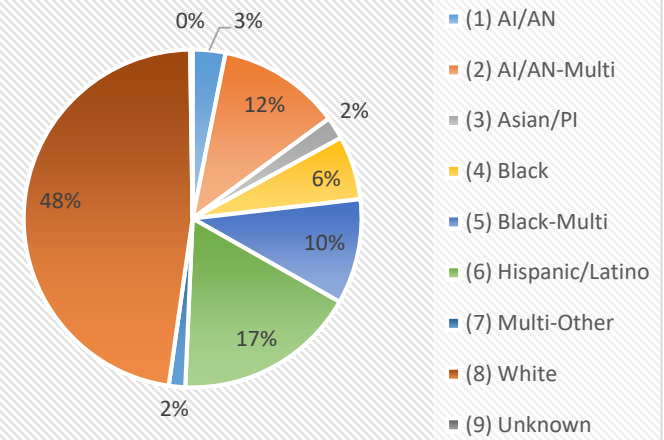
**% of Total Reunifications by Year in All | Gender**



**% of Total Reunifications by Year in All | Age**



**Reunifications**



**What is the breakout of the families being reunified in Washington State?**



★ Red star = has requested AOC Mini Grant

★ Blue star = has indicated they will host an event in 2023

# Family Reunification Day Events Planned

## Clark County

8/19/2023 11:00am to 2:00pm  
Leroy Haagen Memorial Park  
Vancouver, WA

## Chelan/Douglas County

6/23/2023 2:00pm to 4:00pm  
Methow Park  
Wenatchee, WA

## King County

8/05/2023 11:30am to 1:30pm  
Gene Coulon Park  
Renton, WA

## Mason County

6/22/2023 1pm to 3pm  
Kneeland Park  
Shelton, WA

## Spokane County

6/23/2023 1:00pm to 4:00pm  
Jury Lounge  
Spokane, WA

## Snohomish County

6/23/2023 12:00pm to 4:00pm  
America Legion Memorial Park  
Everett, WA

## Pierce County

6/29/2023 2:30pm to 4:30pm  
Wapato Park  
Tacoma, WA

## Thurston County

7/21/2023 5-9pm  
Hands on Children's Museum  
Olympia, WA

## Kitsap County

6/12/2023 2:30pm to 4:00pm  
Juvenile Department  
Port Orchard, WA

## Skagit County

August 2023 TBD

## Jefferson County

6/24/2023 TDB



# Family Reunification Day Event Planning



The screenshot shows the Washington Courts website. At the top left is the logo for Washington Courts. To the right are links for 'Get Email Updates' and 'FAQs & eService Center'. Below these is a search bar labeled 'Search WA Courts Site'. A navigation menu includes 'Forms', 'Court Directory', 'Opinions', 'Rules', 'Courts', 'Programs & Organizations', and 'Resources'. Below the menu is a breadcrumb trail: 'Courts Home > Resources, Publications, and Reports'. The main content area features a large photograph of a family (a man holding a baby, a woman, and a young boy) walking outdoors near a body of water. Below the photo is the heading 'Family Reunification Month'. The text describes the importance of reunification for children in foster care and mentions the statewide celebration in June 2023. To the right of the text is a 'RESOURCES' section with links for 'CERTIFICATE', 'GOVERNOR'S PROCLAMATION', 'MINI GRANTS', 'PLANNING TOOLKIT', and 'PRESS RELEASE'. Below that is a 'CONTACT' section for Lorrie Thompson, Communications Officer, with her email and phone number.

**WASHINGTON COURTS**

Get Email Updates | FAQs & eService Center

Search WA Courts Site

Forms Court Directory Opinions Rules Courts Programs & Organizations Resources

Courts Home > Resources, Publications, and Reports

## Family Reunification Month

For most children in foster care, reunification with their family is the best option for a permanent and loving home. Each year, thousands of children are successfully reunited with their families after parents work hard, gain new understanding and skills, and partner with social workers and courts to meet extensive requirements.

While some courts have held family reunification celebrations for many years, the Washington State Supreme Court Commission on Children in Foster Care was excited to proclaim June 2023 as a statewide celebration of Family Reunification Month among courts and communities across Washington, and to sponsor the annual commemorations. For 2023, the statewide celebration is not focusing on one specific month but rather encouraging and supporting celebrations at any time that works for a court and community.

Safe reunification of children with their parents is the primary goal of the dependency process, which strives for learning and healing. The Commission on Children in Foster Care encourages everyone to join in celebrating families that have worked so hard and succeeded in reunifying.

### RESOURCES

- CERTIFICATE
- GOVERNOR'S PROCLAMATION
- MINI GRANTS
- PLANNING TOOLKIT
- PRESS RELEASE

### CONTACT

Lorrie Thompson  
Communications Officer  
[lorrie.thompson@courts.wa.gov](mailto:lorrie.thompson@courts.wa.gov)  
360-705-5347

## **Family Reunification Celebration – Mini Grants**

The Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) welcomes your application for a Family Reunification Celebration mini grant. Reunification is the primary goal for dependency cases, and families who achieve this have earned a celebration! A small amount of funding is available through the federal Court Improvement Program grant, managed by the AOC, to support Family Reunification Celebrations in Washington State. County Courts or other agencies supporting Family Reunification Celebrations may be reimbursed up to \$200 per county for expenses such as decorations, certificates, crafts and games, cost to rent a venue, etc.

<https://www.courts.wa.gov/newsinfo/index.cfm?fa=newsinfo.familyreunification>

# FJCIP Coordinators support Family Reunification Day Celebrations in their courts.



Through participation in the FJCIP Community of Practice on Family Reunification Day resources and planning, sharing local data on reunification, helping cross-system partners come together to plan events, and finding funding sources such as the AOC Mini Grants, FJCIP Coordinators support hosting Family Reunification Day events for their local courts.

Learn more about FJCIP [here](#)



**Date:** May 1, 2023

**To:** Commission on Children in Foster Care Members and Interested Parties

**From:** Kelly Warner-King

**RE:** Context for CCFC Strategic Planning Conversation

The intent of this memo is to provide historical and current context for our strategic planning discussion about the future direction and structure of the Commission on Children in Foster Care during the May 8<sup>th</sup> meeting.

**Background**

In its May 2004 report "[\*FOSTERING THE FUTURE: Safety, Permanence and Well-Being for Children in Foster Care\*](#)," the Pew Commission on Children in Foster Care recognized the unique position state supreme courts have bringing together child welfare partners and in institutionalizing the leadership required to make progress in the child welfare system. In addition to recommending that states develop multi-disciplinary commissions on children in foster care, the authors made recommendations that still resonate today, including strengthening courts through:

- the use of data and performance measures collected and shared in collaboration with the child welfare agency;
- high quality legal representation for children and parents; and
- organizing courts so that dependency cases are heard in dedicated courts/departments and judicial officers build careers on the dependency bench, with established training and standards of practice.

On November 9, 2004, the Supreme Court of Washington took a step toward this leadership goal and created the Commission on Children in Foster Care. Chief Justice Gerry Alexander designated Justice Bobbe Bridge and Children’s Administration Assistant Secretary Uma Ahluwalia to serve as Commission Co-Chairs.

At that time, the strategic goals of the Commission were identified as:

- monitor and report on the extent to which child welfare programs and courts are responsive to the needs of the children in their joint care;
- make recommendations for systemic improvements; and
- broaden public awareness of and support for meeting the needs of vulnerable children and families, including provision of sufficient mental health, health care, education, and other services.

The CCFC was established via [Supreme Court Order Number 25700-B-448](#). The order has been amended five times, the most recent in [2020](#), to add official members to the roster and to update the co-chair requirements (changing the affiliation from DSHS to DCYF for the child welfare leader and requiring a sitting, rather than retired, Supreme Court justice). The AOC maintains the minutes for all CCFC meetings. Minutes from 2012 to 2023 are posted [online](#) and we can make earlier minutes available upon request.

### **The Commission's Mission, Values and Goals**

The following information is posted on the [Commission's webpages](#), part of the Washington Courts website. While some of the information needs updating, the list of members, meeting notes and meeting schedule are up to date.

#### Our Mission

Provide all children in foster care with safe, permanent families in which their physical, emotional, intellectual, and social needs are met.

#### Our Value Statement

All children need safe, permanent families that love, nurture, protect and guide them.

#### Our Goals

Tactical: Improve collaboration between the courts, child welfare partners and the education system to achieve the mission.

Strategic:

- The Commission will monitor and report on the extent to which child welfare programs and courts are responsive to the needs of the children in their joint care.
- The Commission will broaden public awareness of and support for meeting the needs of children and families in foster care.
- The Commission will institutionalize collaboration beyond the terms of office of individual agency directors and elected officials.



The Commission can achieve its goals through initiating policy decisions and needed legislative and court rule changes.

### **Planning for the future**

We conducted a survey of Commission members and regular attendees in order to gather feedback about how well the CCFC functions and areas in need of improvement. Themes that emerged from the survey and the discussion at our last Commission meeting:

- Positives
  - Commission members work well together, are generally respectful and are able to be open and honest.
  - People find the Commission to be worth their time and informative.
  - Respondents appreciate the cross-system nature of the group and relationship building potential.
  - Meetings are a way to get updates about what other parts of the system are working on.
  - People appreciate that members are passionate about improving the child welfare system.
  - Respondents appreciate that leaders are in the room and are accountable.
- Needs improvement
  - Commission members do not clearly understand their roles or the goals of the Commission.
  - Some members identified a need to focus on the bigger picture and requested that the CCFC develop a strategic plan so that they can figure out how they can best contribute.
  - Orientation for new members was suggested as a way to help members get on the same page.
  - Several respondents requested more focus on action and strategies that the Commission can move forward.
  - Changing the name of the Commission to reflect the child welfare system shift that has taken place since the CCFC's founding - from prioritizing foster care to focusing on keeping families together and connected.
  - Meetings serve as information-sharing but lack enough time for discussion – agendas are too ambitious and more time should be provided to hear all voices.
  - Concerns that the members are not reflective of the current system (reflect an outdated model of child welfare) and should be reconsidered with an eye toward equity.
- Workgroups
  - Most respondents were neutral about the effectiveness of the workgroups, with the Children's Representation Workgroup receiving the highest effectiveness ratings.

- Generally, people admitted that they don't know a lot about what the workgroups do and how they are related to the goals of the Commission.
- Respondents want more clarity about the purpose of workgroups and what they are expected to produce.

Commission members acknowledged that the strength of the CCFC lies in the ability to convene partners from across the system, providing a forum to share ideas and identify gaps. However, the general sentiment was that we could do more, especially considering the power and knowledge of the group. Some of the suggestions about how we might accomplish this included:

- Taking on specific projects that would enable us to “experiment around the edges”
- Developing a common definition of a successful outcome in the child welfare system
- Committing to share data so that we can identify needs and measure our success
- Addressing the challenges created by our non-unified court system – including the lack of required training and frequent rotations of judicial officers – which contribute to inconsistent practice across the state and, ultimately, justice by geography.

The experience of the Washington State Team, which was initiated in September 2019 as part of the *National Judicial Leadership Summit IV on Child Welfare*, has provided an opportunity to consider ways in which we might bring the CCFC together to set goals for positive system change. Justice Madsen shared the idea of the CCFC hosting a Washington Summit every two years, where system partners would hear from professionals and leading experts from across the country and then set goals for the Commission for the following two years. Secretary Hunter suggested that we do this in a spirit of collaboration and utilizing principles of Appreciative Inquiry to work toward a positive vision for children, youth and families.

While the CCFC lacks the resources that other Supreme Court commissions have in the way of dedicated staff and a budget, there was considerable willingness expressed by WACAP, OPD, DCYF, AOC and others to work together to define the agenda and invest in hosting a meaningful summit.

The following considerations were agreed upon at the March CCFC meeting:

- Summit should highlight national experts and actively include parents, youth and caregivers directly affected by the system
- Consider an Appreciative Inquiry approach, with a professional facilitator
- Focus on developing a shared, positive vision for what we are trying to do for children and families in the system
- Need to have safe conversations about equity, poverty, and supporting happy healthy families.
- Take this opportunity to change the Commission's name to reflect our common vision
- In action planning, clarify how we will work and use peoples' time, answering the questions: what do we expect the group to do, and how do we know when we got it done?