



Washington State Supreme Court Commission on Children in Foster Care

9/11/2023
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 12 min</p>	<p>1. Welcome and Introductions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land and Forced Labor Acknowledgment • Please type your name and agency in the chat in lieu of roll call • 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 November 10, 2023. 	<p>Justice Barbara Madsen, <i>Co-Chair</i></p> <p>Secretary Ross Hunter, <i>DCYF</i>; <i>Co-Chair</i></p>
<p>1:12 pm 3 min</p>	<p>Approval of May 2023 Minutes</p>	<p>Justice Barbara Madsen, <i>Co-Chair</i></p>
<p>1:15 pm 30 min</p>	<p>Mockingbird Youth Leadership Summit Follow Up</p>	<p>Mockingbird Society Presenters:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -YEAH Chapter: Lucas Neuman -King County Chapter: Lacey -Eastern Chapter: Caitlin Wallin -Olympia Chapter: Sabian Hart -Tacoma Chapter: Emily Abell -Northern Chapter: Arye -Central Chapter: Mira Cardozo and Fabio Foster
<p>1:45 pm 10 min</p>	<p>CCFC Strategic Planning Update</p>	<p>Kelly Warner-King, AOC</p>
<p>1:55 pm 35 min</p>	<p>Family Well-Being Community Collaborative (FWCC)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wrapping up • Harm of Removal Workgroup Update • Engaging Parents at Shelter Care Workgroup – Recommendations 	<p>Kelly Warner-King, AOC</p> <p>Sarah Burns, AOC Leroy Pascubillo, <i>Amara</i></p>
<p>2:30 pm 15 min</p>	<p>BREAK</p>	

New Business		
2:45 pm 60 min	<p>Keeping Families Together Implementation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Court Update <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Case filing trends ○ Preliminary insights from shelter care court observation project • Pattern Forms • DCYF Update • Small Group Discussion and Share Out 	<p>Matt Orme and Dr. Arina Gertseva, AOC</p> <p>Justice Barbara Madsen, <i>Co-Chair</i></p> <p>Secretary Ross Hunter, DCYF; <i>Co-Chair</i></p> <p>Kelly Warner-King, AOC</p>
3:45 pm 15 min	Member Updates/Discussion	Justice Barbara Madsen, <i>Co-Chair</i>
4:00 pm	Adjournment	
	<p><u>Upcoming 2023 Meetings:</u> December 4, 2023</p>	



**Washington State Supreme Court
Commission on Children in Foster Care
May 8, 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
Jim Bamberger, Director, Office of Civil Legal Aid (OCLA)
Judge Alicia Burton, Superior Court Judges' Association (SCJA) President Designee
Alyssa Connolly, Northwest Intertribal Council
Sydney Doherty, Coordinated Care of WA; Foster Care Physical/Mental Health Representative
Stacey Klim, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI, on behalf of Veronica Gallardo, OSPI 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
Jill May, Washington Association for Children & Families
Tonia McClanahan, Parent Advocate Representative
Representative Tana Senn, Washington House of Representatives
Rachel Sottile, Center for Children & Youth Justice (CCYJ)
Emily Stochel, Youth Who Has Been Reunified; College Success Foundation
Carrie Wayno, Attorney General's Office (Designee for Bob Ferguson)
Senator Claire Wilson, Washington State Senate
Bailey Zydek, Children's Representation Program Manager, OCLA

Members Not Present:

Jolie Bwiza, Tacoma Chapter Leader, Mockingbird Youth Network
Beth Canfield, Foster Parent Allies of Washington State
Mike Canfield, Foster Parent Alliance of Washington State (FPAWS)
Ryan Murrey, Washington Association of Child Advocate Programs (WACAP)

Guests Present:

Katie Anderson, Early Childhood Courts Statewide Coordinator, AOC
Sarah Burns, Statewide Innovation Coordinator, Family & Youth Justice Programs, AOC
Jacob D'Annunzio, Washington State OPD, Parents Representation Program
Patrick Dowd, Office of the Family and Children's Ombuds
Sydney Foster; Senior Policy Advisor, Human Services; Office of the Governor
Jenny Heddin, DCYF Assistant Secretary of Transformation
Allison Krutsinger, DCYF Director of Public Affairs
Carly Kujath, Office of Financial Management (OFM)
Natalie Lente, Executive Director, Mockingbird Society
Erin Shea McCann, Legal Counsel for Youth & Children
Carl McCurley, Washington State Center for Court Research, AOC
Alison Mendiola, Coordinator/Counsel, Senate Human Services, Reentry & Rehabilitation Committee
Jenn Nguyen, Statewide FJCIP Coordinator, Family & Youth Justice Programs, AOC
Matt Orme, Washington State Center for Court Research, AOC
Jim Theofelis, NorthStar Advocates
Commissioner Karl Triebel, Washington State Court of Appeals Division II

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 1:01 p.m. Introductions and roll call were conducted virtually through the Zoom meeting chat box.

Jeannie Kee, Foster Youth Alumni Representative, provided a land acknowledgment.

Approval of the Minutes

Justice Madsen invited a motion to approve the March 2023 meeting minutes. The motion to approve the minutes passed.

2023 Legislative & Budget Updates

DCYF Highlights of the 2023 Legislative Session

Allison Krutsinger, DCYF Director of Public Affairs, provided the DCYF Legislative Update, focusing on highlights of the 2023 Legislative Session that are most relevant to the Commission.

All three items of DCYF's Child Welfare Agency Request Legislation passed, although, the requests were not fully funded, so DCYF will need to adjust implementation accordingly. The request legislation included the following:

- (1) HB 1204 – Family Connections (\$1.308M)
- (2) SB 5256 – Housing Access and Supports (\$5.255M)
- (3) SB 5124 – Guardianship Assistance Program (\$2.609M)

DCYF Related Bill Highlights that Passed included:

- (1) HB 1168 – Parent Substance Exposure (\$2.312M, at HCA)
- (2) HB 1188 – Child Welfare Services/DD (\$148K)
- (3) SB 5515 – Child Abuse and Neglect (\$831K)
- (4) SB 5683 – Child Specific Licenses/Indian Children (\$3.47M)
- (5) HB 1580 – Children in Crisis (\$303K)

Housing Access and Supports Decision Package, which was almost fully funded, included:

- (1) Youth Housing Support Services (\$2.374M)
- (2) Housing Access and Support – SB 5256 (\$5.255M)

Combined In-Home & Transition Services Decision Package included:

- (1) Combined In-Home Services (\$9.693M)
- (2) YV LifeSet (\$4.176M)

Caregiver Placement Supports Decision Package included:

- (1) Caregiver Placement Supports (\$21.9M)

D.S. Compliance *Decision Package* was almost completely funded and included:

- (1) Adolescent Transitional Housing (\$4.962M)
- (2) Implementation and Monitoring (\$1.207M)
- (3) Hub Home Model (\$4.496M)
- (4) Licensing Standards (\$1.650M)
- (5) Referrals and Transitions (\$4.543M)
- (6) Therapeutic Foster Care (\$5.263M)
- (7) Qualified Residential TX (\$2.125M)

Licensed Kinship Placements included:

- (1) Licensed Kinship Placements – staffing:
 - Kinship Caregiver Engagement Unit (\$1.826M)
 - Maintain Licensing Staff Ratios (\$2.97M)
- (2) Initial License Maintenance Payment (\$14.664M)

Family Time *Decision Package* included:

- (1) Family Time (\$16.332M)

Prevention *Decision Package* included:

- (1) SUD Prevention (\$3.014M)
- (2) Home Visiting Funding Increase (\$8.56M)
- (3) Home Visiting Slot Expansion (\$1M)

Rising Strong included:

- (1) Rising Strong Operating & Sustainability
 - One-time funding for a grant to a non-profit organization in Spokane with expertise in the Rising Strong model (\$1.1M)
 - 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 (\$150K)
- (2) Rising Strong West (\$13.356K)

Child Welfare – Other Investments included:

- (1) Continue Prevention Pilot (\$1.742M)
- (2) Foster Youth Mentoring Pilot (\$750K)
- (3) Children’s Advocacy Centers (\$750K)
- (4) Child Placing Agency Incentive Rate (\$538K)
- (5) Modify SSI Reimbursement Process (\$159K)
- (6) Foster Care Maintenance Payment Increases (\$5.161M)
- (7) Independent Living Services (\$1.5M)
- (8) Foster Care Educational Outreach (\$920K)
- (9) The Breakfast Group (\$250K)

Jacob D’Annunzio asked: “How will the shift to HCA for addressing prenatal substance exposure impact the Plan of Safe Care or DCYF’s involvement in the work? Allison responded that DCYF’s work there will continue, and they hope to continue to expand it.

When asked if there will be additional Family First Prevention and Services Act money available to fund prevention services, Secretary Hunter replied that FFPSA are federal funds that Washington is not able to use yet because DCYF lacks the technology to track and report the required data. However, DCYF has funds available to pay for more of those services.

More detailed information regarding Allison's legislative update is available in her PPT slides, which will be sent out to Commission members following the meeting. Commission members may contact Allison at allison.krutsinger@dcyf.wa.gov with additional questions.

Office of Public Defense (OPD) Budget Items

Larry Jefferson, Director of OPD, provided a list of 2023-2025 Parent Representation Budget Items in the meeting materials. He reported that OPD asked for \$44M, and they received \$40M. With their funding, they will be able to fund existing programs and fund a couple more. The OPD budget items discussed included:

- Pre-Filing Representation (\$2M): Maintains pre-filing representation in existing areas, and expands pre-filing representation to additional counties.
- Voluntary Placement Advice Hotline (\$2M): Establishes a voluntary placement advice hotline to assist parents in this critical phase of the child welfare process. Parents will be paired with a pre-filing representative so they can access legal advice. Partnership with DCYF will be needed to let parents know that the hotline exists and how to access it.
- Social Work Contracts (\$872,000): Adds up to six social work contracts to assist the Parent Representation Program contracted attorneys in dependency and termination cases.
- Parents for Parents Program (\$2.8M): Increases funding for the parent for parent peer support program. This will enable parents with lived experience to earn a better wage doing this work.
- Vendor Rate Increase: Increases vendor rates on average 15% in FY24 and 10% in FY25 across multiple programs, including the Parent Representation Program.

Larry also reported that OPD has made exciting new additions to their office. Shrounda Selivanoff is the new Social Services Manager for OPD's Parent Representation Program and Tonia McClanahan took a new position as OPD's Parent Voice Advocacy Manager. In addition, OPD is partnering with formerly incarcerated people to help them transition back into society. OPD is also now representing cases in which defendants have been found not guilty by reason of insanity. Commission members may contact Larry at larry.jefferson@opd.wa.gov with questions.

Child Welfare Advocacy Coalition (CWAC) Highlights

Laurie Lippold provided a list of CWAC Budget Priorities and Support Items for the 2023 Legislative Session in the meeting materials, and she discussed some of the highlights of that list as follows. Laurie noted that there was considerable alignment between the priorities of child and family advocates and state agencies this session. In particular, she highlighted HB 1204, SB 5256, and SB 5683. She also explained CWAC's legislative advocacy process, led by Laurie and co-chair Jim Theofelis. The group meets regularly during the legislative session to identify the legislation and budget items to support, then the CWAC monitors, strategizes, and promotes them together. The following were CWAC priority issues this session:

- Kinship Navigators (\$2.467M): Kinship navigators received \$2.467M. In addition to navigators at DCYF, there will be more kinship navigators around the state, and King County will have two. Evaluation of the model will continue. Let Laurie know if you have any questions, and she will get you connected to who you need.
- Rising Strong (Capital) (\$13.356M): Funding was secured to create a Rising Strong program on the west side of the state. Representative Lisa Callan helped to secure a site with Evergreen Recovery.
- Family Resources Centers (\$10M): Family Resource Centers did not receive as much funding as they hoped for, but \$10M will go to fund centers around the state.

- SSI Child Welfare (HB 1405): HB 1405 is a bill that became a proviso that prevents the child welfare system from using a young person's SSI survivor benefits to pay for the cost of care.
- Voluntary Placement Agreements (HB 1295): As Larry mentioned, \$2M was received for legal consultation through a Voluntary Placement Advice Hotline.

Laurie was asked what overarching themes she detected in the past session. She reported that there was a strong focus on keeping families together, a commitment to young people in care and making their experience more positive, and a focus on ensuring that people leaving systems of care don't end up homeless. Commission members may contact Laurie at laurielippold@gmail.com with questions.

Senator Wilson, Chair of the Senate Human Services Committee and Vice Chair of the Senate Early Learning and K-12 Education Committee, shared her perspective that we need to invest in prevention. The hope is, as we invest early on, there will be fewer dollars we have to spend in the long run. She also believes that it is our job to create spaces at the table for youth and family voices to be heard. Senator Wilson is also thankful to have Representative Senn, Chair of the House Human Services, Youth, & Early Learning Committee, as a partner on the House side.

AOC Family Treatment Court Team

Kelly shared that the AOC received partial funding (\$1.18M of the \$2.1M requested) to support staffing of the statewide Family Treatment Court Team. The funds will enable the AOC to sustain the work of the statewide team and add a Lived Expert position. Kelly also noted that the FTC program recently created a workgroup focused on transportation resources and how to get them to rural communities.

Office of Civil Legal Aid (OCLA)

Jim Bamberger expressed his appreciation to Senator Wilson, Representative Senn and the Legislature for their continued focus on justice and the quality of life of children. Jim shared that the Legislature has been supportive of OCLA as it moves to identify, recruit, train and retain attorneys in new counties. The program received a 17% increase in 2024, and 13.5% increase in 2025.

Bailey Zydek, Program Manager for OCLA's Children's Representation Program (CRP), reported the program has phased into eight counties as part of its HB 1219 program expansion, and they are recruiting in the next CRP counties that will go live on January 1, 2024. The implementation schedule is being revised and OCLA will provide a report to the Legislature outlining the changes needed by October 1, 2023. Challenges continue to be having a pool of qualified attorneys who are willing to carry child representation contracts and go through the extended training that is required. The CRP is excited that a salary increase can be offered, as they think that will help address this challenge.

Next Steps:

- Susan will send Allison's DCYF Legislative Update PPT slides to the Commission.

AOC's Public Dependency Data Dashboard Demonstration

Matt Orme, Senior Research Associate at the AOC Washington State Center for Court Research (WSCCR) provided a demonstration of the AOC's public dependency data dashboard. He noted there are two ways to access the dashboard: (1) by going to the Washington Courts [WSCCR webpage](#) and clicking on Dependency Dashboard, or (2) by going to the [FYJP website](#) and then to Court Improvement, FJCIP, Data Dashboard. He then noted the [dashboard homepage](#) includes information about the dependency reporting program, including new dependency dashboard

information for 2023; that data on the dashboard are updated monthly, quarterly, and annually; and that the dashboard provides the public data in the following main areas:

1. Current year dependency timeliness measures updated on a monthly/quarterly basis.
2. Measures and filings for prior years.
3. 2015-2022 filings and filing rates, and 2022 dependency measures.
4. Race/Ethnicity data for prior years' filings and measures by race/ethnicity, and filing rates by demographics for prior years.
5. 2018-2023 Permanency Outcomes by demographics, point-in-time median length of stay, and placement discharge type.

The dashboard homepage also includes tips for navigating the dashboard, and Matt noted that using the circles at the bottom and going left to right will help a user to navigate through the dashboard. Matt then demonstrated what is available by going to each of the main areas.

Presentation and conversation included the following key takeaways:

- Between 2017 – 2022, dependency filings have dropped almost 50% and the rates of Termination of Parental Rights petitions show a similar decrease.
 - Commission members commented on the pandemic's impact on referrals and the opportunity we now have to engage the community in conversations about ways to keep children safe while living at home.
 - Secretary Hunter noted that many other states have also experienced reductions in child welfare case filings over the last five to ten years, and that a reduction in child poverty has driven a lot of the change. The number of child abuse reports are down and substantiated abuse is down significantly. He offered to provide a future presentation on child abuse and neglect reports and filings.
- Matt shared the new demographic data functions of the public dashboard, which allow users to filter data by the race/ethnicity and ages of children with dependency cases. He also demonstrated the ability to compare data from individual counties to each other and to the state.
 - A question was asked about how the data will categorize gender non-conforming youth and children. This database will reflect how DCYF chooses to classify gender, as that information is imported from FamLink and is based on self-report.
- The Permanency Outcomes section allows users to look reunification rates and the median length of stay in out-of-home care.
- The data sources that feed into the public dashboard are the same as the Interactive Dependency Timeliness Report (iDTR) - court data comes from court management systems for each superior court, and that data is matched to selected data from DCYF's FamLink system.
 - It was noted that what we measure can contribute to system players acting in certain ways, for example, the focus on timeliness as a key indicator of a court's effectiveness.
 - Carl McCurley shared that the iDTR has evolved from a 2007 legislative mandate to track and report on case permanency timelines established by state and federal laws. Perhaps a new mandate could help direct more attention to other measures that are more relevant to the current dependency landscape.

Commission members may contact Matt at matt.orme@courts.wa.gov or Kelly if they have questions or would like to have an individual demonstration for their agency.

Commission Workgroup Orientation – Family Well-Being Community Collaborative
Kelly Warner-King, Manager of AOC's Family & Youth Justice Programs (FYJP) and Co-Chair of the Family Well-Being Community Collaborative (FWCC), provided an orientation to and overview of the FWCC. She shared the [FWCC webpage](#), which includes information about the

FWCC's mission and vision, membership, workgroups, meeting schedule, meeting notes, and more. She then explained the FWCC's mission and vision, which can be viewed [here](#). The FWCC and its workgroups have been focused on preparing dependency courts and court partners for implementation of the Keeping Families Together Act (HB 1227), which will go into effect on July 1, 2023. She then demonstrated some of the tools and resources that are available on the [Keeping Families Together Act webpage](#) of the FYJP website, which are a result of that work.

The tools and resources include a Court Readiness Toolkit, iDecide tool, and a one-page informational flyer regarding HB 1227. These tools are available to all courts, and the FWCC is working with both FJCIP and non-FJCIP courts to prepare for HB 1227. Next week, staff is going to Mason County Superior Court, which is a non-FJCIP Court, to train them on the Court Readiness toolkit. In addition, "Cross System Kickoff for the Keeping Families Together Act" trainings are being provided to DCYF Regions 1-6 in the months of May and June. More information about the work of the FWCC and its workgroups is available for viewing by going to the FWCC Meeting Notes or going to the HUBs for each individual workgroup. Also the FWCC has convened a Data & Evaluation group to help develop a plan for collecting, monitoring and evaluating the impacts of HB 1227 statutory changes on local court system practice and state-level outcomes for children and families. Dr. Arina Gertseva, of the Washington State Center for Court Research (WSCCR), is the point person for this work, and she is currently working with University of Washington professors and graduate students to develop a court observation tool.

Justice Madsen suggested it would be helpful to Commission members to have an update from the FWCC and its workgroups in the minutes. Kelly said the FWCC wants to keep people informed, and they would be happy to explore something that will meet the Commission's needs.

Upcoming Events

Mockingbird Youth Leadership Summit – Save the Date: August 1, 2023

Natalie Lente, new Executive Director of The Mockingbird Society, introduced herself to the Commission. Commission members welcomed her, and Jim Theofelis, founder of The Mockingbird Society, expressed his gratitude for her leadership at Mockingbird and in the community.

Natalie reported the date of this-year's Mockingbird Youth Leadership Summit will be August 1, 2023. The event will be held at the Double Tree Hotel in SeaTac, and there will also be an option to attend the Summit virtually. Mockingbird will send additional information to the Commission as it becomes available. A save-the-date calendar invite will also be sent out to Commission members following the Commission meeting.

Family Reunification Celebrations

Tonia McClanahan, Co-Chair of the Family Reunification Day Celebrations Steering Committee (along with Co-Chair Judge Jeffrey Bassett of Kitsap County Superior Court), and Jenn Nguyen, AOC's Statewide Family & Juvenile Court Improvement Plan (FJCIP) Coordinator, gave an update about what is being planned for this year's Family Reunification Celebrations.

Jenn shared a slide presentation, which included the following data:

- In March 2023, the number of current Dependency Cases open in Washington was 7235, and those children had a median length of stay of 721 days;
- For 2022, in Washington State the percentage of reunifications over time was 58% and the median length of stay in care was 18 months; and
- A breakout of families being reunified in Washington State by race, gender and age.

She reported this data was obtained through the AOC's public Dependency Dashboard ([The Dash!](#)) that Matt Orme demonstrated earlier in the meeting. Tonia reported that 14 counties have confirmed

that are planning to host family reunification celebrations in 2023, including Clark, Chelan/Douglas, Jefferson, King, Kitsap, Mason, Pierce, Skagit, Snohomish, Spokane, and Thurston Counties. Members of the Steering Committee have tasked themselves with getting four additional counties on board for this year. The AOC is again offering \$200 mini grants to help counties cover celebration expenses. To provide additional incentive, OPD is also offering a \$200 reimbursement for reunification celebrations, including reimbursing counties for transportation to attend celebrations in other counties if their county is not hosting its own event. The organizers in Mason County will be giving away a car again this year.

Commission members discussed how powerful these events are, especially when judicial officers can attend. Commission members and interested parties were also encouraged to attend these celebrations whenever possible. More information, including event dates and details, can be found on the AOC's [Family Reunification Day webpage](#).

Next Steps:

- Susan will send a 2023 Mockingbird Leadership Summit save-the-date calendar invite to the Commission.
- Susan will send the link to AOC's Family Reunification Celebrations webpage to the Commission.

CCFC Strategic Planning

Kelly referred members to the May 1, 2023, memo that was included in the meeting materials, and she introduced Jenny Heddin, DCYF Assistant Secretary of Transformation, to share information about DCYF's strategic planning initiative.

Jenny reported that, like most agencies, DCYF went into survival mode during the pandemic. Now, the agency is taking a fresh look at the strategic plan that was created before the pandemic and refining their goals to be more specific in each area of the plan. For example: the agency's goal of reducing the number of children and youth in out-of-home care by 50% - while they have made significant progress, they are adding more specificity about the outcomes they want for children and families. DCYF is also adding prevention goals, with a plan to better articulate the specific outcomes they are trying to prevent. Overarching goals for the agency focus on racial equity and social justice and removing disproportionality, as well as goals around how the agency operates as related to the quality and availability of services and practice. Once the strategic plan and goals are refined, the agency will develop theories of change and a logic model to help orient all 4,600 employees to the desired outcomes. Some key aspects of DCYF's strategic plan overlap with the work of the Commission, like DCYF's employee recruitment and retention goals, which include improving relationships with court partners. DCYF is excited to work with the CCFC to consider how to work together to make progress on shared goals and outcomes.

Secretary Hunter explained that DCYF and the Commission should aim for specific goals that can be measured and expressed in numbers. He shared the following quote from his email signature line: *"When you can measure what you are speaking about, and express it in numbers, you know something about it; when you cannot express it in numbers, your knowledge is of a meager and unsatisfactory kind; it may be the beginning of knowledge, but you have scarcely in your thoughts advanced to the stage of science."* — Lord Kelvin

Justice Madsen shared the idea that the CCFC host a summit, to be held every other year, in which we identify a discrete set of priorities and goals for the state's child welfare court system. Informed by DCYF and other agencies and organization's priorities, we'll seek common ground and aspiration. Then we can identify the roles to be played by everyone in the system. When we come

back together after two years, we should be able to assess if we've moved the needle, if we need to change the goals, and if everyone is taking on their responsibilities. This is a way to commit ourselves publicly to improving the system and making the CCFC a place to be accountable, as well as share information. The co-chairs agree that this seems like a good role for the Commission to play.

Discussion addressed the following points:

- We should re-think the name and charter of the Commission. The current version is reminiscent of the Adoption and Safe Families Act. It needs to be updated to reflect what we, collectively, have learned since then.
- The FWCC is a good example of how the Commission can work – identify a body of work that is a priority for us, figure out what role this group can play, do the work and measure our impact.
- We will need more resources, including staffing, for the Commission and the summit.
 - DCYF and AOC will work together to agree on a consultant to help us identify what is working well, what barriers exist and how we should operate together.
 - Appreciative Inquiry is a useful tool for this kind of exploration.
 - A collaborative effort with transparency about how the Commission will function is important.
- The Commission should also serve as a forum to identify the resources available in other areas and systems that can help us address the needs that families face in child welfare, such as poverty and preventing removal.
- We can harness the collective power of people in this room to substantively improve the system.
- This group can help bring some consistency and predictability in a de-centralized court system.
 - We should consider the quality of hearings and judicial decision-making, given the reality of short judicial rotations, the lack of required training and large caseloads.
 - How can we improve the information judicial officers have about the children and youth on their cases – informing them about well-being issues such as health, education, and social and cultural connections. Perhaps a dashboard with this information?
 - Representative Senn asked if we're missing data about how often judicial officers' decisions go against DCYF's recommendations.

It was agreed that a co-design group of CCFC members will work with the consultant to develop a plan for revising the name, charter and structure of the Commission and outlining the summit structure.

Kelly also reminded Commission members about the “Continuing Upwards from the Summit” virtual conference, which starts tomorrow.

Next Steps:

- Kelly and Jenny will work together to find a consultant and schedule a future co-design meeting.

Closing & Adjournment

Justice Madsen thanked everyone for their attendance. She looks forward to seeing everyone at the Mockingbird Youth Leadership Summit on August 1, 2023, and at the next Commission meeting on September 11, 2023.

Adjourned at 3:58 p.m. by Justice Barbara Madsen.

DRAFT



2023 YOUTH ADVOCACY TOPIC SUMMARIES

YOUTH LEADERSHIP SUMMIT | AUGUST 1

YOUTH ADVOCATES ENDING HOMELESSNESS CHAPTER

We want increased state funding for mental healthcare, especially for young people. Here in King County, there is limited support for those under 18, and no places that specifically serve young adults (18-25). We know that young adults, especially those who are or have experienced trauma (particularly homelessness, systems involvement, and mistreatment) need support in addition to open beds and housing placements. Much like shelters serve different age groups because they have different needs, we need mental healthcare and crisis centers that are focused on serving young adults. Additionally, our chapter hopes to connect with a local team implementing new crisis centers in the county. We hope this continues into a statewide plan to better address the healthcare needs of young people across Washington.

KING COUNTY CHAPTER

Our chapter is focusing on the complaint process available to young people in foster care. We have so many checkpoints in place (bill of rights for young people, assigning lawyers, case manager support, the OMBUDS complaint portal, etc.), and yet young people in foster care still are left with questions and an overwhelming feeling of isolation.

Our chapter hopes to connect with DCYF, Ombuds, and other key partners to discuss the complaint process and supports available to young people in foster care. We hope that these can be regular, quarterly connection times where our members can work alongside you. We want to ensure every young person in foster care knows where to turn for help. By working collaboratively, we envision a future where every young person has a community of support, including a peer advocate.

Our chapter's focus is the foster care complaint process. Despite existing checkpoints, young people feel isolated. We aim to collaborate with DCYF, Ombuds, and partners to ensure support, guidance, and a sense of community for every foster youth. Quarterly connections will help us achieve this vision.

2023 YOUTH ADVOCACY TOPIC SUMMARIES



EASTERN CHAPTER

In Washington state, addressing the issues of underfunding and poor allocation of funds in school districts and Educational Service Districts (ESDs) is critical. These challenges lead to a lack of programs offered, particularly in low-income school districts, disproportionately impacting BIPOC students and contributing to the achievement gap.

Despite the profound impact on young people's education, youth voices are often overlooked in decision-making processes. This exclusion denies them the chance to advocate for their own needs and priorities. By including youth voices in these critical discussions, we can create a more inclusive and equitable education system.

Furthermore, government oversight is essential to ensure transparency and accountability in how schools utilize their funds. When school districts are held accountable for their decisions and priorities, it strengthens the commitment to creating a nurturing and supportive environment for all students.

Empowering youth to play an active role in shaping their education and influencing policy will result in better outcomes for all. By centering youth voices in the decision-making process, we can bridge the gaps in educational opportunities, uplift marginalized communities, and foster a more just and inclusive learning environment. Together, let's pave the way for a brighter future by valuing and amplifying the voices of our youth.

OLYMPIA CHAPTER

The Olympia Chapter is proposing an expansion of Extended Foster Care (EFC), a program that has become synonymous with The Mockingbird Society, designed to assist young people who are dependents of the state between ages 18-21. However, many young adults who age out of EFC still require support during early adulthood. Therefore, we are advocating for the implementation of a stipend program that would extend eligibility for young people aging out of EFC through the age 25. The pandemic has emphasized the importance of an extended age range, as it provides vital stability and a successful transition into adulthood for these individuals. Continuing this model is of utmost importance to ensure Washington's enhanced support for its young population as they navigate early adulthood.

TACOMA CHAPTER

The Tacoma Chapter wants to spearhead a workgroup dedicated to improving and expanding on YYA Master Leases in WA State. Young people like them deserve Master Leases because these arrangements grant them the perfect blend of independence and rental experience, all while ensuring they receive the necessary supportive services and quality of care. Young people are confronted with daunting barriers when it comes to securing housing, as they have to deal with extra fees, no rental or credit history, and high minimum income requirements. These barriers become roadblocks, leaving them stranded and vulnerable, deprived of a stable home and at the mercy of an unforgiving housing system.

2023 YOUTH ADVOCACY TOPIC SUMMARIES



EVERETT CHAPTER

Young people who have experienced homelessness but not foster care face unique challenges that can be difficult to overcome by themselves. Although there are places in our state with ample support for young people experiencing homelessness, there are other areas, especially in our rural regions, that lack the support young folks need. We need to recognize that a disproportionate number of youth and young adults facing homelessness belong to marginalized communities and even if there are resources available to them, they might feel or be physically unwelcome or unsafe to access them. We want to recognize the work that the Office of Homeless Youth has done, in incorporating youth voice in their decision making for allocating funds and there's more to be done. We would like to reinstate quarterly meetings with young people from Mockingbird to information share and provide input on next steps. Furthermore, we would like to work directly with OHY to identify potential solutions to assure all young people facing homelessness have access to a long-term case manager through the age of 25 to assist them in learning about and accessing resources, finding, and maintaining stable housing, and connecting them with their community. Lastly, we want to make sure that there are tailored resources specifically for people of color, and LGBTQ+ people, or at the very least, mandated training provided around working with marginalized communities to the organizations providing resources to these communities.

CENTRAL CHAPTER

Autonomy over one's own future is extremely important when it comes to gaining independence, having confidence in one's abilities, and setting attainable future aspirations. As of right now, there are many systems in place that limit one's autonomy, especially if they happen to be BIPOC youth, who are overrepresented and underserved in the foster care system by far more disproportionately than their white counterparts, this is also the case with LGBTQ+ youth, who have barriers related to acceptance and proper care in many foster homes. With this proposed system in place, some of these barriers for BIPOC and LGBTQ+ youth can be eradicated by giving them a choice to enter a home of a certain demographic that would make them feel more comfortable without personal bias.

We wish to give youth more autonomy by imposing a 3-check system, which includes:

1. Choosing a home: Create a form in which youth can choose a variety of preferences for where they want to live. This can include location, Demographics, and values of the foster parents, and who the youth choose to contact. Based on this information, we can then find the best fit of a foster home for youth.
2. Identifying abuse: Not only will we be providing more resources and training for foster parents to help prevent abuse, but we will also give foster youth training for them to identify abuse as well. This is to ensure that they can identify whether they are in a safe or unsafe situation, and they will know the proper steps to take when they may be in an unsafe situation.
3. Checking in: There will be a more extensive system in which foster youth will be checked on to ensure they feel safe and comfortable in their home. If they do feel unsafe, there will be a very simple system in which they can officially request to leave, and their request be fulfilled. No child should be forced to live in a house in which they feel unsafe.



Commission on Children in Foster Care

The Commission on Children in Foster Care (CFCC) was established by the Supreme Court of Washington in 2004, to regularly convene court and child welfare partners and meaningfully enhance child welfare system practice. The CCFC is co-chaired by Washington State Supreme Court Justice Barbara Madsen and Secretary Ross Hunter, Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF), and staffed by the Administrative Office of the Courts' [Family & Youth Justice Programs \(FYJP\)](#).

What We Do

The mission of the CCFC is to provide all children in foster care with safe, permanent families in which their physical, emotional, intellectual, and social needs are met.

A key role of the Commission is to provide a forum for sharing information across the child welfare, community services and court systems, with the goal of educating members about efforts to improve outcomes for children, youth and families.



Commission Workgroups

- Children's Representation Standards Workgroup
- Family Well-Being Community Collaborative (FWCC)



Reunification Celebrations

Support Family Reunification Day Celebrations held in local court communities.



Youth Voice & Engagement

Support Mockingbird Society's Youth Leadership Summit and legislative and policy agenda .

Recent Accomplishments

At the request of the Legislature, the CCFC convened the Children's Representation Workgroup to [revise practice standards](#) for youth attorneys in dependency cases and develop [recommendations for the representation of children under the age of 8](#). The workgroup provided final reports to the Legislature in the fall 2022.

The [Family Well-Being Community Collaborative \(FWCC\)](#) is a multi-disciplinary workgroup with a mission to facilitate cross-system collaboration to keep families safely together and supported in their communities and to radically reduce inequities within the child welfare court system. For the past two years, the FWCC focused on supporting effective implementation of the [Keeping Families Together Act \(E2SHB 1227\)](#) and the [Strengthening Parent-Child Visitation law \(E2SHB 1194\)](#), developing tools, trainings and resources to help communities understand and apply the new laws at the start of a case.

Continuing and Upcoming Work

- The FWCC will continue to support implementation of the [Keeping Families Together Act \(E2SHB 1227\)](#).
- Convene members to review and update the Commission's mission, vision, and goals.
- Create opportunities for regular, in-person CCFC summits focused on innovation and action.

Meaningful Shelter Care & Engaging Parents Shelter Care Workgroups



History

- Developed in response to the State Team Action Plan strategy:
 - Provide meaningful parent representation PRIOR to shelter care hearing by enforcing RCW 13.34.090 regarding the provision of counsel and discovery prior to shelter care.
 - Research how/when counsel is being appointed and how discovery is occurring in each county. Develop best practices and possibly court rule to implement practice standards statewide.
 - AOC/CITA to include these expectations in annual judicial training and other training venues.

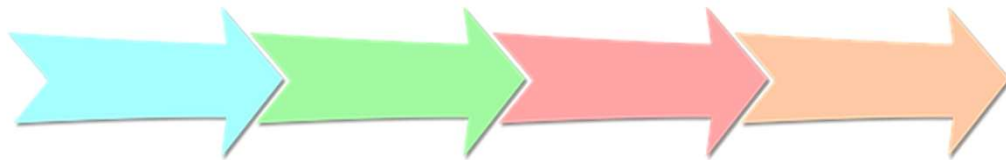
Identifying Purpose

- Initially worked with two counties
- Needed product for statewide shelter care hearing improvement
- Identified purpose of the work:

“Create guidance that provides local dependency court partners the tools to collaboratively craft fair and predictable shelter care processes that comport with due process, increase communication and family engagement, and keep children with their families when it is safe to do so,”

Process

- Gathered what's **Legally Required**, **Best Practice**, and **Bright Spots**
- Provide guidance without overburdening the system with additional resources
- Address engaging parents at shelter care



Shelter Care Think Tank

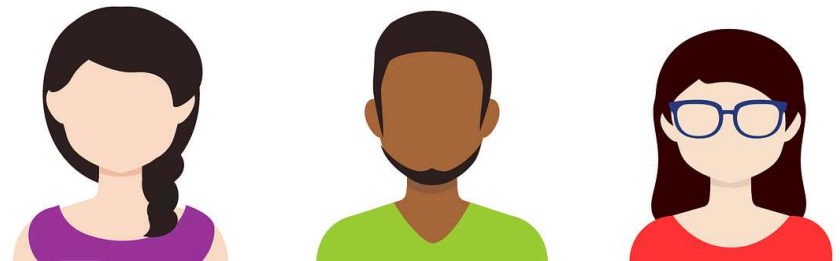
- The *Think Tank* is a group of cross-system partners committed to collaborating with local dependency courts to improve their shelter care hearings
- The *Think Tank* can help court communities identify barriers and develop solutions



[Shelter Care Think Tank – Family and Youth Justice Programs \(wacita.org\)](http://wacita.org)

Engaging Parents at Shelter Care

- Subcommittee of Meaningful Shelter Care workgroup
- Workgroup
 - 6 Lived Expert Professionals
 - 2 Court Improvement Staff
 - GAL, AAG, and DCYF staff



Creative Destruction

- Worst possible outcome for parent engagement
- Divided results into three sections
 - Pre-filing
 - Filing
 - Hearing
- What can we **stop** doing???



Pre-filing and Early Engagement

- Youth and Parent Representation
- Peer Partners
- Early Involvement by Specialty Courts
- ABA Safety Framework training
- Clear is Kind
 - Language
 - Harm of Removal
- Father and Tribe Involvement

Early Involvement Specialty Courts

- Sends a clear message to parents that they are in the court's purview
- Provides parents with connections to services in the community
- Keeps parents organized and on track
- Create a seamless transition to dependency if case gets filed
- Assists with early engagement of tribes
- Increases participation in treatment courts where participation numbers have been reduced due to HB 1227 and a reduction in filings

Treatment Court Cautions

- Early involvement so that the treatment court aligns with reunification timeframe
- Milestones instead of phases
- Ensure that participation in treatment courts is voluntary and will end with reunification
- Ensure that by taking part in a treatment court, the parent is not waiving their right to a fact-finding hearing and the ability to argue dependency
- Treatment court practice varies across the state, some programs have not addressed process/system/and professional bias and early involvement by those programs could be more damaging



ABA Safety Framework Pre-filing

Our system, community partners, and parents should be trained to understand and utilize the ABA Safety framework

- PCAP
- Nurse Practitioners
- Early Head Start/Head Start/ECEAP
- Social Work Schools
- Hospitals
- Other professionals in the community and child welfare system who work with families at risk of removal

“Parents do not understand the 17 safety threats, that’s too confusing. They understand the blue triangle.”



ABA Safety Framework Pre-filing

Should be a parent driven process to:

- Meet parents where they are
- Shift focus to a parent powered process
- Parents can better identify the safety threat
- Parents can start to identify their strengths and protective factors
- Provide opportunities to keep parent's autonomy as a decision maker when completing and updating the framework
- Reduce bias that might be held by a caseworker or other professional



ABA Safety Framework Pre-filing

- Continually update the framework at all points in time
 - Helps determine changes that can change the course
 - Parents can continue to add strengths and protective factors, which can increase motivation and case momentum.
- Always include the question:

“What can we do so kids can stay/go home?”



Strengths and Protective Factors

- Helping professionals like Parent 4 Parents, wrap around services, and FTC can help identify strengths and protective factors
- Continually highlight updated parent strengths and protective factors:
 - Start of meetings, teamings, hearings
 - Start of petition if case gets filed
 - Shared planning
 - Court reports



Identify Relatives and Kin

- Process to continually identify relatives and kin
- Reduces relatives and kin being ruled out by caseworkers who might be biased. (Add relative/kin QR code to form)
- Changing placement once the case begins can be too bureaucratic and complicated



Clear is Kind- Language

- Identify clear and consistent language to utilize when parents are at risk of removal
- Language that families are at risk of removal should be utilized versus coded language that is currently being used.
 - Coded *"We will have to get the courts involved"*
 - Clear *"We are going to ask the court to move your children from your custody."*
- Always include the question: *"What can we do so kids can stay/go home?"*

Clear is Kind- Harm of Removal

- Everyone pre and post filing trained
- Discuss with parents
 - If they are considering treatment/services, it could increase motivation
 - Impact of removal
 - How long their children could be out of their care
 - Impact of dependency after family is reunified and the lack of resources to help

Actively Engage Tribes and Fathers

- Fathers: pre-filing and throughout the life of the case
 - Bias still plays a part when making attempts to engage a father
 - Create a process that forces staff to engage with fathers whether DV or other factors are a concern, or when mother is engaged
 - Message outside of our agencies about the importance of engagement by the father
- Tribes: pre-filing and continually throughout the case
 - Tribes are under-resourced, and due to historical harm, we hold more responsibility to put forth more effort to engage
 - Options to reschedule a meeting or hearing if the tribe cannot be present