Washington State Institute for Public Policy
110 Fifth Avenue SE, Suite 214 ● PO Box 40999 ● Olympia, WA 98504 ● 360.586.2677 ● www.wsipp.wa.gov

April 1, 2016

Data Dissemination Committee
Office of the Administrator for the Courts
PO Box 41170
Olympia, WA 98504-1170

Attn: Stephanie Happold
Data Dissemination Administrator

Dear Members of the Committee,

I am writing to request access to information on dependency filings for families with screened-in Child Protective Services (CPS) reports for use in a legislatively-mandated evaluation of the Family Assessment Response. The outcome evaluation will be conducted by the Washington State Institute for Public Policy (WSIPP).

The 2012 Washington State Legislature made changes to the way the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) responds to reports of child abuse and neglect (ESSB 6555, Chapter 259, Laws of 2012). Previously, all accepted reports of child abuse and neglect were subject to an investigation, where a caseworker determined whether abuse or neglect had occurred.

The new law created a "differential response" system where only the highest risk cases will be investigated. In Washington, the differential response is called the Family Assessment Response (FAR). Low-to-moderate risk cases will receive an assessment of the families' strengths and receive services and concrete goods that reduce the likelihood of future maltreatment. WSIPP was directed to evaluate the Family Assessment Response by December 1, 2016

In January 2014, DSHS began a phase-in of FAR in three offices. To date, FAR has been implemented in 33 of 46 field offices.

The WSIPP evaluation will compare outcomes for families served by FAR to outcomes of families who met eligibility criteria for FAR but were served in offices where FAR had not yet been implemented. We will study the effect of FAR on re-reports to CPS, out-of-home placements, and dependency filings.

We are requesting that the Washington Center for Court Research (WSCCR) match children with screened-in CPS reports against SCOMIS records to identify children with dependency case filings. After identifying dependency cases, WSCCR will strip identifying information and deliver

data to WSIPP via secure file transfer protocol. Dependency data will be linked to CPS records using bogus IDs for person and case. WSIPP will reimburse WSCCR for time and materials necessary to identify dependency cases of children who were alleged victims in CPS reports.

WSIPP will receive no data unless and until the project is approved by the Washington State Institutional Review Board and access to dependency information has been approved by the DDC.

I look forward to discussing this request with the committee on April 22.

Sincerely,

Marna G. Miller, Ph.D.
Senior Research Associate