

## WASHINGTON STATE COURT IMPROVEMENT STRATEGIC PLAN FFY 2022-2027

June 2022 Revision

**State Name: Washington State**

**Date Strategic Plan Submitted: June 30, 2022**

**Timeframe Covered by Strategic Plan: July 2022 – June 2023**

**Overall Goal/Mission of CIP:** Mission: Transforming the child welfare court system to promote thriving families and equitable court communities. To achieve our mission, we collaborate with system partners to keep children and families safely together and supported in their communities and to radically reduce inequities within the child welfare court system. We work upstream to help families avoid entry into the system by addressing the impacts of poverty and trauma. For families who require the oversight of the court, we strive to ensure they receive effective, culturally-relevant services in a system that is equitable, accountable and hope-centered.

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### **Priority Area #1: Safety**

**Outcome #1:** As a result of cross-system training and strategic planning process (Safety Summit Project) courts and system partners will use congruent language to clearly and consistently articulate safety-related information in ways that support family and system well-being. Court systems will understand the importance of ensuring that parents understand safety threats, conditions for return and what they need to do to provide safety for their child(ren). Increased fidelity to safety framework practices is anticipated to occur system wide, including in the following areas:

- Assessment of safety in the home (safety threats, child vulnerability, and protective capacity)
- Safety planning (in-home and out-of-home)
- Conditions for return home
- Family time plans and decisions (HB 1194 implementation)
- Case planning
- Evaluating progress and compliance

### **Need Driving Activities & Data Source: *How do you know this is a need in your state?***

**2021 Hearing Quality Evaluation:** In 2021 the Capacity Building Center for Courts (CBCC) conducted a baseline evaluation of safety decision making practices of seven courts in Washington State. The following themes emerged:

- Vulnerabilities, protective capacities, and conditions for return are rarely discussed at hearings;
- Safety analysis and discussions of safety planning rarely occur in court;
- Safety-related justifications for supervised family time were rarely articulated;
- The need for child welfare and court professionals to better understand and be able to articulate how case plan progress relates to safety.

Recommendations for improvement from the researcher and author of the evaluation, Dr. Alicia Summers, included:

1. Enhance understanding of all stakeholders through multidisciplinary trainings;
2. Engage parents to better understand concepts and language regarding safety considerations;

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3. Enhance training of professionals around safety planning, conditions for return home, and case planning;
4. Enhance training to ensure knowledge translates to behavior change, where practice aligns with understanding of safety training concepts.

**The Washington Baseline Safety Decision-Making Practice, March 2021**

[https://www.wacita.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Washington-Baseline-Safety-Hearing-Quality-Report\\_Final.pdf](https://www.wacita.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Washington-Baseline-Safety-Hearing-Quality-Report_Final.pdf)

2022 Hearing Quality Evaluation: The court jurisdictions that participated in the hearing quality evaluation committed to holding cross-system safety practice training in their county in 2021. This system change process, known as the Safety Summit Project, aims to improve fidelity to safety framework practice through a combination of cross-system organization, training, and strategic planning activities. Dr. Alicia Summers will be conducting a second round of hearing quality evaluations in these counties to assess the impact that the Safety Summit trainings and action planning had on in-court safety practice. Data collection for this evaluation took place in February and March of 2022, and the final report is anticipated to be released by the end of May 2022.

Safety Summit Project: The results of this hearing quality evaluation will be reviewed with partners and used to inform revisions to the current Safety Summit Project and to develop new trainings, resources, and opportunities for court systems that build on the knowledge and skills gained through the Safety Summits. Originally, Safety Summits were planned for the original seven counties identified in the PIP. Increasing requests from other courts to hold a Safety Summit have resulted in this project being expanded to be available to those courts who request the training for their communities and can commit to meeting the expectations of the project.

The Safety Summit State team is a statewide cross-system advisory group that meets monthly to discuss the progress made in implementing the above training and strategic planning activities in select WA counties (i.e., sites engaged in the Safety Summit Project). This team works to identify the needs for specific courts in improving safety practices and guides the strategic deployment of resources and assistance to those areas.

Program Improvement Plan: The Washington State Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) identifies the below root cause in Goal Area 4: Permanency in its current Program Improvement Plan (PIP). DCYF collaborated with the courts and other stakeholders in the development and implementation of PIP strategies to address this need.

*“The lack of consistent support and oversight for caseworkers to complete ongoing shared planning meetings and integrate the Safety Framework into practice results in an inability to clearly communicate safety threats to children, parents, the court, and court partners and to create individualized case plans that accurately identify needed services to support timely permanency.”*

**Theory of Change:**

Deliver interdisciplinary safety guide training and local action planning:

SO THAT a shared understanding and language of safety is created;

SO THAT sufficient information is collected;

SO THAT threats of danger are identified and protective capacities are accurately assessed throughout the life of the case;

SO THAT effective safety plans and case plans are created;

SO THAT a child remains in the home;

OR THAT if a child is placed out-of-home, appropriate family time is ordered and conditions of return home are identified and understood;

SO THAT at all parties are clear as to what strategies and services are necessary to achieve permanency;

SO THAT safe and lasting permanency is achieved in each and every case.

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**Reminder:** please note if priority area will be supported by Division X supplement with a 'COVID' tag.

<b>Activity or Project Description</b> <i>Specific actions or project that will be completed to produce specific outputs and demonstrate progress toward the outcome.</i>	<b>Collaborative Partners</b> <i>Responsible parties and partners involved in implementation of the activity.</i>	<b>Anticipated Outputs of Activity</b> <i>What the CIP intends to produce, provide or accomplish through the activity.</i>	<b>Goals of Activity (short and/or Long-term)</b> <i>Where relevant and practical, provide specific, projected change in data the CIP intends to achieve. Goals should be measurable.</i> <b>Progress toward Outcome</b>	<b>Timeframe</b> <i>Proposed completion date or, if appropriate, "ongoing".</i>	<b>Resources Needed</b> <i>Where relevant identify the resources needed to complete the activity.</i>	<b>Plans for Evaluating Activity</b> <i>Where relevant, how will you measure or monitor change?</i>
Briefly describe the overall activity or project that should help lead to the outcome identified above.						
<i>Action Step 1 – Work with individual sites to form a local planning team that assists in the planning, execution, and action implementation components of the Safety Summit project in their community.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Safety Summit State Advisory Team</li> <li>• DCYF Headquarters</li> <li>• DCYF Region Staff</li> <li>• DCYF Local Staff</li> <li>• Local Court Staff</li> </ul>	Formation of a local planning team.  Two local planning team meetings facilitated by CIP and DCYF.	Plan the logistics of the Safety Summit and prepare for the strategic plan implementation.  Increase local stakeholder collaboration and engagement in system improvement.	Completed for original 7 sites  Ongoing for additional sites	N/A	N/A
<i>Action Step 2 – Hold four-hour safety summit event open to all court and systems partners who work directly or indirectly with families involved with child welfare.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Safety Summit State Advisory Team</li> <li>• Casey Family Programs</li> <li>• DCYF Headquarters</li> <li>• DCYF Region Staff</li> <li>• DCYF Local Staff</li> <li>• Local Court Staff</li> <li>• Local Site Planning Team</li> </ul>	Facilitate of a cross-system training on the basic use of the safety framework in practice and action planning group activities.	Improve understanding of key safety principles across the system.  System partners change practice and permanency outcomes improve.	Completed for original 7 sites  Ongoing for additional sites	N/A	Participant evaluation
<i>Action Step 3 - Create Strategic Plan using information collected at the Safety Summit and input from planning team members.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Safety Summit State Advisory Team</li> <li>• DCYF Headquarters</li> </ul>	Compile summit information and input from local planning team members.	Create a Strategic Plan that contains the system vision for improvement, discipline group action goals, and the available assistance from CIP.	Completed for original 7 sites  Ongoing for additional sites	N/A	N/A

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DCYF Region Staff</li> <li>• DCYF Local Staff</li> <li>• Local Court Staff</li> <li>• Local Site Planning Team</li> </ul>					
<i>Action Step 4 - Implement efforts/actions in Strategic Plan.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Safety Summit State Advisory Team</li> <li>• Casey Family Programs</li> <li>• DCYF Headquarters</li> <li>• DCYF Region Staff</li> <li>• DCYF Local Staff</li> <li>• Local Court Staff</li> <li>• Local Site Planning Team</li> </ul>	At the request of sites, provide technical assistance, support, and resources to support implementation of projects, initiatives, and other efforts from the Strategic Plan.	<p>Implementation of action plan items</p> <p>Effective implementation of local action plans.</p> <p>Increase in frequency and quality of safety-related discussions in court hearings.</p> <p>Increase in number of safety assessments/plans submitted to the court.</p>	Ongoing	N/A	N/A
<i>Action Step 5 – Assist courts in accessing available data and information to evaluate the impacts of the Strategic Plan.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Safety Summit State Advisory Team</li> <li>• DCYF Headquarters</li> <li>• DCYF Region Staff</li> <li>• DCYF Local Staff</li> <li>• Local Court Staff</li> <li>• Local Site Planning Team</li> </ul>	<p>Work with planning teams to identify sources of available data.</p> <p>Assist planning teams with identifying appropriate data metrics and creating a process for ongoing evaluation.</p>	Local court systems will have a plan for continuous, sustainable safety practice improvement in their county.	Ongoing	N/A	Utilize ongoing evaluation plans designed with sites

**Priority Area #2: Quality Court Hearings**

**Outcome #2:** Judicial officers who participated in the Judicial Reasonable Efforts and Active Efforts Academy will engage in quality reasonable and active efforts (RE/AE) inquiries at the appropriate points in the case and make detailed child-specific findings, including

- Reason to Know Inquiry
- Indian child status
- Efforts to prevent removal

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- Efforts to finalize permanent plan

### **Need Driving Activities & Data Source: *How do you know this is a need in your state?***

The need to provide training opportunities that have been found to improve the quality of hearings in regards to making reasonable and active efforts findings and applying the ICWA “reason to know” standard is driven by several recent, significant Washington Supreme Court decisions and the upcoming implementation of state legislation intended to reduce removals and keep children with family.

*In re Dependency of Z.J.G. & M.E.J.G.*: In 2020 the Washington Supreme Court affirmed core provisions in the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA), ensuring that the law’s protections are applied early enough to prevent the unnecessary removal of Native children from their families (*In re Dependency of Z.J.G. & M.E.J.G.*). It adopted a broad interpretation of ICWA’s “reason to know” standard, the critical clause that determines whether ICWA’s protections of family integrity and tribal sovereignty will be brought to bear in a dependency case. Justice Raquel Montoya-Lewis’ 41-page opinion was joined by the entire high court, and relied on the history of state-sponsored family separation, the plain language of the statute, and rules of statutory construction in federal Indian law, to adopt a broad reading of a “reason to know.” The decision also acknowledges that, moving forward, the practice in dependency cases may need to change to comply with the law. Importantly for future cases, the Court held “We hold that a court has a ‘reason to know’ that a child is an Indian child when any participant in the proceeding indicates that the child has tribal heritage.” Quoting the U.S. Supreme Court on another groundbreaking case affirming tribal rights, Justice Montoya-Lewis writes, “The magnitude of a legal wrong is no reason to perpetuate it.”

*Matter of Dependency of G.J.A.*: In 2021 the Washington Supreme Court ruled that in order to comply with ICWA and WICWA, the Department has the burden to provide ‘active efforts’ that are—at a minimum—thorough, timely, consistent, and culturally appropriate. The decision also affirmed that “it is the Department’s responsibility to clearly document its actions in the record to enable the court to reach an informed conclusion about the Department’s provision of active efforts.”

*In re the Welfare of J.M.W., 99481*: The issue of whether the active efforts element applies to place or maintain a child in shelter care is currently pending before the Washington State Supreme Court in *In re the Welfare of J.M.W., 99481-1* (argued Jan. 11, 2022). Even if this element is not a condition precedent for placing or maintaining a child in shelter care, during this phase of the proceeding the court can inquire as to what active efforts have been initiated thus far and may order DCYF to perform additional efforts.

*HB 1227 Keeping Families Together Act*: In 2021 the Washington State Legislature passed the *Keeping Families Together Act* (HB 1227) in recognition that children and families are best served when children are cared for by their loved ones and in their communities. HB 1227 will go into effect in July 2023 and successful implementation will necessitate significant changes in judicial practice. CIP has dedicated capacity to preparing courts for the implementation. HB 1227 changes the standard by which a court may enter an order directing a child be removed from the home and mandates that the court shall release a child to a parent at Shelter Care unless the court finds that removal of the child is necessary to prevent imminent physical harm and that the evidence show a causal relationship between the conditions in the home and imminent physical harm to the child. HB1227 identifies that the existence of community or family poverty, isolation, single parenthood, age of the parent, crowded or inadequate housing, substance abuse, prenatal drug or alcohol exposure, mental illness, disability or special needs of the parent or child, or nonconforming social behavior does not by itself constitute imminent physical harm. In addition, DCYF will also be required to make continuing efforts to place children with relatives and suitable other persons requires such placement unless there is no relative capable of ensuring the basic safety of the child. These new provisions will shift focus to the front-end of cases and require judicial officers to make additional inquiries into what efforts were made to prevent removal, what efforts have been made to reduce the harm to children who are removed from the home, and what efforts are continuously being made to place with a relative/suitable other.

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**Theory of Change:**

Conduct a hearing quality evaluation:

- SO THAT participating judicial officers are assessed on the quality of their RE/AE findings before and after the judicial academy;
- SO THAT the quality of RE/AE findings at shelter care and permanency planning can be assessed;
- SO THAT the quality of RE/AE findings prior to the judicial academy can be compared to the quality of RE/AE findings after the academy;
- SO THAT any changes in practice by participating judicial officers can be assessed;
- SO THAT the impacts of the judicial academy in improving the quality of RE/AE inquiries and findings can be determined;
- SO THAT effective RE/AE training opportunities and resources can be further developed for judicial officers;
- SO THAT judicial officers have the knowledge and skills necessary to make detailed and case specific RE/AE findings;
- SO THAT judicial officers actively engage in RE/AE inquiries;
- SO THAT judicial officers are able to make quality RE/AE findings at the appropriate points in a child welfare case;
- SO THAT the court through the mechanism of the RE/AE findings ensures that DCYF follows its statutory duty to make reasonable efforts to avoid removal and achieve timely permanency;
- SO THAT children are not unnecessarily removed from their homes;
- AND THAT children achieve timely permanency when they are removed from their home.

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Briefly describe the overall activity or project that should help lead to the outcome identified above.						
<i>Action Step 1 – Facilitate the transfer of hearing observation data from participating courts/judicial officers to researcher</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local courts</li> <li>• Dr. Alicia Summers</li> <li>• CBCC</li> </ul>	Recordings of hearings needed for the evaluation are provided by the court to Dr. Summers.	N/A	Depends on availability of Dr. Summers	Evaluation services of Dr. Summers	N/A
<i>Action Step 2 – Data collection, analysis, interpretation, and report generation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dr. Alicia Summers</li> <li>• CBCC</li> </ul>	Comparative evaluation of the quality of judicial officer RE/AE practices before and after participating in the academy.	N/A	Depends on availability of Dr. Summers	Evaluation services of Dr. Summers	N/A

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<i>Action Step 3 – Review evaluation report results in order to identify areas of practice change and notable trends</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dr. Alicia Summers</li> <li>• CBCC</li> <li>• Jurists-in-Residence</li> </ul>	Hearing Quality Evaluation Report  Supporting evidence of the impacts of training on judicial practice change.	N/A	Depends on availability of Dr. Summers	Assistance from CBCC and Dr. Summers	N/A
<i>Action Step 4 – Develop additional RE/AE learning opportunities for judicial officers.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CBCC</li> <li>• Dr. Alicia Summers</li> </ul>	Additional training opportunities, resources, tools, and other materials for judicial officers that support practice improvement in making quality RE/AE findings.	Judicial officers will have increased capacity and ability to actively engage in RE/AE inquiries and make quality findings.	Within 3-4 months from the time Action Step 3 is completed.	Examples of similar materials from other states.	N/A

**Priority Area #3: Quality Legal Representation**

**Outcome #3:** As a result of participating in the Washington Attorney Academy on Reasonable and Active Efforts, attorneys who represent the State, parents, and/or children in dependency cases will engage in reasonable and active efforts discussions and be prepared to make arguments on behalf of their client on these issues at appropriate hearings. Attorneys will understand what information is needed by judicial officers to make reasonable and active efforts inquiries and their role in providing that information. Attorneys will have increased ability to authentically engage while advocating for their clients both in- and out of court.

**Need Driving Activities & Data Source: *How do you know this is a need in your state?***

In the spring of 2022, CIP partnered with the CBCC to develop content and co-sponsor the Washington Judicial Academy on Reasonable and Active Efforts. A total of 24 judicial officers from 12 different WA counties attended this two-day, highly interactive on-line academy. The training provided instruction in federal and Washington black letter law and the art of making reasonable efforts and active efforts findings and conducting sufficient “reason to know” inquiries. Judicial officers learned new skills to prevent the unnecessary removal of children from their homes and to make sure that those who are removed are returned to their parents or achieve permanence as quickly and safely as possible. The “Black Letter Law” and “Reason to Know Inquiry” sections of the academy were recorded and are now available online. As a part of the academy, CIP worked with cross-system state experts in relevant areas to develop WA-specific resource tools, including a comprehensive [Guide on Reasonable and Active Efforts](#). These efforts are part of the broader mission of CIP to improve reasonable and active efforts practice in the WA dependency court system by increasing available learning opportunities and resources.

The Attorney Academy on Reasonable and Active Efforts has been developed by the CBCC and is based on the design of the Judicial Academy. When judicial officers who attended the judicial academy were informed that CBCC was seeking states to pilot the attorney version of the academy, there was unanimous support for WA CIP pursuing this opportunity. There was agreement that providing attorneys a similar training would support judicial officers’ efforts to improve the quality of reasonable and active efforts practice.

The need for attorney training on the law of reasonable and active efforts and how to make effective arguments to the court is primarily generated by recent Washington Supreme Court decisions and the upcoming implementation of significant state legislation. These are described in depth under Priority Area #2, above.

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**Theory of Change:**

Deliver a series of Attorney Academies on Reasonable and Active Efforts:

- SO THAT attorneys representing parties in dependency cases have the knowledge, understanding, and skills necessary to engage in reasonable and active efforts inquiries;
- SO THAT attorneys are prepared to make reasonable and active efforts arguments in appropriate hearings;
- AND THAT attorneys can effectively advocate for their clients outside of court hearings;
- SO THAT discussion of reasonable and active efforts is increased in appropriate hearings;
- SO THAT judicial officers are able to make detailed and child specific reasonable efforts and active efforts findings at the appropriate points in a child welfare case;
- SO THAT the court through the mechanism of the Reasonable Efforts finding ensures that the agency follows its statutory duty to make reasonable efforts to avoid removal and achieve timely permanency;
- SO THAT children are not unnecessarily removed from their home;
- AND THAT children achieve timely permanency when they are removed from their home.

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<p>Briefly describe the overall activity or project that should help lead to the outcome identified above.</p>						
<p><i>Action Step 1 – Confirm WA participation and start initial planning of academy logistics.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CBCC</li> </ul>	<p>CIP and CBCC have jointly committed to holding a WA Attorney Academy on Reasonable and Active Efforts in 2023.</p> <p>Dates for the academy are scheduled and confirmed with CBCC.</p> <p>Potential faculty have been contacted with an invitation to participate.</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>August 2022</p>	<p>CBCC assistance</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p><i>Action Step 2 – Work with CBCC to plan and coordinate for the academy</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CBCC</li> <li>• OPD</li> <li>• AGO</li> </ul>	<p>Online registration is set up and invitations are sent</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>September 2022 - February 2023</p>	<p>Templates for communications to attendees.</p>	<p>N/A</p>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• OCLA</li> <li>• DCYF Headquarters WACAP</li> <li>• Jurists-in-Residence</li> </ul>	<p>out to all applicable attorneys.</p> <p>WA faculty (8) have been confirmed and are prepared to assist in the simulation activities.</p> <p>The WA Guide on Reasonable &amp; Active Efforts (originally created for the Judicial Academy) is updated to be applicable for attorneys.</p> <p>Applications for continuing legal education (CLE) and continuing judicial education (CJE) credits have been submitted.</p>			Information to supply to faculty on their role and expectations.	
<i>Action Step 3 – Hold a WA Attorney Academy on Reasonable &amp; Active Efforts.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CBCC</li> <li>• OPD</li> <li>• AGO</li> <li>• OCLA</li> <li>• DCYF WACAP</li> <li>• Jurists-in-Residence</li> </ul>	Facilitation of a 2-day, simulation-based training academy on RE/AE for attorneys who represent parties in dependency cases.	<p>Attorneys representing parties in dependency cases will have increased capacity for making RE/AE arguments in court and advocating for their clients on RE/AE issues outside of court.</p> <p>Attorneys will have increased capacity for supplying what information is needed for judicial officers to make quality RE/AE findings.</p>	March 2023	CBCC facilitation and assistance	<p>Knowledge Test (pre- and post-test)</p> <p>Satisfaction Survey</p>
<i>Action Step 4 –A hearing quality evaluation of changes in RE/AE attorney practice</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CBCC</li> </ul>	Work with CBCC hearing quality assessment tool for use in evaluating attorney practice related in RE/AE findings.	N/A	Within six months of the academy completion.	CBCC assistance in developing and conducting the evaluation	Hearing Quality Evaluation

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		Work with CBCC to conduct a hearing quality evaluation study to assess changes in attorney practice as resultant of the academy		Dependent on availability of CBCC.		
<i>Action Step 3 – Review knowledge test, satisfaction survey, and hearing evaluation report results in order to identify areas of practice change and notable trends</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CBCC</li> <li>• OPD</li> <li>• AGO</li> <li>• DCYF</li> <li>• OCLA</li> <li>• WACAP</li> <li>• Jurists-in-Residence</li> </ul>	<p>Hearing Quality Evaluation Report</p> <p>Supporting evidence of the impacts of training on attorney practice change.</p>	N/A	Dependent on availability of CBCC.	CBCC assistance	N/A
<i>Action Step 4 – Develop additional RE/AE learning opportunities for attorneys.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CBCC</li> <li>• OPD</li> <li>• AGO</li> <li>• OCLA</li> <li>• DCYF</li> <li>• WACAP</li> <li>• Jurists-in-Residence</li> </ul>	<p>Additional training opportunities, resources, tools, and other materials for attorneys that support practice improvement in making quality RE/AE findings.</p>	<p>Attorneys will have increased capacity and ability to actively engage in RE/AE inquiries and advocate for their clients</p> <p>Higher quality RE/AE findings will result in fewer children being unnecessarily removed from the home and more children are achieving safe, timely permanency.</p>	Dependent on availability of CBCC.	Examples of similar materials from other states.	N/A

**Priority Area #4: Timeliness/Permanency**

**Outcome #4:** Utilizing results from the 2021-22 COVID Recovery Statewide Assessment, provide tailored support and resources to court communities and develop statewide tools to increase access to justice, improve timeliness measures, and increase timely permanency. In addition, court professionals will have increased knowledge about how to access their court’s data utilizing Washington’s online [Dependency Dashboard](#) and interpret their data to better identify delays in court process, racial disproportionalities, and trends in filing rates.

**Need Driving Activities & Data Source:**

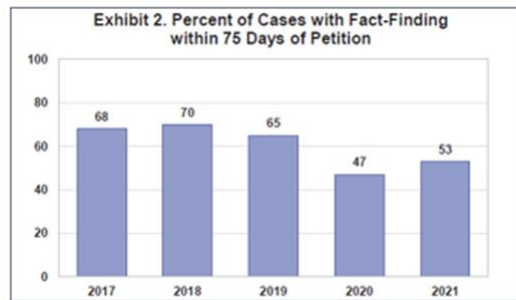
Using COVID Recovery funds, CIP conducted structured interviews and electronic surveys judicial officers and dependency court partners in all 39 Washington counties to understand the impact of the pandemic on dependency courts and provide support to ensure the safety, permanence, and well-being of children going

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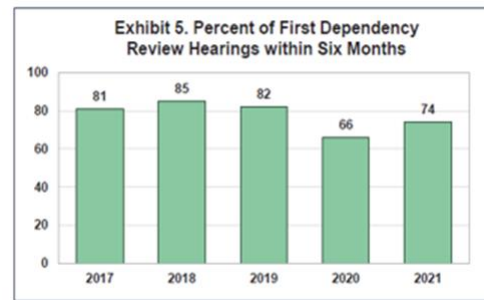
forward. CIP identified local court challenges and innovations in remote operations, along with obstacles to achieving timely permanency. Results showed that many courts have a backlog of termination hearings, delays in getting to fact-finding within 75 days and reviews by six months, errors in data collection, and have varied practices for how remote hearings are implemented. The variations in virtual hearing practice create differences in access to justice for parties to the case, and increased stress for dependency professionals and other court participants. Court data show that many courts in Washington have experienced delays in their case processing and are not achieving pre-COVID timeliness measures.

Through the interview process, CIP shared iDTR data on timeliness, filings, and trends over time. Working with local respondents, CIP staff identified innovative practices, pandemic challenges, and resources courts need to address case backlogs and operate efficiently and equitably post-pandemic. The assessment has provided an opportunity for CIP to inform courts about research and effective practices, and to gather information about dependency court operations that will help address their needs in the future. CIP has compiled a wide range of resources to support effective and equitable virtual operations on the [Remote Operations](#) section of the FYJP website. Materials include guides for conducting remote hearings and best practices for remote interpretation, courtroom technology and engaging families in a virtual environment.

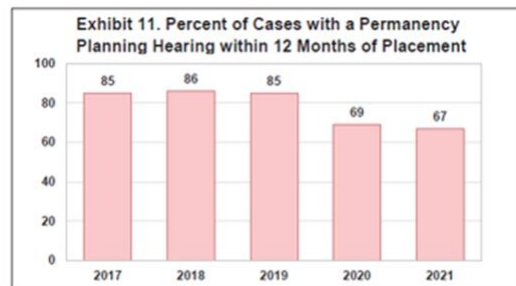
The Dependent Children in Washington State: Case Timeliness and Outcomes 2021 Annual Report shows that timeliness of dependency hearings and trials continues to lag behind pre-pandemic measures, attributed to the ongoing impact of restricted access to courts and COVID related challenges experienced by system and community partners, including staffing shortages and lack of services for children and families.



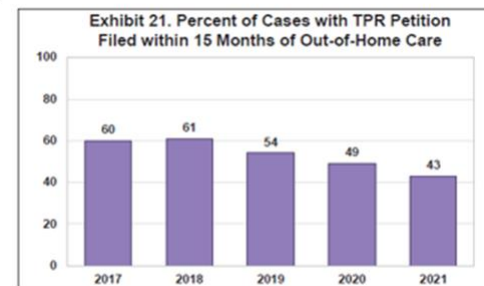
The rate of compliance for 2021 increased 6% from the previous reporting year to 53%. Note that cases are included in the year in which the fact-finding hearing is due, not the year in which the petition is filed.



The rate of compliance for 2021 increased 8% from the previous reporting year to 74%.



The percentage of cases in which the first permanency planning hearing occurred within 12 months of the beginning of the placement episode (meeting the statutory requirement) decreased 2% in 2021 to 67%.



Of the dependent children who had an associated termination case or who were due for a termination case in 2021, 43% had a termination petition within 15 months of out-of-home care, a drop of 6% from the previous reporting year.

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In June 2020, the Board for Judicial Administration (BJA) formed a [Court Recovery Task Force](#) to assess court impacts from COVID-19; develop and implement strategies to ensure that every court can provide fair, timely, and accessible justice; and provide recommendations for ongoing court operations and recovery after the public health emergency subsides. CIP staff co-lead the multidisciplinary Child Welfare Committee, one of nine committees that reports to the Task Force. The Committee examined practices and formulated systems improvement recommendations to achieve better outcomes for children, youth, and families, including recommendations regarding court hearing schedules; providing flexibility for parents, children, court participants, and witnesses to participate remotely in hearings (now and post-pandemic); and a process for obtaining signatures on orders (electronic or otherwise). The Child Welfare committee is developing a juvenile court rule to allow court participants to appear remotely.

**Theory of Change:**

Provide tailored support and resources to court communities and develop statewide tools to increase access to justice and improve compliance with timeliness measures

- SO THAT courts can access CIP COVID recovery support and resources tailored to their court community’s needs;
- SO THAT courts can implement best practices for remote operations and family centered case management;
- SO THAT courts are more accessible to litigants and court professionals;
- SO THAT effective participation by parents and children, professionals, and other court participants is improved;
- SO THAT case timeliness improves to pre-pandemic levels or better;
- SO THAT permanency is increased.

**Reminder:** please note if priority area will be supported by Division X supplement with a ‘COVID’ tag.

<b>Activity or Project Description</b> <i>Specific actions or project that will be completed to produce specific outputs and demonstrate progress toward the outcome.</i>	<b>Collaborative Partners</b> <i>Responsible parties and partners involved in implementation of the activity.</i>	<b>Anticipated Outputs of Activity</b> <i>What the CIP intends to produce, provide or accomplish through the activity.</i>	<b>Goals of Activity (short and/or Long-term)</b> <i>Where relevant and practical, provide specific, projected change in data the CIP intends to achieve. Goals should be measurable.</i> <b>Progress toward Outcome</b>	<b>Timeframe</b> <i>Proposed completion date or, if appropriate, “ongoing”.</i>	<b>Resources Needed</b> <i>Where relevant identify the resources needed to complete the activity.</i>	<b>Plans for Evaluating Activity</b> <i>Where relevant, how will you measure or monitor change?</i>
Briefly describe the overall activity or project that should help lead to the outcome identified above.						
<i>Action Step 1- Draft court rule to allow flexibility for parents, children, and court participants to appear remotely for hearings and develop recommendations</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• BJA Court Recovery Task Force</li> <li>• Supreme Court Rules Committee</li> </ul>	Juvenile court rule to allow remote participation in dependency court hearings.	Dependency courts offer remote hearing options in accordance with the court rule.	Ongoing	N/A	

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<p><i>for best practices for remote hearings.</i></p>		<p>Recommendations for best practices for remote hearings.</p> <p>Education for court professionals about the rule and recommendations.</p>	<p>Courts utilize best practices for conducting remote hearings.</p> <p>Increased participation in court hearings by children, parents and caregivers.</p>			
<p><i>Action Step 2 – Create two short instructional videos for court participants that prepare them to attend virtual dependency court hearings.</i></p> <p><i>Videos will be easily shared with families and will cover virtual court decorum and technical support for participating on virtual platforms.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Video production consultant</li> <li>• Workgroup of multi-disciplinary stakeholders that includes youth, parent, and caregivers with lived experience in child welfare</li> </ul>	<p>Short videos with instructions for attending virtual dependency hearings.</p> <p>Plan to engage and encourage local courts, legal professionals and providers to utilize videos with parents, youth and caregivers.</p> <p>Plan to assess usefulness of videos for court participants and court staff.</p>	<p>Reduced time spent by court professionals providing technology support to participants in virtual hearings.</p> <p>Court participants understand how to access virtual hearings and use the platform’s tools to participate meaningfully.</p> <p>Court parties and staff experience reduced stress related to virtual hearing participation.</p>	<p>July 1, 2022 – March 1, 2023</p>	<p>Ideas for marketing the video to increase use among dependency professionals and providers.</p>	<p>Measure the number of times the video is watched and how it is being used regionally</p> <p>User survey</p>
<p><i>Action Step 3 – Create up-to-date resources, guidance, and online learning modules for courts and dependency partners to help them hold effective and meaningful hybrid hearings that increase access to justice. Utilize CIP website to host information.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Instructional design consultant</li> <li>• Court Recovery Child Welfare Committee members</li> <li>• Workgroup of multi-disciplinary stakeholders that includes youth, parent, and caregivers with lived experience in child welfare</li> </ul>	<p>User-friendly guidance and online learning modules to help court professionals implement best practices for hybrid hearings and remote court operations.</p> <p>Resources are shared with court professionals and support provided to encourage uptake at the local court level.</p>	<p>Courts and stakeholders utilize CIP hybrid resources to support delivery of hearings and court operations.</p> <p>The provision of hybrid dependency court operations and hearings is more consistent between non-unified courts.</p> <p>Courts are more likely to adopt new technology for remote court operations.</p>	<p>September 2022-June 2023</p>	<p>Support to develop assessment measures for this project.</p>	<p>Measure website usage.</p>

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			Increased access to justice for court participants, especially those with barriers to in-person participation as a result of incarceration, health concerns, transportation challenges, and/or resource barriers.			
<i>Action Step 4 – Educate court staff about using timeliness data to support correct entry of good cause codes related to the Termination by 15 months measure.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Court clerks</li> <li>• Local judicial officers and court staff</li> <li>• AOC data staff</li> </ul>	<p>Guidance for courts on how to accurately capture good cause findings and ensure they are coded correctly in the court data system. Including instructions for identifying and correcting errors in the collection of good cause codes.</p> <p>Meetings with court staff to show them how to use timeliness data reports to improve practice and process.</p>	<p>Compliance with Termination by 15 Months measure will improve for courts that work with CIP.</p> <p>Termination Petition Filed by 15 months measure will improve statewide.</p>	Ongoing	N/A	Monitor Dependency Timeliness Report data.

**Child and Family Services Review / Program Improvement Plan (CFSR/PIP) - Overall Infrastructure & Supports**

*For states that will be participating in round 4 of the CFSR and PIP in your state this reporting year, please briefly describe overall infrastructure or similar supports for the CFSR/PIP process that may have been needed based on your Self-Assessment. As described in the PI, this may include engaging a broad representation of legal and judicial stakeholders, working with other leadership, collaborating with other partners, use of data in the process, staging, and feedback loops. For CFSR/PIP related efforts that are farther along and have focused data or outcomes identified, those can be completed on the usual project template above. Copy and paste the portion below the blue line if there are additional CFSR/PIP overall infrastructure and support items.*

**CFSR/PIP Outcome #1: The change the CIP seeks to support for the CFSR/PIP process**

<b>Activity Description</b> <i>Specific actions that will be completed to produce</i>	<b>Collaborative Partners</b>	<b>Anticipated Outputs of Activity</b>	<b>Goals of Activity (short and/or Long-term)</b>	<b>Timeframe</b> <i>Proposed completion</i>	<b>Resources Needed</b> <i>Where relevant identify the</i>	<b>Plans for Evaluating Activity</b>
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<i>specific outputs and demonstrate progress toward the outcome.</i>	<i>Responsible parties and partners involved in implementation of the activity.</i>	<i>What the CIP intends to produce, provide or accomplish through the activity.</i>	<i>Where relevant and practical, provide specific, projected measurable change the CIP intends to achieve.</i> <b>Progress toward Outcome</b>	<i>date or, if appropriate, "ongoing".</i>	<i>resources needed to complete the activity.</i>	<i>Where relevant, how will you measure or monitor change?</i>
Briefly describe the overall activity that should help lead to the outcome identified above.						
<i>Action Step 1 – Briefly identify the activities/action steps needed to implement activity 1</i>						
<i>Action Step 2 -</i>						[tab to add rows]

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