

# The DCYF Oversight Board's Guiding Budget Principles for the Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF)

In response to COVID-19 pandemic financial impacts on the state budget for SFY21

The DCYF Oversight Board acknowledges the tremendous task presented to state agencies to conduct 15% budget reduction exercises, as requested by the Office of Financial Management (OFM), in light of the mounting financial impacts presented by the COVID-19 pandemic. Although this is a daunting task, the DCYF Oversight Board sees this as an opportunity to return to the basics that serve as the original foundation for creating DCYF, as well as an opportunity to champion the value of family voice, nurture and grow community partnerships, and optimize shared resources with other state agencies.

In this document the DCYF Oversight Board provides guiding budget principles to DCYF as the department makes decisions to accomplish the 15% budget reduction exercises. This guidance is provided in partnership as we all face the immediate and long-term impacts presented by the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Priority Budget Principles

1. **Prioritize resources to eliminate racial and ethnic disparities and disproportionality across all DCYF systems of care.** The COVID-19 pandemic has brought into sharp relief the disparate impacts any crisis has on families and communities of color. See this as an opportunity to achieve the social justice reforms and goals identified as essential for administering state services and achieving outcomes equitably.
2. **Where possible, support community-based interventions and solutions to keep children and youth safe in their community instead of in institutions.**
3. **Continue to prioritize those children and youth most at risk of neglect, physical harm, and other adverse childhood experiences known to damage their long-term physical and behavioral health and perpetuate intergenerational poverty.**
4. **Optimize matching dollars, administrative savings, technological advances and streamlining of processes to reduce needs for direct service cuts.** Examples include:
  - Leverage state funding to maximize federal matching funds (FFPSA, Medicaid, Title IV-E, and others) and encourage existing and new private/public partnerships, such as the network administer model.
  - Streamline processes including reduction of duplicative work conducted between DCYF and community partners, for example background check processes, by leveraging the capabilities of those partners.
  - Continue effective technological advances explored during pandemic including, but not limited to tele-treatment options, videoconferencing visitation supervision options, etc.<sup>i</sup>
  - Coordinate resources from other departments to support the needs of children and families.

5. **Preserve DCYF’s core ability to gather and analyze data on outcomes for children, youth and families, racial and ethnic disproportionality and disparities, including disparities among other identity groups, and service effectiveness.**
6. **Maintain resources to support an anticipated increase in children’s and families’ needs as they return to daily activities once the Stay Home, Stay Healthy order is lifted.** With reduced observation by mandatory reporters during the COVID-19 pandemic, plus increased economic and emotional stress placed on families, we anticipate an increase in child welfare referrals. In addition, as parents return to work, child care will play a critical role in ensuring economic recovery for the family and the economy. The DCYF Oversight Board strongly encourages DCYF to maintain funding to address this anticipated increase in need for services and supports to help families stay whole and intact.
7. **Utilize a cost-benefit approach to identify and sustain effective programmatic responses that are geared towards reducing deeper and/or future system involvement, like dependency, incarceration, and homelessness.** At the same time, the Board encourages DCYF to ensure some flexibility in programs and funding to address new and intensified needs emerging because of the COVID-19 pandemic.
8. **Prioritize funding for programs and policies that have demonstrated their effectiveness in improving outcomes as identified in the WA State Blue Ribbon Commission on Service Delivery to Children and Families Report from 2016, the original legislation creating the Department of Children, Youth and Families (HB 1661 of 2017 or as codified in RCW 43.216.015(2)(c)), as well as in DCYF’s Strategic Plan.**

The DCYF Oversight Board commends the leadership and transparency DCYF has demonstrated during the unprecedented new world brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. The Oversight Board encourages DCYF, as difficult as it first appears, to embrace the opportunity presented by the budget reduction exercises. In doing so, we believe this process can work in the Department’s favor to eliminate racial and ethnic disparities and disproportionality through all systems of care, ensure the safety and well-being of all of Washington’s children and youth, and maintain a laser focus on achieving the stated outcomes central to the creation of DCYF.

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<sup>i</sup> *The Oversight Board understands that certain services such as in-person visitation are considered essential and savings may only arise from offered supplemental support services. The Oversight Board also acknowledges that some services will need to be evaluated for effectiveness when administered in a virtual format.*