

## DCYF Oversight Board Response & Feedback on DCYF Strategic Priorities 2020-2025

The Oversight Board is encouraged by the direction DCYF has outlined in this plan and its obligation to fulfill the mandate as envisioned in the Governor's Blue Ribbon Commission on the Delivery of Services to Children and Families and House Bill 1661 of 2017. In particular, the DCYF Oversight Board was supportive and pleased to see the following in DCYF's Strategic Priorities 2020-2025 plan:

- Adding geography, sexual identity/gender expression and ability status to the work aimed at reducing disproportionality and disparities across system outcomes.
- Support for the DCYF workforce that is responsive to emotional and secondary trauma experienced as a result of working in child and family services.
- Trauma-informed care with a healing-centered approach to addressing the needs of children and families served by the Department.
- A focus on staff satisfaction and retention.
- Continued support for the performance-based contracting strategy pursued by the Department for all direct client services.
- Concerted efforts to increase the service array available to children and families across the state with a particular focus on rural areas.
- The inclusion of the Chapin Hall Baseline Performance Assessment as a guide to strengthen quality improvement systems.
- A plan to report on all accountability indicators by race, ethnicity, geography and family income where available.

The Oversight Board does want to offer additional guidance to strengthen the direction of DCYF over the next five years. The following feedback from the DCYF Oversight Board aligns with the order and organization of the current document.

### **Mission, Vision and Introduction Statement**

#### **❖ Embed a specific plan to reduce racial and ethnic disparities throughout the main DCYF strategic plan**

The Board applauds the attention drawn to reducing racial and ethnic disparities early on in DCYF's strategy priorities document, and the expansion of that focus to reducing disparities based on family income, geography, sexual identity/gender expression and ability status. Though the Oversight Board would like to see the department:

- (1) Clearly state specific actions connected to this commitment; and
- (2) Enmesh this work throughout this strategic plan document and not treat it as a separate plan to be produced later in the year after this plan is finalized.

By prioritizing reducing these disparities and disproportionality, the Department must commit to making it a part of every program, policy or operation administered by the agency. Without seeing this formally memorialized in the strategic plan, the Oversight Board is concerned that these efforts will continued to be siloed and perceived as additional or separate work from the main mission of the Department.

## **DCYF Agency Priorities**

### **1. Safely reduce the number/rate of children in out-of-home care by half**

- ❖ **Expand this goal to reduce youth involved in the juvenile justice and juvenile rehabilitation systems.** As DCYF seeks to de-silo its work and provide a continuum of care, the Oversight Board believes this should be attributed to efforts to reduce the number of youth in care across the child welfare system, juvenile justice and juvenile rehabilitation system. This would require prioritizing DCYF's leadership role in strengthening partnerships with local governments to increase diversion options for youth touched by the juvenile justice system.
- ❖ **Address youth in BRS placements that are returning home from out of state placements, as well as increasing hotel stays and other emergency placement stays.** With the focus on safely reducing the number of children in care, the Oversight Board would like to see commitment to strategies and actions in this plan that address the in-state placement of youth returning from out-of-state BRS placement, as well as what strategies that will mitigate the pattern of increasing hotel stays and other emergency placements.

### **2. Create successful transition into adulthood for youth and young adults in our care**

- ❖ **Expand specificity around mental health and substance use disorder treatment, both in the description of the current state of these issues and what will be addressed within that landscape.** Additional information on the realities of this issue and how DCYF will address it is desired.
- ❖ **Include higher education access, in addition to vocational education, as an option for creating successful transition into adulthood for youth and young adults in care.**

### **3. Create high quality integrated B-5 system**

- ❖ **Parent and caregiver supports should be central to creating a high quality integrated B-5 system.** Parents and caregivers are cornerstone to ensuring better outcomes for our youngest Washingtonians and essential for building and maintain a quality holistic B-5 system.

### **4. Improve quality and intention of our practice**

- ❖ **Highlight new innovative programs – such as the Family Connections Program and the Certificates of Parental Improvement** - that enhancing caregiver relationships, resources and opportunities produce better outcomes for children, youth and families in our state.

## **5. Improve quality and availability of providers services**

- ❖ **Identify and prioritize strategies on strengthening partnerships with communities, providers and local governments.** The Blue Ribbon Commission identified that the expectations to improve outcomes for children and families that are touched by DCYF systems, is an expectation that cannot be achieved by DCYF alone. The Department must take a leadership position in forging and supporting partnerships with communities, providers and local government entities including local courts.
- ❖ **Acknowledge the success of the Network Administrator model in Region 1, administered by Empire Health through the Family Impact Network,** and address its relationship to the strategy for achieving a robust service array, particularly in rural areas.

### **Cross-Cutting Themes**

- ❖ **Add the commitment to reducing disparities and disproportionality across all DCYF systems.**

### **Additional indicators of interest to monitoring plan**

The Oversight Board acknowledges that this plan is in early stages of development, but the Board is glad to see a clearly defined commitment to reduction of youth in care by a designated factor. The Oversight Board expects that similar target will be set across all priority areas identified in the plan, including the commitment to obtain 90% kindergarten readiness for all children entering kindergarten.

Additionally, the Oversight Board believes the following indicators would be insightful for monitoring performance for strategies laid out in this plan:

- ❖ ***For create successful transitions into adulthood for youth and young adults in our care*** – add driver indicator on stable placements
- ❖ ***For create high quality integrated B-5 system*** – add (1) stability of child care to ensure children are not being moved from center to center; (2) higher Early Achievers ratings, and (3) capacity growth of providers over time.
- ❖ ***For improve quality and availability of provider services*** - add capacity growth of providers over time.

Again, the Oversight Board is encouraged by the plan the Department has put forth as is main areas of focus over the next 5 years. The Board believes with the additional guidance provided here, DCYF is moving on a strong foundation towards achieving the stated outcomes central to its mission.