

# 2022 Annual Report

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DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN, YOUTH, AND FAMILIES  
OVERSIGHT BOARD 2022 ANNUAL REPORT

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## Executive Summary

Created in 2017, the Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF) was created by the Washington State Legislature to administer a continuum of care in order to achieve eighteen outcomes, with corresponding performance measures, focused on the well-being of Washington’s children and families. In this report, the DCYF Oversight Board reviews the agency’s performance in these priority focus areas spanning early learning, child welfare, and juvenile rehabilitation.

**Supporting the Workforce:** The DCYF Oversight Board acknowledges the essential and indispensable value of DCYF’s workforce to ensure improved outcomes for children and families across the agency’s continuum of care. Throughout the year, the DCYF Oversight Board heard from the workforce about the trauma, challenges, and lack of support they experience when managing complicated and demanding workloads, particularly when critical incidents occur. The DCYF Oversight Board calls on DCYF leadership to own the challenges its workforce experiences and to adopt and enact an action plan, driven and designed by the workforce, to ensure the well-being of staff.

**Focus on Safety:** The Oversight Board emphasizes the importance of child and youth *safety, permanency, and well-being* (RCW 43.216.015(3)(c)(iii)), as essential priorities for determining DCYF’s performance in the outcomes reviewed below and throughout this report. As outcomes are reviewed, a child or youth’s safety and well-being is central to considerations regarding agency performance.

**COVID-19 Impacts:** The COVID-19 pandemic - and associated changes to service and program provision - has, and continues to have, differing impacts on each of the outcome areas reviewed in this report. Further recognition and discussion of these impacts is provided, where appropriate, when reviewing the agency’s performance.

### Outcomes

It is recognized that the Covid 19 pandemic has had a significant and immeasurable impact on outcomes for children, youth and families. Based on the data that is available, the report concludes DCYF is **achieving improved outcomes** for:

- Preventing child abuse and neglect
- Reducing the number of children and youth entering out-of-home care
- Reducing length of stay for youth in out-of-home care, and
- Increasing family reunifications

The report also concludes DCYF’s **practice and operations need improvement** on:

- Eliminating racial and ethnic disproportionality and disparities in system involvement across child and youth outcomes
- Increasing the number and proportion of children who are kindergarten-ready
- Increasing proportion of the children in early learning programs that have achieved the level 3 or higher early achievers quality standard
- Increasing the available supply of licensed childcare in both childcare centers and family homes, including providers no receiving state subsidy
- Licensing more foster homes than there are children in foster care
- Reducing the number of children who re-enter out-of-home care within 12 months
- Increasing stability of placements for children in out-of-home care

- Developing strategies to demonstrate to foster families that their service and involvement is highly valued by the department
- Improving adolescent outcomes
- Reducing future demand for mental health and substance use disorder treatment, and
- Eliminating discharge of unaccompanied youth from institutional settings into homelessness

**Inconclusive Performance Status:** The agency’s performance on the remaining outcomes is inconclusive due to at least one of the following limitations: (1) the lack of an existing quantifiable measures to capture a priority outcome, (2) one-time analyses reflective of performance prior to the creation of DCYF, (3) data collection and reporting limitations due to old data infrastructure in need of updating to meet modern data and reporting needs, and/or (4) data analysis lags due to traditional performance measure structure and reporting frequency.

Even with these data limitations, the DCYF Oversight Board reviewed each outcome area and identified contributing factors influencing agency performance, including externally imposed limitations introduced by the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as opportunities for improvement presented by recent legislative changes, programming, and funding.

For each outcome area, the DCYF Oversight Board provides recommendations for DCYF to improve performance, reporting, refine priorities, and improve practices with the goal of achieving better outcomes, equitably, for Washington’s children and families.

## DCYF Oversight Board Background

In 2017, the Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF) was created with the passage of [HB 1661](#). DCYF administers early learning, child welfare, juvenile justice and juvenile rehabilitation services previously administered by two separate state agencies – the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) and the Department of Early Learning (DEL). The creation of DCYF restructures how the state serves children, youth and families through a continuum of care, with the goal of producing better outcomes in all Washington communities. [HB 1661](#) (2017) also created the DCYF Oversight Board as an independent entity for monitoring and ensuring that DCYF achieves the stated outcomes as intended by the legislation, and to ensure that the department complies with administrative acts, relevant statutes, rules, and policies pertaining to early learning, juvenile rehabilitation, juvenile justice, and children and family services.

A list of Board members is available for review in Appendix D.

**Honoring DCYF Oversight Board Members’ Service:** The end of 2022 marks the end of the four-year terms served by the original set of Oversight Board members appointed in 2018. We would like to acknowledge and thank the following members who will complete their service at the end of this year. These members have brought indispensable value and expertise to the Board in their given roles and will be missed as the Board moves forward into a new term in 2023.

**Annie Blackledge**, serving in the role of *a representative of an organization that advocates for the best interest of the child.*

**Loni Greninger**, serving in the role of *tribal representative from the west of the crest of the Cascade Mountains*

**Annie Lee**, serving in the role of *subject matter expert in eliminating disparities in child outcomes by family income and race and ethnicity.*

**Charles Loeffler**, serving in the role of *child welfare caseworker representative.*

## Performance Snapshot RCW 43.216.015(3)(c)

	On Track		Needs Improvement/Mixed		Off Track		Inconclusive due to data limitations and reporting prior to DCYF creation.
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	Outcome Measure	2021 Performance Status	2022 Performance status	Page #
1.	Eliminate racial and ethnic disproportionality and disparities in system involvement across child and youth outcomes in collaboration with other state agencies			<a href="#">Page 9</a>
2.	Increase the number and proportion of children kindergarten-ready as measured by the Washington kindergarten inventory of developing skills (WAKids) assessment including mathematics			<a href="#">Page 12</a>
3.	Increase the proportion of children in early learning programs that have achieved the level 3 or higher early achievers quality standard			<a href="#">Page 15</a>
4.	Increase the available supply of licensed child care in child care centers and family homes, including providers not receiving subsidy			<a href="#">Page 17</a>
5.	Prevent child abuse and neglect			<a href="#">Page 19</a>
6.	Reduce number of children entering out-of-home care*			<a href="#">Page 23</a>
7.	Reduce Length of Stay (LOS) in out-of-home care*			<a href="#">Page 26</a>
8.	Reduce maltreatment of youth while in out-of-home care*			<a href="#">Page 28</a>
9.	Licensing more foster homes than there are children in foster care			<a href="#">Page 29</a>
10.	Reducing the number of children re-entering out-of-home care within twelve months* **			<a href="#">Page 31</a>
11.	Increase stability of placements for children in out-of-home care *			<a href="#">Page 33</a>
12.	Develop strategies to demonstrate to foster families that their service and involvement are highly valued by DCYF			<a href="#">Page 37</a>
13.	Increase family reunification, as measured by the number of youth reunified with their family of origin			<a href="#">Page 40</a>
14.	Collaborate with county juvenile justice programs to improve adolescent outcomes including ...			<a href="#">Page 42</a>
	Reduce multisystem involvement			<a href="#">Page 42</a>

	Outcome Measure	2021 Performance Status	2022 Performance status	Page #
	Reduce homelessness			<a href="#">Page 44</a>
	Increase high school graduation rates			<a href="#">Page 45</a>
	Increase successful transitions into adulthood for youth involved in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems			<a href="#">Page 46</a>
15.	Reduce future demand for mental health and substance use disorder treatment for youth involved in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems			<a href="#">Page 50</a>
16.	In collaboration with county juvenile justice programs, increase number of youth who successfully complete terms of diversion or alternative sentencing options**			<a href="#">Page 55</a>
17.	Decrease the number of youth who commit subsequent crimes **			<a href="#">Page 59</a>
18.	Eliminate the discharge of youth from institutional settings into homelessness			<a href="#">Page 61</a>

\*Federally reported measures in the Annual Progress and Services Report, complimented by the Child and Family Services Plan.

\*\*Data limitations due to data lag, analysis, and reporting periods in conjunction with the initial implementation of DCYF in August 2017 and full implementation by July 2019.

## DCYF Oversight Board Strategic Plan Review Summary Statement

The DCYF Oversight Board reviewed drafts of DCYF’s Strategic Plan in March 2020 and again in March 2021. The Oversight Board’s full response to DCYF’s Strategic and Racial Equity Plan 2021-2026, prior to the plan’s completion, is available for review in Appendix A of the [DCYF Oversight Board’s 2021 Annual Report](#).

DCYF’s final plan sets the agency’s direction and priorities for the 2021-2026 timeframe. In 2022, the DCYF Oversight Board engaged the agency and stakeholders on the following priority areas central to the plan:

Agency Priority	DCYF Oversight Board 2022 Meeting Date(s)	Summary & DCYF Oversight Board Response
<b>Eliminate racial disproportionalities and advance racial equity</b>	<b>7/21/22</b> Racial Equity & Social Justice (RESJ)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Agency continued commitment to becoming an anti-racist organization, including organizational assessment engaging employees and staff RESJ training.</li> <li>Progress made to implement liberatory and healing-centered design across DCYF.</li> <li>Evaluation and redesign of assessments to ensure equity underway.</li> <li>Other progress and advances reviewed on page 9.</li> </ul>

<p><b>Safely reduce the number/rate of children and youth in out-of-home care</b></p>	<p><b>3/17/22</b> Families First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) and Provider Panel</p> <p><b>7/7/22</b> Prevention Strategies Across the Continuum of Care</p> <p><b>9/1/22</b> Fatalities &amp; Near Fatalities Review &amp; Recommendations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prevention services needed for families at-risk of system involvement but aren't eligible for services unless referred to system.</li> <li>• IT and data challenges preventing agency's ability to pull down FFPSA funding (page 19 and page 31).</li> <li>• Strengthening Families Locally underway to serve highest need areas of the state (page 19).</li> <li>• Redesign of Family Practice Model occurring via co-design approach.</li> <li>• Advances in kinship caregiver licensing (pages 29, 31, 33, 37 and 40).</li> <li>• Increasing array of prevention services available and expanding, reviewed on page 19</li> <li>• Consistent review and presentation of number of youth in out-of-home care alongside balancing indicator of re-entry into care rates (page 23)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Create successful transitions into adulthood for youth and young adults in care</b></p>	<p><b>1/20/22</b> Placement Exceptions Plan</p> <p><b>7/21/22</b> Juvenile Rehabilitation Updates since 2020</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased housing and placement options developed in response to increasing placement exceptions (pages 33).</li> <li>• Advances JR community transition services and therapeutic environments (pages 50, 59 and 61).</li> <li>• Diligent progress in improving assessments identifying treatment needs for youth in care, progress to be made on connecting youth in need of treatment with services (pages 50).</li> <li>• Progress in partnerships and recommendation development to address low-performing institutional educational outcomes (pages 42).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Create a high quality integrated B-8 system</b></p>	<p><b>7/7/22</b> Prevention Strategies Across the Continuum of Care</p> <p><b>9/15/22</b> DCYF Workforce Strategies Across the Continuum of Care</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expansion of home visiting services (page 19).</li> <li>• Promising preliminary data on the effectiveness of the Child Welfare Early Learning Navigators (CWELN) program connecting families to early learning services (page 19).</li> <li>• Challenges in recruiting and retaining contracted services providers due to low wages and challenging nature of the work.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Improve quality and intention of our practice</b></p>	<p><b>7/21/22</b> Juvenile Rehabilitation Updates since 2020</p> <p><b>9/1/22</b> Fatalities &amp; Near Fatalities Review &amp; Recommendations</p> <p><b>9/15/22</b> DCYF Workforce Strategies</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DCYF special project work underway to understand staffing support needs and address issues that have impacted staff retention in JR and CW.  <p style="margin-left: 20px;"><b>The DCYF Oversight Board expects a stronger commitment and clear action plan by DCYF leadership to address the many challenges and hardships experienced by the DCYF workforce regarding overwhelming and complicated workloads, as well robust work-alleviating supports when critical incidents occur.</b></p> </li> <li>• JR trauma informed care for youth and staff.</li> </ul>



	Across the Continuum of Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Redesign of Family Practice Model underway with the use of co-design approach.</li> <li>• A reduction in unnecessary staff investigations.</li> </ul>
<b>Improve quality and availability of provider services</b>	Updates provided in 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agency-wide service delivery performance-based contracting implementation continues across continuum of care. Contract groups for child welfare, adolescent programs, tribal services, early learning, and family support reported updates on service and quality measurement identification and development. As of June 2022, 1,013 of the agency's contracts were involved in the performance-based contracting process.</li> </ul>


**Supporting the Workforce:** DCYF leadership must address the needs and calls for support from its workforce. The DCYF workforce has expressed to the DCYF Oversight Board that a disconnect exists between DCYF headquarters decision-making and the realities of day-to-day workload demands and realities for field staff across the state.

DCYF performance outcomes can only be achieved by the work of its staff. As staff encounter challenging workloads, complex cases, and trauma, they deserve and require adequate supports to not only manage these challenges, but also to heal and be effective and compassionate caseworkers for families and children. This is the very least required in order to handle existing workloads, let alone to embrace and effectively implement policy reforms focused on prevention and whole family supports.

Developing and enacting a two-way communication mechanism between field staff and headquarters leadership is necessary to ensure decision-makers are familiar with the day-to-day realities of the workforce. Two-way communication must be designed and embraced by the workforce to be effective. Additionally, staff should be provided transparent information regarding decisions made as a result of this communication mechanism, include clear and accessible explanations for why certain requests or recommendations are, or are not, adopted.

The DCYF Oversight Board will continue to seek input from the DCYF workforce to understand the development of this relationship between headquarters and field operations, as well as to continually emphasize the indispensable value of the workforce that DCYF is dependent on to fulfill its intended vision and mission.

## 1. Eliminating racial and ethnic disproportionality and disparities in system involvement and across child and youth outcomes in collaboration with other state agencies

**PERFORMANCE STATUS:** Needs Improvement, progress made 

There are a number of indicators to consider when assessing the agency’s performance towards eliminating racial and ethnic disparities across child and youth outcomes. Due to the varied nature of data available and how that data is analyzed, DCYF published a report in May 2021 “Using Data in DCYF to Advance Racial Equity.”<sup>1</sup> Work has continued into 2022 to standardize how race and ethnicity is collected and measure across DCYF’s multiple systems supporting its continuum of care.

With the data that is available, DCYF has identified the following trends across its continuum of care regarding racial and ethnic disparities and disproportionalities:

**Child Welfare:** In reviewing data at every stage of the child welfare placement process, the majority of disproportionalities are attributed to disproportionalities at intakes, with American Indian/Native American (AI/NA) and Black/African American (B/AA) children experiencing the highest disproportionality rates compared to white children. AI/NA children experience even higher disproportionality rates for screened-in intakes and removals. While B/AA children experience screened-in intakes and removals at lower disproportionality rates than is experienced for intakes, but the rates are still higher than the rates experienced by white children. Intakes and screened-in intakes for children who identify as multiracial is only slightly higher than intakes for white children, yet removal rates for multiracial children occurs similar to that of AI/NA children. It should be noted that the population of AI/NA children and multiracial children is smaller than the white or B/AA population, indicating that changes in smaller populations show greater variance in aggregate data over time.

**Early Learning:** Racial and ethnic disparities persist for children assessed for kindergarten readiness in all six domains. Populations of children identifying as Asian, white, or as two or more races have overall a higher percentage of children considered kindergarten ready than the state population overall at 50.8%. While populations of Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino, Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and Native American/American Indian, exhibit kindergarten readiness at a percentage lower than the state average.

**Juvenile Rehabilitation:** From SFY18-SFY21, the racial and ethnic characteristics of the JR population has remained relatively consistent, with overrepresentation of AI/NA, B/AA and Hispanic youth. Similarly, AI/NA and B/AA youth experience homelessness at disproportionate rates within the 12 months after they exit from JR. Though disparities in employment outcomes after release from JR have diminished in the last few years.

When evaluating data regarding race and ethnicity, it is important to analyze trends by understanding the purpose and use of that data in terms of equality versus equity. This is particularly true when considering service provision versus outcomes. Racial and ethnic disproportionality in service provision and resource

<sup>1</sup> Cummings, K., Graham, J. C., Veele, S., & Ybarra, V. (2021). Using Data in DCYF to Advance Racial Equity. Washington State Department of Children, Youth, and Families – Office of Innovation, Alignment, and Accountability. [www.dcyf.wa.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/reports/OIAAEquityData2021.pdf](http://www.dcyf.wa.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/reports/OIAAEquityData2021.pdf)

distribution may exist in order to achieve racial equity in child and family outcomes. Though this is not true for all trends regarding disproportionality, it is necessary to maintain an understanding that targeted strategies for some communities can disrupt long-standing status quo patterns of inequity, by providing services, supports and programming in order to achieve equity.

### DCYF Planning and Policy Achievements in 2022:

- **PEAR Team:** In accordance with Governor Inslee’s Executive Order 22-04, DCYF has established a Pro-Equity, Anti-Racism Team (PEAR Team) which has the intent to hold DCYF accountable for accomplishing goals to eliminate racial and ethnic disparities in child, youth, and family outcomes.
- **Racial Equity and Social Justice Policy:** DCYF has adopted policies regarding racial equity, Limited English Proficient (LEP), Individuals with Disabilities, and LGBTQIA+ to further progress on the agency’s top priority in its strategic plan: *eliminate racial disproportionalities and advance racial equity*.
- **DCYF Inclusive Racial Equity Change Team:** The agency developed an agency leadership team that designs, coordinates, and organizes RESJ system change efforts to support culture change.

Additional actions, led or administered by DCYF, to further advance racial equity and social justice include:

- Increased relative placement rate, from approximately 44% in 2016 to 52.1% in 2022
- Implementation of child-specific licensing, increasing kinship placements and placement stability for BIPOC children and families
- Sustaining child care through the pandemic
- Eliminating child support referrals, alleviating socio-economic stressors on system-involved families
- Tracking outcomes disaggregated by race
- Repealing parent pay statute with the passage of HB 2050 in 2022
- Expanding Community Transition Services with the passage of HB 1186 in 2021
- Providing workforce retention grants for child care providers
- In response to partnership work with the CAPTA Citizen Review Panel, establishing a Racial Equity Citizen Review Panel
- Redesigning screening assessments to eliminate bias and accurately identify treatment needs for mental health and substance abuse for youth and families
- The Fair Starts for Kids Act (FSKA) funding included the hiring of FTEs added to work with families through three most common, non-English, spoken languages in Washington State

### Contributing Factors & Future Performance:

- **DCYF Leadership Commitment & Strategic Plan:** DCYF has identified *eliminate racial disproportionalities and advance racial equity* as one of six priorities central to the agency’s first Strategic and Equity Plan for 2021-2026. DCYF Leadership recognizes that in order to improve on all outcomes identified in the agency’s founding legislation, the agency must make progress on advancing racial equity.

- **Fair Starts for Kids Act (FSKA):** The FSKA, passed in 2021, included funding for early learning equity grants administered by DCYF in 2022. Equity grants provides support for culturally and linguistically specific early learning programs, as well as early childhood and parent support programs across the state.
- **COVID-19 Pandemic:** Some studies have shown that the COVID-19 Pandemic contributed to increasing racial inequities in foster care in certain urban environments. The impacts of the pandemic will be under consideration when monitoring the agency’s performance moving forward.<sup>2</sup>
- **Continued Need for Data Infrastructure:** Continued advances in developing data infrastructure for assessing racial equity in DCYF’s systems of care will create greater transparency and metrics by which to assess the agency’s progress.
- **Recent Legislation:** The passage of legislation in 2021, including but not limited to [HB 1227](#), [HB 1194](#), [SB 5151](#), [HB 1186](#), [HB 1295](#), and [SB 5237](#), all have elements aimed at addressing racial disproportionalities across early learning, child welfare, and juvenile rehabilitation. The impacts from these new laws will be monitored given their various implementation dates and subsequent practice over the next several years.

### Recommendations & Future Follow Up:

- **Reporting disaggregated data for policy and program claims of advancing racial equity:** When DCYF claims changes to programs, policies, or practices achieve advancing racial equity, the agency should transparently provide data to support that claim.
- **Report on RESJ Team Achievements:** DCYF should publicly share the achievements of the RESJ team since its foundation in mid-2020, while acknowledging challenges facing the team and how the agency plans to mitigate those challenges.
- **Report on and define racial equity and social justice as two separate concepts:** Racial equity and social justice are two independent concepts, that at times intertwine, but not always. To be clear in its intentions and what issues it is working to address, DCYF should define and label policy, program and practice changes that specifically address one, the other, or both, to clearly identify the agency’s and deliberate actions towards furthering each concept.
- **Increasing Access and Availability of RESJ Resources and Trainings:** RESJ training opportunities should be proactively provided and available to DCYF workforce beyond being available on a resource page for those wishing to seek it out. In the coming year, the Oversight Board will monitor DCYF’s RESJ team’s development and progress and inquire into DCYF workforce’s experience accessing and engaging with DCYF’s Inclusive Racial Equity Change Team (DIRECT) intended to further the agency’s efforts to become an anti-racist organization.

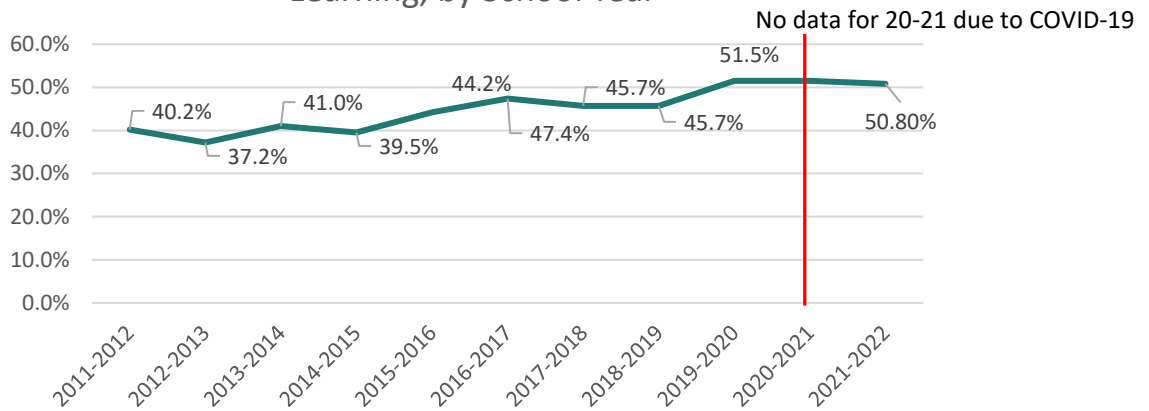
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<sup>2</sup> Bethany Christian Services. *What the Pandemic Taught Us: Innovative Practice Report*. 2021. <https://bethany.org/media/resources/blogs/innovative-practice-report-2021.pdf>

## 2. Increasing number and proportion of children kindergarten-ready as measured by WA kindergarten inventory of developing skills (WaKIDS) assessment including mathematics.

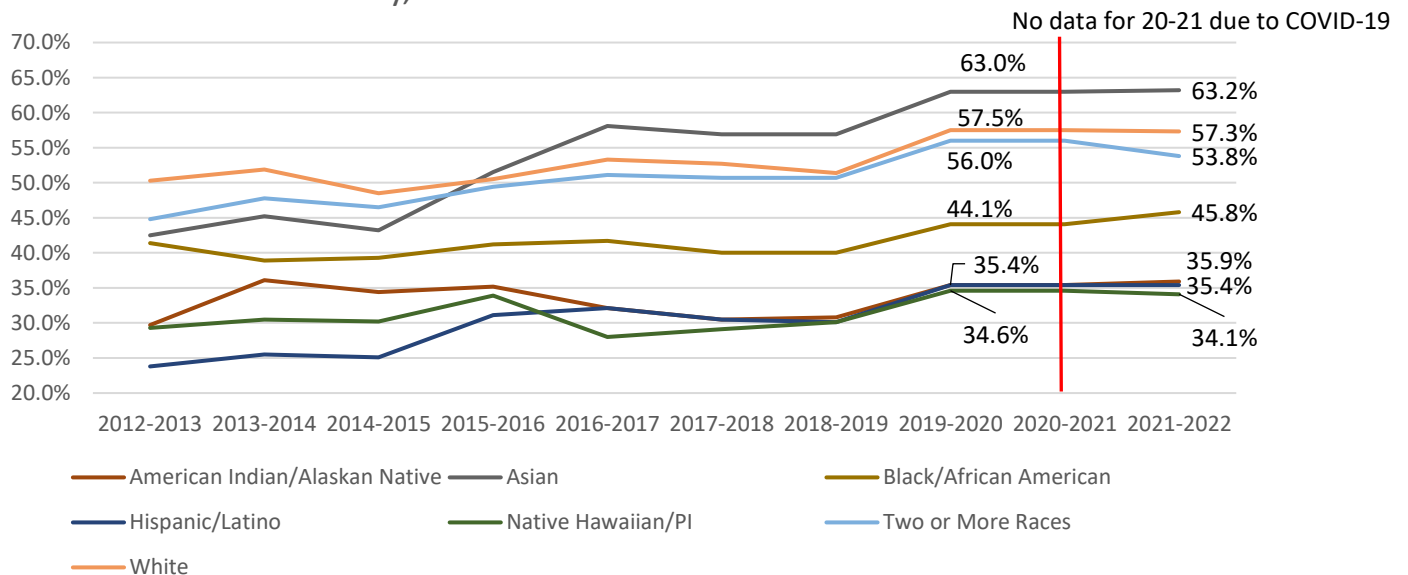
**PERFORMANCE STATUS:** Needs Improvement →

Percentage of Students Entered Kindergarten Ready in All Six Areas of Development and Learning, by School Year



3

Students Kindergarten Ready in all six domains by race and ethnicity, School Year 2012-2013 to 2020-2022



4

<sup>3</sup> Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) Report Card. *Kindergarten Readiness*. 2022.

<https://washingtonstatereportcard.ospi.k12.wa.us/ReportCard/ViewSchoolOrDistrict/103300>

<sup>4</sup> OSPI Report Card. *Kindergarten Readiness by Student Demographics*. 2022.

<https://washingtonstatereportcard.ospi.k12.wa.us/ReportCard/ViewSchoolOrDistrict/103300>

For the 2021-2022 school year, 78,175 children enrolled in kindergarten, and 74,961 enrolled in 1<sup>st</sup> grade.<sup>5</sup>

Enrollment for kindergarten and first grade has slightly increased in the 2022-2023 school year from the previous school year but is still lower than pre-pandemic enrollment rates. In 2020-2021, enrollment declined due to concerns regarding COVID-19, as well as the remote/hybrid schooling structure. Some families have opted for home-based instruction, private schooling, or chose delayed enrollment due to the pandemic.<sup>6</sup> The WaKIDS assessment is conducted within the first two months of the school year. The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in school closures during the beginning of the 2020-2021 school year. As a result, WaKIDS data is not available for that school year. For school year 2021-2022, statewide WaKIDS data is available and illustrates a slight statewide decrease in readiness across all domains with the exception of math, which maintains 68.2% of students assessed ready in this domain. Still, math remains the lowest scored domains among all six areas.

For the 2019-2020 school year, of the students entering kindergarten who are also in **foster care**, only **28.2%** were considered ready in all six domains, compared to the **50.7%** of non-foster students.<sup>7</sup>

DCYF piloted the Child Welfare Early Learning Navigators (CWELN) program in 2019. In 2021, CWELNs assessed 4,762 child welfare cases for early learning needs. Of 3,000 referrals made, 1,500 were to child care, 500 to ECEAP, 285 to ESIT, and the remainder to services in the community.

As required in HB 2711 (2020), the Education Research & Data Center (ERDC) is producing an annual analysis comparing foster care student educational outcomes in comparison to their non-foster care peers, through 2025. This analysis provides further insight into the developmental needs of children in foster care, though these updated reporting requirements does not include performance on each individual WaKIDS domain. The lack of detail by domain does not assist with understanding how early learning programs, policies, and providers can best target developmental needs of young children. This lack of detail is of particular concern given that for developing brains, emotional well-being and social competence are necessary to support the development of other cognitive abilities.<sup>8</sup>

#### **Contributing Factors & Future Performance:**

- **COVID-19 Pandemic:** The pandemic, and operational closures or remote learning environments, appears to continue to impact the development of children preparing for kindergarten. Additional services, such as early interventions, were also limited in their ability to identify and serve young children to prepare them for kindergarten.
- **Kinship vs. Non-Kinship Placements:** DCYF acknowledges the value of understanding the impacts of out-of-home placements on social-emotional development. The agency has plans to analyze the impacts of kinship placements, versus non-kinship placements, on social-emotional development of young children in care.
- **Fair Starts for Kids Act:** The passage of the Fair Starts for Kids Act ([ESSSB 5237](#)) in 2021 introduced multiple strategies for improving child care across the state. With expanded eligibility and reduced copays for some programs, more families and children have access to high quality early learning

<sup>5</sup> Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) Report Card. *Enrollment: By Grade*. 2022. <https://washingtonstatereportcard.ospi.k12.wa.us/ReportCard/ViewSchoolOrDistrict/103300>

<sup>6</sup> Caseload Forecast Council, June 2022 "Common Schools Enrollment" June 15, 2022 <https://www.cfc.wa.gov/Documents/ForecastNarratives.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> Chen, V. and Hough, G. *Education and Workforce Outcomes for Children and Youth in Foster Care, 2021 Report*. 2021.

<https://erdc.wa.gov/publications/student-outcomes/education-and-workforce-outcomes-children-and-youth-foster-care-2021>

<sup>8</sup> Center on the Developing Child. *Brain Architecture*. 2021. <https://developingchild.harvard.edu/science/key-concepts/brain-architecture/>

opportunities. Among many other enhancements, the expansion of Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultants (IECMHC), supported by the FSKA funding, assists with the socio-emotional development of young children in licensed child care.<sup>9</sup>

- **ECEAP Slot Expansion:** ECEAP slots expanded by 1,331 slots for the 2022-2023 school year.
- **ECEAP Mobility Mentoring Pilot** – Beginning in 2020, Washington State piloted Mobility Mentoring, a national model that supports family engagement around asset building and resource navigation. The pilot was implemented from 2020-2021. Research indicates that ECEAP enrolled children whose adult family members received Mobility Mentoring showed gains in 2 of 6 WaKIDS domains versus those who did not receive Mobility Mentoring.<sup>10</sup>

### Recommendations & Future Follow Up:


- **Publicly Report WaKIDS Data for Children in Foster Care (re-emphasized from 2021 with elaboration):** DCYF has identified kindergarten readiness as an outcome indicator for the agency’s strategic priority [Create high-quality integrated B-8 system](#). Given this priority and planned future analyses on students in foster care, DCYF is urged to report this data accessibly on their website and agency performance page. Additionally, the Oversight Board urges DCYF to work with ERDC in refining the reporting of educational outcomes for youth experiencing foster care, in particular the domain performance for foster care students versus non-foster care students given the previously observed disproportionality in socio-emotional development, among others, for foster care involved students.
- **Addressing Fragmentation of Early Learning System:** The DCYF Oversight Board recognizes a need to have the full Board review and discuss challenges facing the early learning system before the Board can take an informed position on the issues of concern.

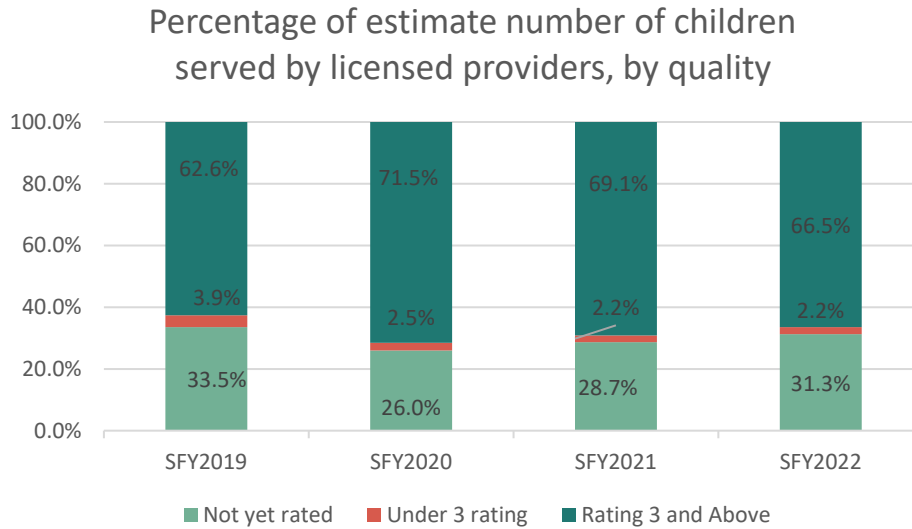
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<sup>9</sup> DCYF. (May 2022). *Holding Hope IECMHC Program Supports Social-Emotional Development in Youth*. <https://dcyf.wa.gov/news/holding-hope-iecmhc-program-supports-social-emotional-development-youth>

<sup>10</sup> Homer, C. J., Winning, A., and Cummings, K. “A Coaching Model to Promote Economic Mobility and Child Developmental Outcomes.” *Pediatrics*. 2022. 149 (1). <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2020-018473>

### 3. Increasing the proportion of children in early learning programs that have achieved the level 3 or higher early achievers quality standard

**PERFORMANCE STATUS:** Needs Improvement 



*Note: Licensed providers include (1) child care centers, (2) family home providers, and (3) Head Start/ECEAP.*

#### Estimated Number of Children Served by All Types of Providers, By Quality

	SFY2019	SFY2020	SFY2021	SFY2022
Not yet rated	35,295	27,438	29,784	32,167
Under 3 rating	4,158	2,637	2,330	2,249
Rating 3 and Above	65,921	75,505	71,675	68,346
Total	105,374	105,580	103,789	102,762

Data indicates that, in comparison to previous years, fewer children are being served by providers who have an Early Achievers rating below three, as well as children being served by a provider with a rating three or above. The number of children overall being served by enrolled providers has decreased in SFY2022. This may indicate a loss of providers over the SFY2020 to SFY 2022 timeframe, or families choosing not to have their children served by an Early Achievers enrolled provider, both could be results and lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Similarly, data reviewed under the previous outcome measure, Kindergarten Readiness, indicates a

<sup>11</sup> DCYF. (June 2019 – June 2022). Early Achievers Monitoring Report. Merit.



reduction in the number of children enrolled in kindergarten and first grade compared to enrollment rates prior to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Contributing Factors & Future Performance:**

- **COVID-19 Pandemic:** The COVID-19 pandemic directly impacted the agency’s ability to license and evaluate providers to determine quality. It is assumed this impact is reflected in the increase of providers “not yet rated” in SFY2021 and SFY2022 compared to SFY2020, though the number of *not yet rated* providers is still below the SFY2019 figure. Similarly, the pandemic appears to have impacted the supply of enrolled providers, either due to provider decisions and/or family choice regarding enrolling their children in licensed child care and preschool.
- **Fair Starts for Kids Act (FKSA):** The passage of the FSKA ([ESSB 5237](#)) during the 2021 legislative session, is intended to expand access to high quality child care to more families across the state. It is anticipated that the percentage of children served by providers with a quality rating of 3 or higher will increase in the coming years.

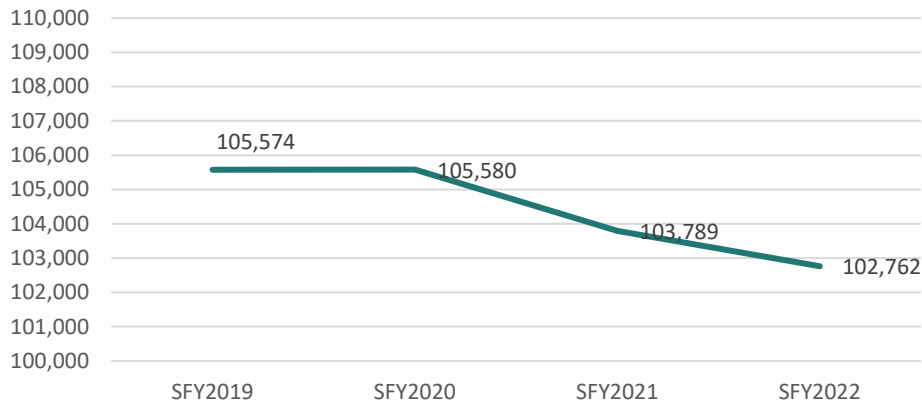
**Recommendations & Future Follow Up:**

- **COVID-19 Impacts on Status of Quality Rating System:** The DCYF Oversight Board will conduct future follow up to review the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the status of the quality rating system. Given the changes in trends provided in this review and resulting unanswered questions regarding the reasons behind the changes in data trends, further monitoring and review is required to better inform agency performance in this area.

## 4. Increasing the available supply of licensed child care in both child care centers and family homes, including providers not receiving state subsidy

**PERFORMANCE STATUS:** Mixed, Needs Improvement →

Estimated Number of Non-School-Age Children Served by Child Care Centers, Family Home Providers and Head Start/ECEAP, by end of SFY



12

As of November 2022, DCYF estimates that 317,494 Washington state children, for all income levels, are eligible for licensed child care and preschool, but only 105,182 children are being served, approximately 33%. As a subset of this population, it is estimated that 105,878 children are live below 200% of the federal poverty level and only 44,660 of those children are currently being served by child care and preschool programs. Reported capacity regarding this calculation includes ECEAP, Head Start, Early Head Start, Child Care Centers and Family Home Centers.<sup>13</sup>

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, DCYF reported on the total licensed capacity for child care centers and family home centers enrolled in Early Achievers. Due to impacts from the pandemic, DCYF shifted to measuring total open licensed capacity for all providers including school-age programs. Although DCYF stated they would continue to report on total open licensed capacity as it collected and reported during the pandemic, the agency has stated in 2022 that this way of measuring open capacity was only intended to be temporary and it no longer reports on capacity in this manner because providers no longer report it to the agency.

### Contributing Factors & Future Performance:

- COVID-19 Pandemic:** The COVID-19 pandemic had a dramatic impact on licensed child care providers, reducing capacity of providers, or closing businesses all together, as families remained home with their children. DCYF continues to undertake efforts to stabilize the child care industry. Given similar changes

<sup>12</sup> DCYF. (June 2019-June 2022). *Early Achievers dashboard appendix*. WACompass.

<sup>13</sup> DCYF and Washington Stem. (November 2022). *Child Care Need and Supply Data*. DCYF Early Learning Data Store. Eligibility Table (ELDS). <https://www.dcyf.wa.gov/practice/oiaa/reports/early-learning-dashboards/child-care-need-supply-data>

observed in the enrollment rates of children in kindergarten and first grade, the pandemic may also have impacted family choice regarding child care and early learning preferences.

- **Rate Increases for Family Home Providers, Child Care Centers, and Family, Friend, Neighbor (FFN) Providers & Child Care Stabilization Grants:** Increased rates for early learning providers and the opportunity provided by child care stabilization grants administered by DCYF, may help the industry to rebound from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and enable providers to sufficiently compensate their workforce, increase workforce retention, and potentially expand capacity to serve children and families.
- **DCYF Workforce Retention Grant:** In October 2022, DCYF launched a one-time payment to eligible on-site workers of DCYF-licensed or certified child care centers and family home providers to help retain the existing workforce.
- **Fair Starts for Kids Act (FSKA):** Passed in 2021, the FSKA ([ESSB 5237](#)) is intended to continue statewide growth in licensed capacity and increase the number of families served.
- **Child Care Collaborative Task Force:** Actions outlined in the 2021 Child Care Collaborative Task Force Report “Washington State Child Care Access Strategy” is intended to increase the available supply of child care.<sup>14</sup>

#### Recommendations & Future Follow Up:

- **Report on Open Licensed Capacity by Slot Type:** The Oversight Board urges DCYF to improve public reporting of child care need and supply data by offering filters regarding slot type: part day, school day, and working day slots by geography.
- **Confirming accuracy of reported data from providers:** The Oversight Board will seek clarity from the agency on how it confirms the accuracy of data reported by providers on types of slots and capacity. Additionally, as future follow up work, the Oversight Board, will engage with the provider community to understand the provider experience reporting capacity data to the agency.

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<sup>14</sup> Child Care Collaborative Task Force. *Washington State Child Care Access Strategy: A strategy, timeline and implementation plan to reach the goal of accessible, affordable child care for all Washington families*. 2021. <https://www.commerce.wa.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/FINAL-June-2021-C3TF-Legislative-Report.pdf>

## 5. Preventing child abuse and neglect

**PERFORMANCE:** On Track



### Performance Measures:

For this report, to assess DCYF’s performance in preventing child abuse and neglect, the Oversight Board reviewed measures reported federally, including **the number and percentage of families screened for a Family Assessment Response (FAR), the number of families who elected for Family Voluntary Services (FVS), the number of children and youth in out-of-home care** (page 23), and **the percentage of children that re-enter care** (page 31).

The DCYF Oversight Board urges DCYF to continue to review the number of children and youth in out-of-home care in tandem with the percentage of children that re-enter care within 12 months to ensure that prevention efforts are effective, and that children and youth are returning to their homes safely. In addition to this monitoring, DCYF also tracks hospital injury admissions data to ensure that children and youth not coming into the child welfare system are not entering the hospital system with indications of abuse or neglect. The DCYF Oversight Board supports DCYF’s efforts to be comprehensive in its tracking and assessment of the effectiveness of its prevention efforts.

In addition to these measures, DCYF’s Prevention and Client Services Division presented to the Oversight Board in July 2022 on progress made in the agency’s prevention work specific to services and programs available to families. These programs and services include: **Strengthening Families Locally, Home Visiting, Child Welfare & Early Learning Navigators (CWELN), Substance Abuse in Pregnancy Pilot, and Plan of Safe Care**. Data on the success of these prevention efforts is reviewed below. The progress made on all these measures was taken into consideration when assessing the agency’s performance for preventing child abuse and neglect.

**Family Assessment Response (FAR):** Is an alternate way for to respond to some reports of child abuse and neglect by supporting families when they are in crisis without finding parents responsible for child abuse or neglect, and helping families connect with their communities.

Currently, only data on FAR referrals is available. Further analysis is needed to understand the outcome of FAR referrals. Reporting on the number of FAR referrals that have subsequent CPS investigations will indicate how many FAR referrals succeed in keeping children safe and ensuring family well-being.

Number of CPS Intakes Screened in for FAR <sup>15</sup>	
CY2015	13,549
CY2016	17,834
CY2017	19,992
CY2018	22,297
CY2019	21,452
CY2020	16,474
CY2021	18,847

*Note: With the passage of SB6555 in 2012, FAR was expected to expand to statewide utilization in 2016, though full implementation was in 2017.*

<sup>15</sup> DCYF. *Annual Progress and Services Report (APSR)*. Annual Reports from 2017-2021.

**Family Voluntary Services (FVS):** FVS allows parents to voluntarily engage in services to increase their protective capacities and meet the child’s safety, health and well-being needs. The desired state performance according to the Annual Progress and Services Report is 20% or less.

Percentage of families who had their FVS case closed that experienced a subsequent screened-in CPS intake or placement of one or more children <sup>16</sup>	
Year	WA State Performance
SFY2018	31.2%
SFY2019	27.6%
SFY2020	28.9%

**Agency Prevention Work:**

**Substance Abuse in Pregnancy Pilot:** The pilot launched in late 2020 in child welfare field offices that were identified with the highest number of infant placements and has expanded into additional counties every quarter. Through the pilot, eligible clients are identified by intake staff, referred to care coordinators, and connected to resources. Since the beginning of the pilot to the second quarter of 2022, a total of 167 eligible clients were referred to care coordinators. Prior to the pilot, no clients were referred to care coordinators. Although only 15% of the identified clients in need of services were connected to resources, the progress is observable compared to the pre-pilot context.

**Child Welfare and Early Learning Navigators (CWELN):** CWELNs identify child-welfare involved families with early learning needs. In 2021, CWELNs assessed 4,762 child welfare cases for early learning needs. Of those assessments, a total of 3,00 referrals were made resulting in 1,500 referrals to childcare, 500 referrals to ECEAP, 285 to ESIT, and the remainder to other early services in their community.<sup>17</sup>

**Strengthening Families Locally:** In targeted locales across the state, this program increases family resilience, and reduces rates of child maltreatment and entry into foster care through community-driven solutions.

**Home Visiting:** Home visiting programs are voluntary, family-focused services offered to expectant parents and families with new babies and young children to support the physical, social, and emotional health of a child. Home Visiting models including: Nurse-Family Partnership, Parents as Teachers, Parent-Child Home Program, Early Head Start, and Family Spirit.

**Plan of Safe Care:** Plan of Safe Care (POSC) is a family-centered prevention plan designed to promote the safety and well-being of infants with prenatal substance exposure and their birthing parents. Initial sites for POSC were launched in June 2021, with plans to expand statewide.

**Family Reconciliation Services Redesign:** Funding provided in the 2022 supplemental budget is intended to support the agency in a co-design approach to develop a community-based crisis intervention program model. Recommendations are due to the Legislature in December 2022 with implementation set to begin in Summer 2023.

<sup>16</sup> DCYF. (October 2022). *Child welfare priority performance measures* [July 2019-June 2020]. infoFamlink

<sup>17</sup> DCYF. (February 2022). *Child Welfare Early Learning Navigators (CWELN) Evaluative Brief*. [https://www.dcyf.wa.gov/sites/default/files/pubs/IAA\\_0004A.pdf](https://www.dcyf.wa.gov/sites/default/files/pubs/IAA_0004A.pdf)

**Motivational Interviewing:** DCYF child welfare caseworkers are being trained in this well-supported evidence-based method of talking to individuals and families about change. Phased training and implementation is underway.

### Contributing Factors & Future Performance:

- **DCYF Organizational Structure Changes:** In October 2021, DCYF announced a reorganization of its leadership structure, including the creation of the Assistant Secretary of Prevention and Client Services. The creation and elevation of this position aligns with the agency’s commitment and prioritization to prevention services, a priority at the core of the agency’s founding legislation.
- **DCYF’s Prevention Theory of Change & Goal Setting:** On July 21, 2022, the DCYF Oversight Board engaged with DCYF in 2022 to understand (1) the agency’s theory of change for preventing child abuse and neglect; (2) what outcome measure the agency intends to utilize its performance on prevention; and (3) whether or not the agency’s theory of change is achieving desirable results. DCYF has committed itself to the goal of *safely reducing the number of children & youth in out-of-home care by half* and explains the goal was identified as a stretch goal, but believes it is in the realm of possibility by observing comparative trends in other states that have the rates of children in foster care that exhibit less than half of Washington’s rate.
- **DCYF Strategic & Equity Plan 2021-2026:** Throughout the agency’s [first strategic plan](#), elements of prevention, including investments in services and practices, are central to a systems reform focused on preventing further involvement in the agency’s service array. Adopting an **applied racial equity lens** and focusing on **reducing children and youth in out-of-home care by half**, are two of the agency’s top six priorities that create the foundation of the strategic plan.

The DCYF Oversight Board commends DCYF for prioritizing racial equity, though the Oversight Board has set expectations for DCYF to further commit to a more defined and tangible approach, with set measurable goals and targets, to intensify the commitment to this work. (For more on the Oversight Board’s response to the agency’s commitment, see Appendix A).

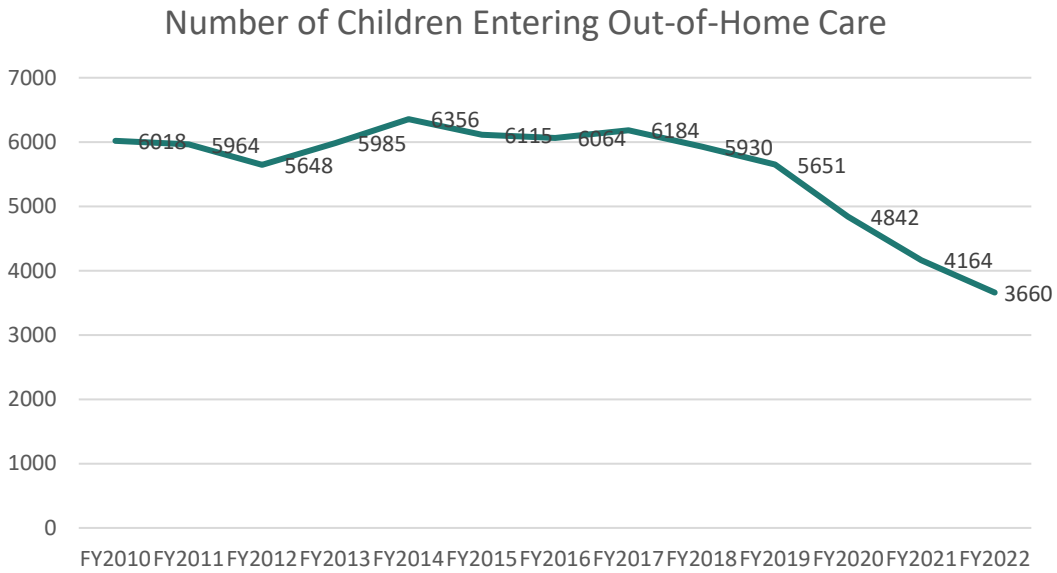
### Recommendations & Future Follow Up:

- **Outcome Data Reporting for Prevention Services:** In addition to data and reporting on the outcomes of families that are referred to FAR and FVS is necessary to identify the effectiveness in the agency’s actions to address family needs and avoid an escalation to CPS investigations, the agency should continue to embed data collection and evaluation into the planning and expansion of prevention pilots, services and programs.
- **Prioritize IT Upgrades to Access Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) Funding:** DCYF’s FFPSA plan was approved by the federal Children’s Bureau in October 2020. With this funding, evidence-based prevention programs will be made available to families prior to formal child welfare involvement. To be able to access FFPSA funding, DCYF must make updates to their data infrastructure to collect and report on required data. Securing resources to support these IT changes is necessary to ensure these advances in programming and services can bolster the agency’s prevention and early intervention efforts.

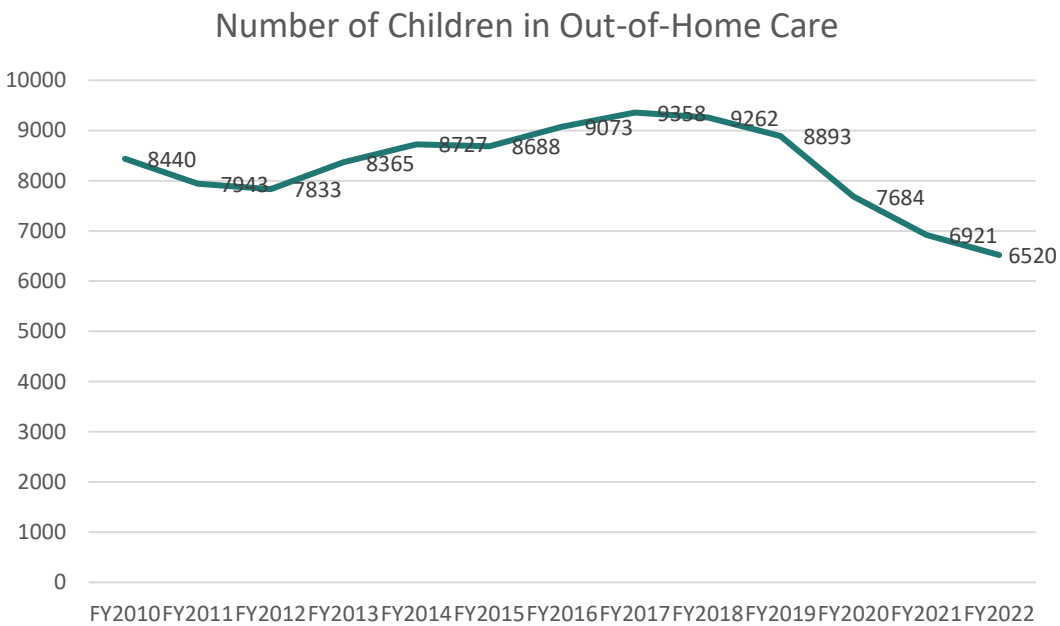
- **Transparency on Multi-Year Planning for Multiple Initiatives & Projects:** FFPSA is one part of the recent federal and state reforms regarding prevention efforts targeting child abuse and neglect. Additional policy changes advanced by the legislature in the past couple of years has contributed to large scale practice change for the agency and its caseworkers. DCYF has stated they are taking the planning and implementation of all changes into consideration to develop a strategic roll out of the entire array of reforms. Both to ensure effective application, as well as to consider the experience of caseworkers undergoing the changes to their work.

## 6. Reducing the number of children entering out-of-home care

**PERFORMANCE:** On Track 



18



19

<sup>18</sup> DCYF. (October 2022). *Relative versus non-relative* [July 2009-June 2022]. infoFamlink.

<sup>19</sup> DCYF. (October 2022). *Out of home exits and entries* [July 2009-June 2022]. infoFamlink.



Since DCYF’s creation, the number of children and youth entering out-of-home care, and in out-of-home care, are reducing consistently each state fiscal year.

To ensure this reduction of children in out-of-home care is being done safely, this outcome measure must always be viewed in tandem with the balancing indicator *reducing the number of children that reenter out-of-home care within twelve months*, which is reviewed on page 31 of this report.

**Percentage of Children in Care by Race/Ethnicity, Last Day of State Fiscal Year, 2016-2022**

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	Difference Since SFY2019*
AI/AN	3.87%	3.51%	3.25%	3.19%	3.11%	2.90%	3.87%	<b>+0.68%</b>
AI/AN-Multi	9.56%	10.49%	10.85%	10.82%	11.27%	11.88%	9.56%	<b>-1.26%</b>
Asian/PI	1.75%	1.69%	2.08%	2.45%	2.06%	1.63%	1.75%	<b>-0.7%</b>
Blac	7.99%	7.80%	8.16%	8.55%	8.47%	7.89%	7.99%	<b>-0.56%</b>
Black-Multi	8.54%	9.08%	9.20%	9.72%	9.79%	9.46%	8.54%	<b>-1.18%</b>
Hispanic	16.51%	15.92%	15.05%	15.48%	15.75%	16.60%	16.51%	<b>+1.03%</b>
Multi-Other	1.85%	1.97%	1.91%	1.93%	2.02%	2.10%	1.85%	<b>-0.08%</b>
White	49.93%	49.54%	49.49%	47.86%	47.54%	47.54%	49.93%	<b>+2.07%</b>
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	

*Note: 46 cases are missing race/ethnicity data and are excluded.*

*\*DCYF was created in 2017 and assumed child welfare authority and responsibilities in July 2018. SFY2019 reflects the first full year of data since DCYF was responsible for children in out-of-home care.*

Given the decrease in the absolute number of children in out-of-home care over the past several years, disaggregated data by race and ethnicity indicates the reduction is occurring at different rates for each group. Although trend differences are observable when reviewing this data, it is important to consider overall demographic shifts in Washington State among children, youth and young adults ages 0-19.<sup>20</sup> The changing demographic landscape of Washington’s population may explain trends illustrated above. A more detailed graph of demographic shifts of the population of children, youth and young adults in Washington can be viewed in [DCYF’s Using Data in DCYF to Advance Racial Equity Report, page 16](#).

**DCYF Strategic & Equity Plan**

DCYF has adopted this measure as an outcome indicator in the agency’s strategic plan to achieve its agency priority to *safely reduce the number/rate of children and youth in out-of-home care by half*. To ensure the focus on reducing the number of children entering care occurs safely, the agency is also monitoring balancing indicators – such as re-entry into to care rates (reviewed on pages 23), extended foster care utilization and reunification rates – to ensure the focus on reduction doesn’t have collateral consequences for youth and families.

**Data Reporting & Transparency**

In response to feedback from the DCYF Oversight Board, and members of the public, DCYF has committed to transparently reporting on the reduction of youth in out-of-home care in tandem with the rate of children and youth re-entering care within a 12-month period, to ensure that efforts to reduce entries into care are done

<sup>20</sup> Cummings, K., Graham, J. C., Veele, S., & Ybarra, V. (2021). Using Data in DCYF to Advance Racial Equity. Washington State Department of Children, Youth, and Families – Office of Innovation, Alignment, and Accountability. [www.dcyf.wa.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/reports/OIAAEquityData2021.pdf](http://www.dcyf.wa.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/reports/OIAAEquityData2021.pdf)

safely. The agency acknowledges that re-entry rates are calculated as a lagged analysis, complicating the comparative assessment of the number of children in out-of-home care to the number of youth re-entering care for the same recent time frame or cohort. In order to address this complication, the agency reviews other data sets including hospital injury admissions data to ensure that the reduction of children entering out-of-home care are not showing up in other systems, such as the health care system, as a result of agency programs and policies.

Even given the progress made on this area of high importance, and the agency's continued commitment to keeping it a priority, continued work must be dedicated to **prioritize reducing youth in out-of-home care equitably across race and ethnicity**, as well as well as to target strategies **to reduce the length of stay of those youth in out-of-home care** (see on page 22) and **address the root causes for repeated exceptional placements of a small number of youth** (see graphs on page 30).

**Contributing Factors & Future Performance:**

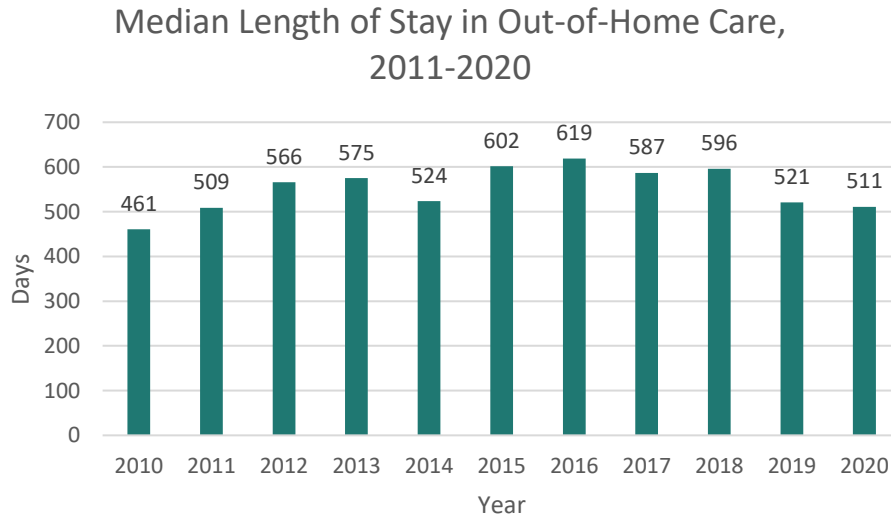
- **Implementation of E2SHB 1227 in 2023:** In the 2021 legislative session, [HB 1227](#), which seeks to protect the rights of families responding to allegations of abuse or neglect of a child, is expected to further reduce the number of children entering out-of-home care beginning in 2023 when the bill is fully implemented.
- **WA Supreme Court Decisions:** In 2020 and 2021, the Washington State Supreme Court issued decisions that significantly impact how DCYF must apply the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) and the Washington State Indian Child Welfare Act (WICWA). In the first, *In re GJA*, the Court held that both Acts require DCYF to prove that “active efforts” were made to prevent the breakup of an Indian Family, and, that the “futility doctrine” may not be used in ICWA/WICWA cases to excuse lack of “active efforts.” As ordered, DCYF must provide and prove “active efforts” - defined as affirmative, active, thorough, and timely efforts intended primarily to maintain or reunite an Indian child with his or her family – were made prior to a court hearing the termination of parental rights petition. In the second, *In re ZIG*, the Court made clear that DCYF has “reason to know” that a child may be Native (triggering the requirements and protections of ICWA/WICWA) where there is any indication that a child may have tribal heritage. With these interpretations clarifying the obligations of DCYF under ICWA/WICWA to support tribal youth and their families, it may be assumed the number of tribal children in out-of-home care will continue to decrease.

**Recommendations & Future Follow Up:**

- **Indicator for Re-Entry into Out-of-Home Care (OHC) Rate:** As described above, DCYF and the DCYF Oversight Board acknowledge the challenges of using a lagged analysis for re-entry into OHC to ensure safety of children exiting OHC, or who are being prevented from entering OHC to begin with. The Oversight Board will work with DCYF's OIAA to gain a deeper understanding of a more immediate balancing indicator to ensure the safety of children- impacted by agency policies and decision-making.

## 7. Reducing length of stay for youth in out of home care

PERFORMANCE STATUS: On Track



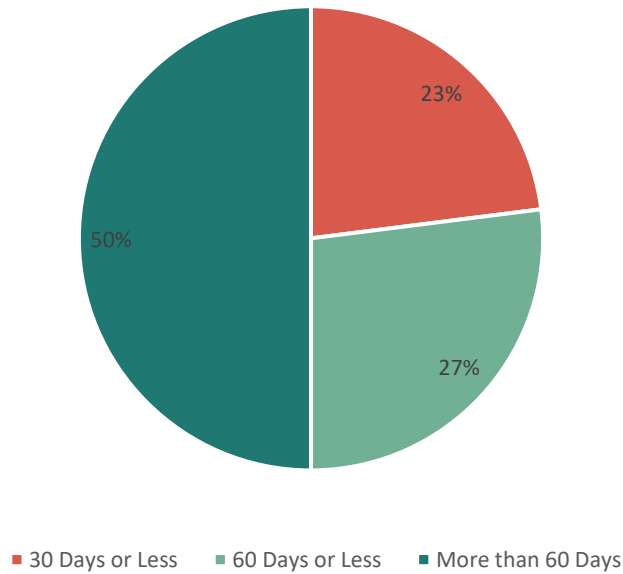
DCYF calculates Length of Stay (LOS) by the median number of days children are in out-of-home care. The LOS for any individual child or youth has equal likelihood of falling above or below the median for each state fiscal year. In this calculation, DCYF excludes stays of less than seven days, but includes stays for Trial Return Home period that may go up to a maximum of 30 days.

LOS is a lagged analysis as it is calculated by cohort, for the children who entered care during a fiscal year, and the total length of stay for any child cannot be calculated until the stay is over. For this reason, it takes a little under two years to accurately calculate LOS for a given fiscal year, and thus, the most recent data point available is for SFY2019, the first full year since foster care was administered by DCYF.

The first two years of analysis, SFY2019 and SFY2020, with DCYF managing foster care suggests a positive trend towards reduced LOS for youth in out-of-home care. This trend holds true for all categories of race and ethnicity over the same time frame and in comparison to when foster care was managed by DSHS prior to SFY2019.

<sup>21</sup> infoFamLink, Child Welfare Priority Performance Measures. Updated 2021 by DCYF Office of Innovation, Alignment, and Accountability (OIAA).

## Children Who Entered Care in CY2021, By Days in Care

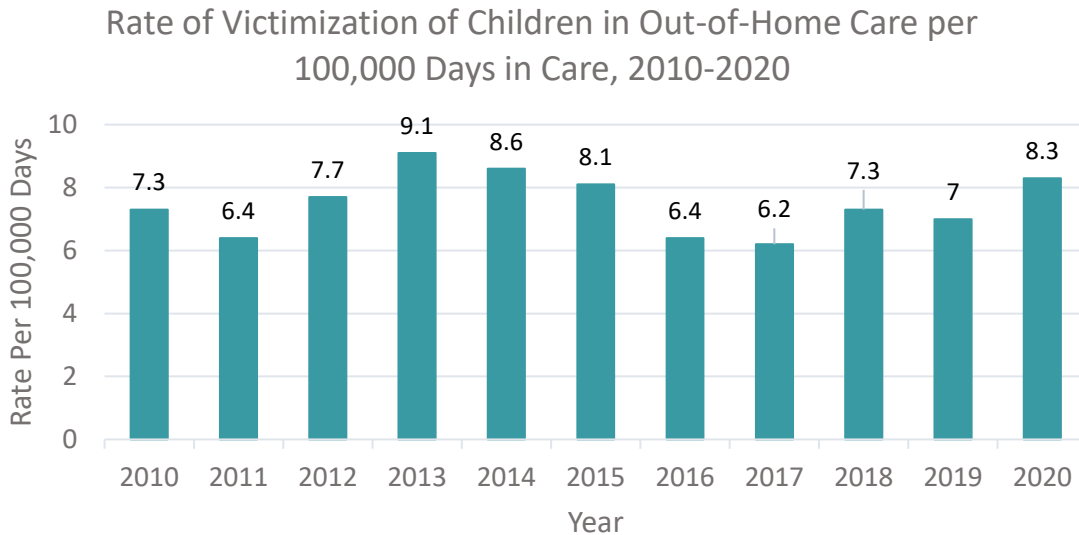


### Contributing Factors & Future Performance:

- Interconnectedness of LOS and Reducing the Number of Youth in Out-of-Home Care:** Even given the suggested declining trend for LOS, the total number of youth in out-of-home care has been declining annually since SFY2018. Given an overall reduction of youth in out-of-home care, as the lagged analysis of LOS for the same fiscal years becomes available, it is possible an increasing trend may emerge as those youth who remain in care may have greater challenges in finding placement unless alternative placement options are made available to meet culturally and behavioral needs of youth in care.
- Implementation of E2SHB 1227 in 2023:** The passage of E2SHB 1227 during the 2021 session, has set a high standard for removing children from their families only if there is evidence suggesting a child is at risk of imminent harm. With stricter standards for removing children from their parents, it is anticipated that fewer cases will meet this criteria and fewer families will experience separation. As with the relationship with *reducing the number of youth in out-of-home care*, it is anticipated that median LOS may increase with fewer children placed in out-of-home care as a result of the full implementation of this legislation beginning July 1, 2023.

## 8. Reducing maltreatment of youth while in out-of-home care

**PERFORMANCE STATUS:** Inconclusive due to lack of data for SFY2021 →




Since 2018, when DCYF began to officially administer child welfare programs and services, there has been an increase in founded reports of maltreatment in out-of-home care.

As of November 2022, DCYF has reported that the data point for SFY2021 is not yet available. The consideration of the agency’s performance on this issue is inconclusive due to the lack of updated data. The DCYF Oversight Board urges DCYF to publicly report the most recent data point for this outcome as soon as possible, particularly given the Board’s concern and assessment of the agency’s performance on this outcome in the 2021 report.

### Recommendations & Future Follow Up:

- Develop Useful Measure for Maltreatment Rate in Out-of-Home Care (re-emphasized from 2021):** Similar to the LOS outcome measure review on page 22, the DCYF Oversight Board will work with DCYF to explore means to measure maltreatment in out-of-home care in a manner more useful for informing policy and practice. The current measure is difficult to understand and lacks practical application for improving practice.
- Performance Data for SFY2021:** Once available made available, the DCYF Oversight Board will review data on this outcome and respond accordingly. A further inquiry into understanding the delay of reporting data on this outcome this year will be conducted by the Oversight Board.

## 9. Licensing more foster homes than there are children in foster care

**PERFORMANCE STATUS:** Needs Improvement 

Since the initial establishment of DCYF, there has been a **relatively constant number of licensed foster homes from 5,060 in 2018 to 4,498 in 2022<sup>22</sup>**. Simultaneously, there is a **decreasing trend in the number of children, under the age of 18, in out-of-home care from 9,262 in 2018 to 6,520 in 2022<sup>23</sup>**. Currently the number of licensed foster homes trails the number of children in out-of-home, though multiple factors should be taken into consideration regarding the agency’s performance in this area.

In 2004, the state’s welfare system set a goal of 2.0 licensed beds per child or youth in care. The following tables illustrate that ratio trend over the past five years by region:

**Bed to Child Ratio, Last Day of State Fiscal Year, by Region<sup>24</sup>**

Region	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Region 1	1.17	1.15	1.1	1.12	1.27	1.18	1.18
Region 2	1.15	1.29	1.36	1.52	1.53	1.38	1.24
Region 3	0.88	0.94	1.18	1.25	1.59	1.83	1.87
Region 4	1.26	1.08	0.94	0.89	0.98	1.16	1.23
Region 5	0.86	0.99	1.24	1.38	1.62	1.66	1.56
Region 6	1.75	1.38	1.17	1.19	1.32	1.44	1.26
<b>State</b>	<b>1.12</b>	<b>1.12</b>	<b>1.14</b>	<b>1.18</b>	<b>1.34</b>	<b>1.41</b>	<b>1.36</b>

*Methodology: Total licensed capacity of a region divided by total children in care in that region on the last day of the State Fiscal Year.*

Although there is still progress to be made to achieve the 2.0 ratio of bed to youth goal, a continually increasing trend is observable for the whole state, with some slight regional variations. This trend is particularly true leading up to 2020 when the COVID-19 pandemic impacted all functions of the agency including licensing procedures. Although there is a slight decrease observed for most regions in 2021 likely as a result of the pandemic, the DCYF Oversight Board applauds the agency’s work in achieving an increase in the ratio of beds to children throughout the state.

### Contributing Factors and Future Performance:

- **COVID-19 Pandemic:** The COVID-19 pandemic impacted the availability of placements due to caregivers, understandably, seeking to ensure the health and well-being of the children and family members already residing in their homes.
- **Youth in Out-of-Home Care Needing Alternate Placement Options:** As observed in changing trends of youth’s behavioral health needs in out-of-home care (pages 34-35 and 50-53, alternate placement

<sup>22</sup> DCYF. (2020). *Counts of Licensed Providers by Location and Type Report*. infoFamLink.

<sup>23</sup> DCYF. (2020). *Relative versus Non-Relative Report*. infoFamLink.

<sup>24</sup> DCYF. (August 2021). *Counts of CA licensed providers by location and type report & relative versus non-relative placement report* [June 2016-June 2021]. infoFamLink.

options other than traditional foster homes are in higher demand. DCYF has developed a number of mechanisms to expand the placement array to best serve children in youth in out-of-home care. The regional changes in licensed foster homes ratio to youth in out-of-home care may, in part, be understood as reflecting the differing needs of the population of youth in out-of-home care.

- **WA Caregiver Application Portal:** By the end of 2022, the online portal for general foster care licensing, kinship licensing, certified respite, and expedited licensing is expected to go live. The online application portal is intended to streamline licensing processes to increase and diversify the population of licensed foster care and kinship caregivers. Work is underway to ensure the application portal integrates and implements pro-equity, anti-racist, and multicultural policies to achieve this goal.
- **Caregiver Recruitment Efforts:** In May 2021, DCYF launched the Be the Way Home campaign focused on foster parent and kinship caregiver recruitment with focused messaging, guiding values and the goal to demonstrate the value provided by safe, loving and temporary homes for youth in care.
- **“Future Foster Parents of Washington” Foster Parent Recruitment Facebook Page:** In July 2022, DCYF launched a dedicated Facebook page targeting the recruitment of foster parents across the state.
- **Child-Specific Licensing:** Effective July 2021, SB 5151 passed to provide a pathway for child-specific licensing to caregivers. This process supports enhanced recruitment and licensing of kinship caregivers and streamlines the process for finding appropriate placement for all youth in care.
- **Partnerships:** The value of kinship caregivers has gained visibility and support through partnerships with community partners such as Amara CaRES Kinship program that assists with support services and the licensing process.

#### **Recommendation for Meaningful Performance Measure:**

DCYF, through analysis, has identified that (1) children and youth have better outcomes when placed with kin, and (2) there is a subset of youth that are best served in therapeutic settings. For these reasons, measuring the ratio of licensed foster homes to children in out-of-home care misses the nuanced needs of youth in out-of-home care. Measuring the licensing of therapeutic foster homes in comparison to the need for specialized placement, and the licensing of kinship care, may provide a more meaningful assessment that can help target resources to produce better outcomes for youth.

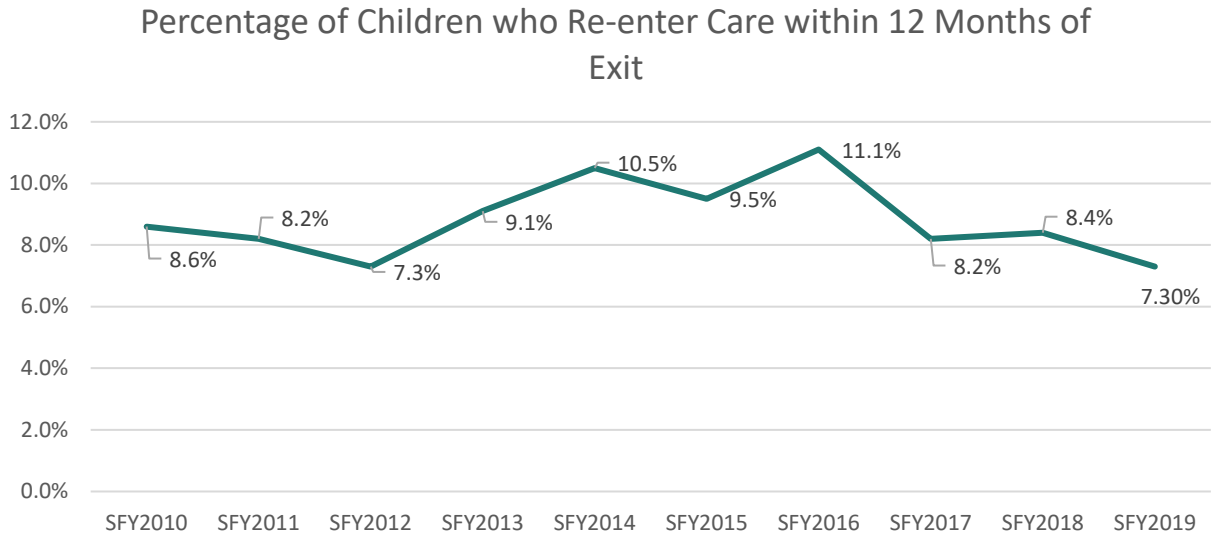
A more suitable measure would reflect the entire array of placement options needed to adequately serve youth in care, rather than measuring the number of licensed foster homes. This recommendation is echoed in the review of outcome measure *increase stability of placements for children in out-of-home care* on page 36 of this report.

#### **Recommendations & Future Follow Up:**

- **Revise Performance Measure & Reporting (re-emphasized from 2021):** Revise measure to increase licensing for kinship care, therapeutic foster care, and foster care for adolescents needing behavioral support. Enhance behavioral supports for caregivers needing assistance to stabilize and maintain adolescents in placement.

## 10. Reducing the number of children that reenter out-of-home care within 12 months

**PERFORMANCE STATUS:** Needs Improvement, progress made →



Performance is assessed on this measure based on two years of data, SFY2018 and SFY2019. At 7.3%, there is a decrease in the re-entry into care rate from the previous year. At 7.3%, DCYF is only slightly above the federal target of 7% or lower.

Reporting the percentage of youth who re-enter care requires two years of monitoring after a youth originally enters care to determine which youth safely achieve permanency or who re-enter out-of-home care. Due to this manner of calculation, this measure can only reflect agency performance and the result of decision-making from two years earlier.

Due to the limitations of this data to reflect real-time performance, it is important to consider this measure in conjunction with the number of youth entering and exiting care for each state fiscal year.

DCYF is diligently monitoring the re-entry into care rates while it strives to safely reduce the number of youth in care. DCYF’s Strategic and Equity Plan set a goal to safely reduce the number of youth entering out-of-home care by half by 2026. In an effort to accomplish this goal genuinely, and not doing so by creating collateral consequences by prematurely returning youth to unsafe home environments, the agency is monitoring the number of children re-entering out-of-home care as a balancing indicator to its strategic priority.

Close monitoring of these measures together must continue to ensure children and youth don’t experience the unnecessary trauma of multiple removals, and that families are receiving effective services.

<sup>25</sup> DCYF. (2022). *Child Welfare Priority Performance Measures*. InfoFamLink.



**Contributing Facts & Future Performance:**


- **Family Practice Model:** DCYF’s current reworking the Family Practice Model will provide a greater standard practice of family engagement with the child welfare system when it becomes necessary, and will ultimately standardize decision-making and services provision to better support safe households.

**Recommendations & Future Follow Up:**

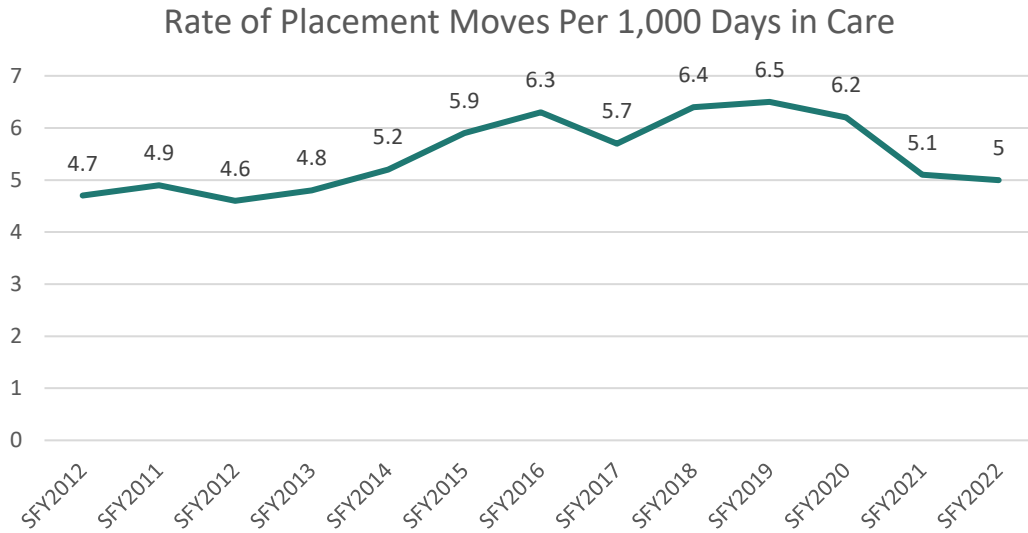
- **Report Re-Entry Rates for Children and Youth on Trial Return Home Periods:** In an effort to understand the impact of the agency’s focus on safely reducing the number of children and youth in out-of-home care, and to increase successful reunifications, the DCYF Oversight Board urges DCYF to transparently report on how often children re-enter care during their Trial Return Home period with their family of origin. The intent of this inquiry is to understand how successful efforts are for ensuring stable reunification efforts, and to ensure children are not returned before their family is prepared for successful reunification, and thus have to endure the trauma of continual placement and permanency disruptions.

The DCYF Oversight Board acknowledges the role the court system plays in determining when a child is returned home, sometimes regardless of the recommendations made by the assigned DCYF caseworker. The Oversight Board will connect with the Washington State Center for Court Research (WSCRR) to explore data collection and analysis opportunities to understand the relationship between caseworker recommendations and court decisions. The resulting data could provide insights into how to improve safety and well-being outcomes for children and families.

## 11. Increasing the stability of placements for children in out-of-home care

**PERFORMANCE STATUS:** Mixed, Needs Improvement 

Performance status determination is based on differing experiences of subpopulations as reviewed throughout the following pages.



*Notes: Of all children who enter foster care in a 12-month period, the rate of placement moves per 1,000 days of foster care. Includes the total care days during the 12-month period, but not closed episodes with time in care of less than eight days. Care days include any days in a Trial Return Home period that occur during the cohort period, up to a maximum of 30 days.*

Aggregate data for all children and youth in out-of-home care over the last three years indicates an overall improvement on the agency’s performance regarding placement stability.

DCYF is working towards increasing kinship caregivers to find stable placements for youth in out-of-home care and to keep the youth connected to family. In addition to increasing stability and permanency, research indicates that placement with kin can improve a child’s well-being, reduce trauma, improve behavioral and mental health outcomes, and maintain a child’s connection to their own cultural identity and community.<sup>27</sup>

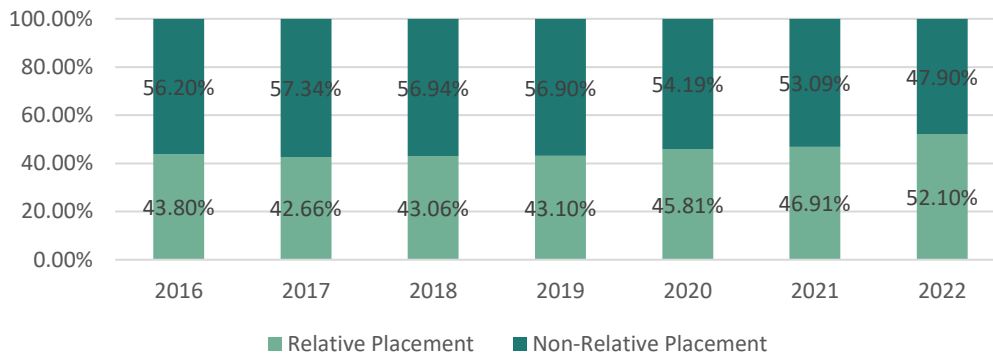
Data from DCYF indicates that the agency’s efforts are showing an incremental increase in the percentage of youth placed with a relative.

<sup>26</sup> DCYF. (2021). *Child Welfare Priority Performance Measures*. infoFamLink.

<sup>27</sup> Epstein, Heidi R. *Kinship Care is Better for Children and Families*. American Bar Association. July 2017.

[https://www.americanbar.org/groups/public\\_interest/child\\_law/resources/child\\_law\\_practiceonline/child\\_law\\_practice/vol-36/july-aug-2017/kinship-care-is-better-for-children-and-families/](https://www.americanbar.org/groups/public_interest/child_law/resources/child_law_practiceonline/child_law_practice/vol-36/july-aug-2017/kinship-care-is-better-for-children-and-families/)

### Relative vs. Non-Relative Placement, by SFY



DCYF has identified two main strategies for increasing placement stability: (1) resource kinship caregivers, and (2) increase kinship placements and licenses. The agency plans to pursue the resources needed to support both strategies for this purpose.

#### Office and Hotel Stays

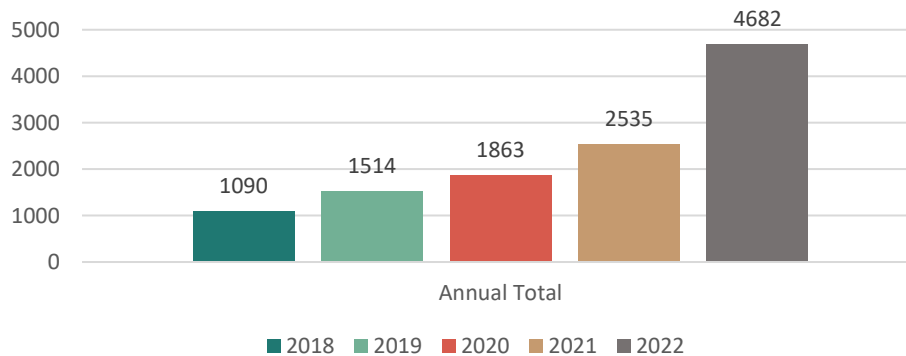
Exceptional placements, including the use of office and hotel rooms, represents a particularly acute population of youth who experience repeated disruption to placements and who are not well served by existing DCYF options.

The DCYF Oversight Board has taken considerable time and effort to work with OFCO and DCYF to understand the increasing trends in exceptional placements. DCYF presented a plan to the DCYF Oversight Board in September 2021 to eliminate the use of hotel and office stays for youth in care by November 1, 2021, in accordance with US District Court Order No. 2:21-cv-00113-BJR.

After the introduction of the plan in September 2021, the use of office stays for exceptional placements has almost completely ceased with only two stays occurring in an office over the entire 12-month period. Though the use of hotel, night-to-night, and leased facility stays has increased throughout the same time period.

29

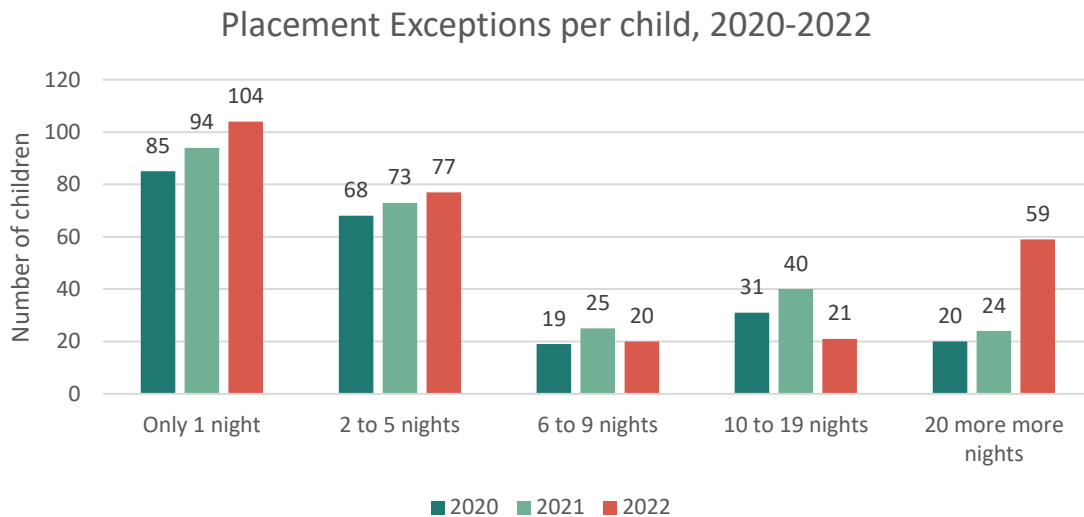
### Total Count of Placement Exceptions - individual night stays - per Reporting Year (Sept. 1 - Aug. 30)



<sup>28</sup> DCYF. (August 2021). *Relative versus Non-Relative Report*. [July 2016-June 2021]. infoFamLink.

<sup>29</sup> Office of Family and Children’s Ombuds (OFCO). (September 2022). *DCYF Use of Hotel and Offices as Placement 2022 Report*. [September 2018 – August 2022].

The above bar chart illustrates the count of individual night stays that meet the definition of placement exceptions. For the same data cohort, **the number of youth experiencing exception placements has only slightly increased from 256 in 2021 to 281 in 2022**. This data indicates that although the number of children experiencing placement exceptions has not dramatically increased, the number of nights those children experience placement exceptions has. As displayed below, children and youth experiencing *20 or more nights* in placement exceptions has increased greatly from 2021 to 2022, indicating youth spending longer durations in these placement types without alternate placement options available to best serve these youth.



30

Several factors have contributed to the increase in placement exceptions in 2022.

COVID-19 health concerns have continued to contribute to reduced licensed placement capacity with approximately 1,000 foster homes choosing to no longer remain licensed or to no longer accept additional placements.

The increase in placement exceptions can be further explained in the context of a decrease in other placement resources with the loss 14 group care facilities over the past two years. Additionally, in recent years children and families have become involved in child protective services as a result of a child’s behavioral or mental health need that cannot be managed in the home or the family is not able to access needed services, and removal is not due to allegations of children abuse or neglect.

Other data reporting factors have impacted data on placement exceptions. These changes include the agency’s improved tracking of these events to include night-to-night stays in licensed foster homes. Although technically these stays are not considered placement exceptions, the agency recognizes the instability of these stays and the impact it can have on a child or youth experiencing them. For this reason, the agency has decided, for the sake of transparency and to inform decision-making, to include these types of stays in placement exceptions reporting. Additionally, the agency recently opened two leased facilities, one in Region 4 and one in Region 6, and counts the stays of the children and youth in those facilities as placement exceptions.

<sup>30</sup> Office of Family and Children’s Ombuds (OFCO). (September 2022). *DCYF Use of Hotel and Offices as Placement 2022 Report*. [https://ofco.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2022-10/Placement\\_Exceptions\\_Dashboard\\_August\\_2022x.pdf](https://ofco.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2022-10/Placement_Exceptions_Dashboard_August_2022x.pdf).

### Contributing Factors & Future Performance:

- **Exceptional Placement Plan:** In September 2021, DCYF developed a plan to eliminate hotel and office stays starting November 2021. In partnership with DSHS’s Research and Data Analysis Division (RDA), DCYF has conducted considerable analysis to assess the characteristics and needs of children and youth who have been experienced exceptional placements, as well as assessing gaps in the current continuum of care available to serve youth. This information has informed a plan to develop appropriate placement options for youth with high behavioral health service needs. This plan can only be implemented if additional resources are secured.
- **Child-Specific Licensing:** Since the passage of [SB 5151](#), child-specific licensing, during the 2021 legislative session, DCYF has increased the number of licensed kinship caregivers by almost 10% over a four-year period from July 2018 to July 2022. Research indicates that out-of-home care placement with kin results in greater placement stability.<sup>31</sup>
- **Limited Placement Options for all Children and Youth Eligible for Services:** Beyond children and youth in the formal foster care system, some youth eligible for other state administered services, including developmental disability services and behavioral health services, also lack access to adequate placement and treatment options. There is a continued need for productive collaboration across state agencies, including Development Disabilities Administration (DDA), Healthcare Authority (HCA), and DCYF, to collectively build a robust and accessible placement options array to ensure youth and young adults are appropriately served by the services and systems they need.


### Recommendations & Future Follow Up:

- **Detailed Reporting on Children and Youth Experiencing Placement Moves (re-emphasized from 2021):** The practical application of the rate of placement moves measure would be improved by providing a more nuanced visual analysis of the rate of placement moves in relation to the number of children in out-of-home care. Given the number of children in out-of-home care has decreased while the rate of placement moves has remained relatively consistent, indicates inadequate stable and appropriate placement options for the children and youth in care.
- **Report on the availability of appropriate placement options (re-emphasized from 2021):** beyond licensed foster homes (as recommended on page 29 of this report), report on the need and use of the array placement options.
- **Continued Collaboration with Other State Agencies (re-emphasized from 2021):** Children and youth in need of stable and adequate placement options would benefit from enhanced collaboration between DCYF, DDA, HCA and other agencies to ensure youth are served by the system or systems that best meets their needs.

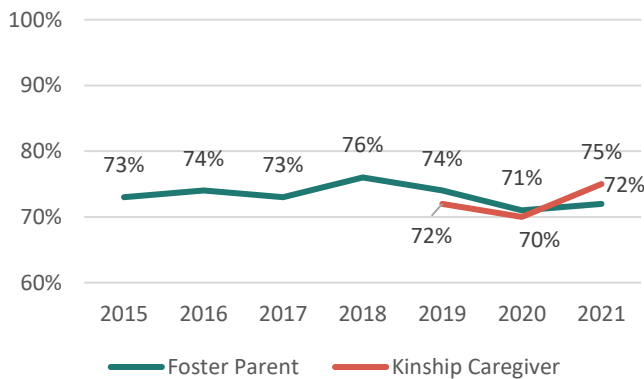
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<sup>31</sup> Winokur, M., Holtan, A. and Batchelder, K.E., 2014. Kinship care for the safety, permanency, and well-being of children removed from the home for maltreatment. *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews*, (1).

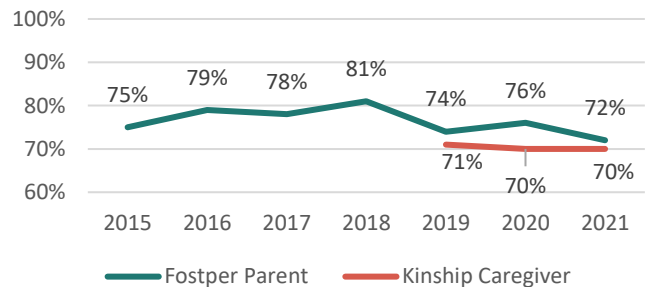
## 12. Developing strategies to demonstrate to foster families that their service and involvement is highly valued by the department, as demonstrated by the development of strategies to consult with foster families regarding future placement of a foster child currently placed with a foster family

**PERFORMANCE STATUS:** Mixed, Needs Improvement 

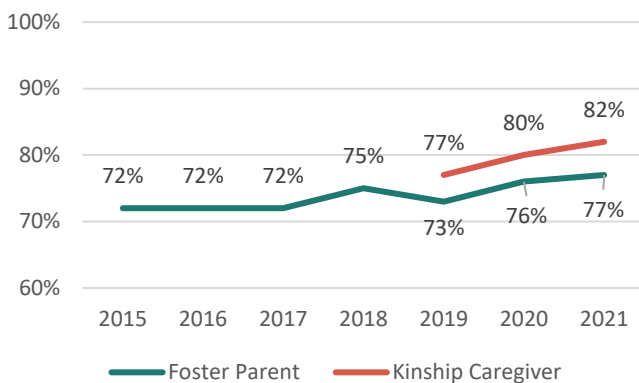
Are you treated like a part of the team?



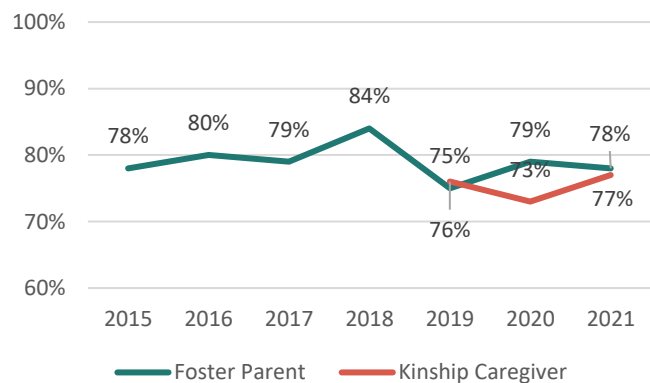
In the past year, did you get adequate support for your roles and responsibilities as a foster or kinship caregivers



Are you included in meetings about the child in your care?



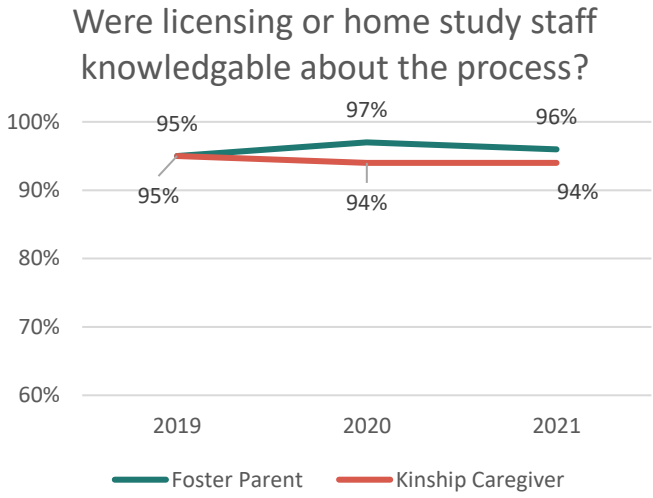
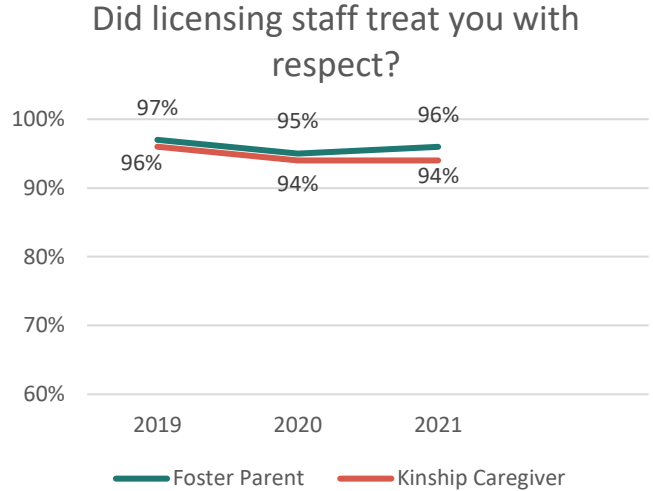
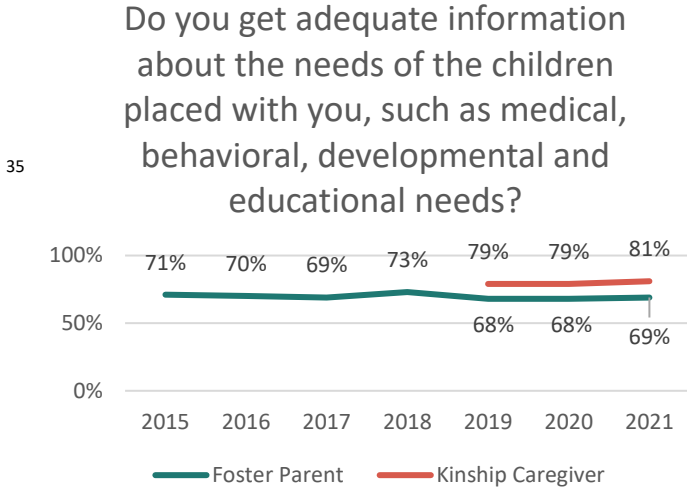
Can you get help when you ask for it?



<sup>32</sup> DSHS Foster Parents Speak: 2017 Foster Parent Survey. (May 2018). Prepared by Department of Social and Health Services Research & Data Analysis Division. <https://www.dcyf.wa.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/2017CaregiverReport.pdf>

<sup>33</sup> DCYF Caregiver Survey Report 2021. (June 2022). Prepared for Washington State Department of Children, Youth, and Families by Department of Social and Health Services Research & Data Analysis Division. <https://manuals.dshs.wa.gov/sites/default/files/rda/reports/research-7-125.pdf>

<sup>34</sup> DSHS Foster Parents Speak: 2016 Foster Parent Survey. (May 2016). Prepared by Department of Social and Health Services Research & Data Analysis Division. <https://www.dcyf.wa.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/BraamFY15FSPSurvey.pdf>



In 2021, 1,345 caregivers completed the survey out of a total of 1,582 caregivers who were given an opportunity to complete the survey, resulting in an 85% response rate.

Year	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Survey Response Rate	92%	92%	92%	89%	86%	83%	85%

Caregivers who received the survey were identified based on having at least one child in care within the six months of the sampling time frame.

Each survey question provides four options along a scale for a response. Positive response percentages in the graphs provided in this report represent when a survey responder selected one of two positive survey response options instead of the two more negative response options. In this survey, the positive options

<sup>35</sup> DSHS Foster Parents Speak: 2016 Foster Parent Survey. (June 2017). Prepared by Department of Social and Health Services Research & Data Analysis Division. <https://www.dcyf.wa.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/BraamFY16FPSurvey.pdf>

included “usually” and “always/almost always” for some questions, and “somewhat adequate” and “more than adequate” for other questions.

Survey responses across all questions maintain a relatively high positive response, though trends are mixed depending in individual questions from 2018 to 2021, reflective of the timeframe since DCYF was created.

The addition of kinship caregivers as a separate response group to the survey also highlights potential differences in experiences as caregivers given the supports provided to each subgroup, though, again, positive response rates remain relatively high on all questions. DCYF acknowledges the need to resource licensed kinship caregivers in parity with licensed foster caregivers. Key findings from the 2020 survey include the following:

- This year, a higher percentage of caregivers stated they are being included in meetings about the youth in their care.
- Similar to last year, experiences with case workers and social workers are mixed. Many caregivers stated caseworkers were accessible, but difficult with processes and resources remains.
- As with last year, most caregivers report receiving adequate information, but they want more.
- Many caregivers said they were satisfied with the support received from DCYF.
- Caregivers continue to be happy with their experience with the licensing program.
- This year, kinship caregivers responded stating more satisfaction with their experience than foster caregivers. An improvement from the previous year’s survey results.

**Recommendations & Future Follow Up:**

- **Amend Performance Measure in Statute:** An amendment should be pursued to ensure this performance measure (RCW 43.216.015(3)(c)(iii)(G)) reflects the value of *both* foster parents *as well as* kinship caregivers. As the benefits of placing children and youth with kin becomes more evident, the agency should also be held to account in its performance regarding how it shows value to kinship caregivers similar to that of foster parents.

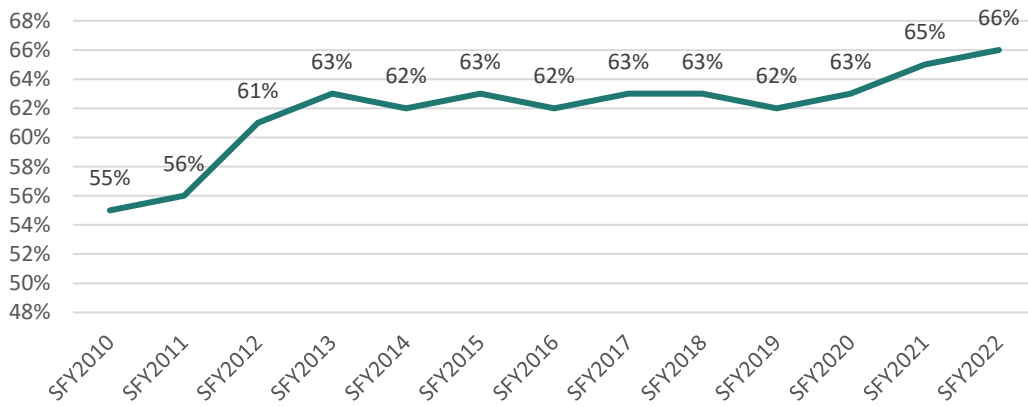


### 13. Increasing family reunification by increasing number of youth who are reunified with their family of origin

RCW 43.216.015(3)(c)(iv)(A-B) differentiates the performance measure (A) “increasing family reunification” from “increasing the number of youth who are reunified with their family of origin”. DCYF does not distinguish between these two measures and reports on total number of youth reunified with their family of origin. For these reasons, this report follows the same logic and will use the number and percentage of youth reunified with their families to assess performance in these areas.

**PERFORMANCE STATUS:** On track 

Percentage of total exits that are reunifications each year



36

Reunifications for all categories of race and ethnicity have increased over the past year, with the exception of Hispanic children experiencing a rate decrease of reunification rates by 2.51% over the past year. Rates for reunification for Hispanic children have consistently varied by +/- 4% each year since SFY2018. Beginning in SFY2022, DCYF began to report on reunification rates by race and ethnicity in accordance with Washington State Racial Disproportionality Advisory Committee (WSRDAC)’s categories, thus changing how rates of reunification for American Indian/Alaskan Native and American Indian/Alaskan Native-Multi rates could be compared year to year, as well as with Black/African American and Black/African American-Multi rates.

**Contributing Factors & Future Performance:**

- **Recent Legislation:** The passage of [HB 1194](#) in the 2021, which seeks to strengthen parent-child visitation during child welfare proceedings, may positively impact the reunification rate of children with their family of origin as relationships are maintained while children and youth are in out-of-home care.

Additionally, the passage of [SB 5151](#), a bill that enhances pathways to child-only licensing in an effort to recruit and support of more kinship caregivers. Kinship caregivers maintain a child or

<sup>36</sup> DCYF. (October 2022). *Out of home care exits and entries* [June 2010-June 2022]. infoFamlink.

youth's connection with their family of origin.

**Recommendations & Future Follow Up:**

- **Emphasizing Safety:** The DCYF Oversight Board re-emphasizes the importance of child safety and well-being regarding decision-making around reunifications. Further discussion on outcome data and balancing indicators related to reunification can be reviewed in *reducing the number of children and youth entering out-of-home care* (pages 31-32), *reducing the length of stay for children in out-of-home care* (pages 26-27), and *reducing the number of children who re-enter out-of-home care within 12 months* (pages 31-32).
- **Amend Performance Measure in Statute (re-emphasized from 2021):** Future amendment to the statute, RCW 43.216.015(3)(c)(iv)(A-B) to combine the measures into one, instead of its current structure which lists the same concept as two separate measures.
  - Amend the same statute to require the measurement to assess the percentage of youth exiting to reunification rather than total number of youth who are reunified for the family. As the number of youth in care continues to decrease, the absolute number of reunifications loses meaning compared to the percentage of all youth who are being reunified from a given exit cohort.


14. In collaboration with county juvenile justice programs, improving adolescent outcomes including reducing multisystem involvement and homelessness; increasing school graduation rates and successful transitions to adulthood for youth involved in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems

Overall **PERFORMANCE STATUS:** Mixed, Needs Improvement 

**Regarding DCYF’s Adolescent Programs Unit:** The following discussion and review of DCYF’s performance on adolescent outcomes is largely reflective of the work conducted by the agency’s Adolescent Programs Unit to date. Near the end of 2022, the Oversight Board became aware of potential upcoming changes to the agency’s Adolescent Programs Unit and has concerns about any changes that may diminish a strategic and pointed focus on adolescents. The original decision-making around the creation of the Department of Children, Youth and Families emphasized the need for a dedicated focus on adolescent outcomes within the agency:

*“We should ensure focused attention on adolescents, with this new agency having primary responsibility for helping the state achieve better outcomes for youth in this age cohort. Adolescent brain development is a critical period and an opportunity to change a youth’s trajectory into adulthood. Older children and youth also are an important focus for any holistic approach to supporting the wellbeing of children.”<sup>1</sup>*

*Page 37 of the Blue Ribbon Commission Report*

Reduce Multisystem Involvement: 

**PERFORMANCE STATUS:** Inconclusive

Understanding multisystem involvement, across child welfare and juvenile rehabilitation, requires deciphering what timeframes of a young person’s life are taken into consideration and what programs or services a young person experiences to be determined to have multisystem involvement. Understanding trends in multisystem involvement can lead to practice and policy improvements that serve children and youth who may be involved in one system and at-risk for involvement in another system.

Utilizing data identifiers developed by DSHS’s RDA, DCYF has been able to analyze when the same individual is present in different records management systems for child welfare and juvenile rehabilitation for CY2016, CY2017 and CY2018. The analysis identifies incidents when youth admitted to JR have had a child welfare prior to admission to JR. Not all children and young people who have had an out-of-home placement end up with an admission to JR, the percentage that do is worth paying attention to. The data table below summarizes the percentage of young people who had out-of-home placements in the child welfare system and also had an admission to JR sometime after their child welfare placement.

Out-of-Home Placements...	CY2016	CY2017	CY2018
Any time prior to JR admission	23%	23.2%	24.8%
Any time lasting two months or more	12.9%	16.9%	16.9%
Within the year prior to JR admission	10.1%	12%	9.6%
Lasting two months or more in the year prior to JR admission <sup>37</sup>	8.3%	9.5%	8.8%

In addition to consideration of out-of-home placement and JR admissions overlap, DCYF has stated that 79% of youth admitted to a JR facility had experience with the child welfare system – not only foster care – at any time during their lifetime.

Adolescence is a time within a youth’s development that can have a major impact on an individual’s trajectory into adulthood. To best serve this population, the Blue Ribbon Commission recognized that a unique targeted focus was required to ensure improved outcomes for adolescents involved in child welfare, juvenile rehabilitation, or both. DCYF’s Adolescent Programs Unit was developed to encompass integrated services across the agency’s core service areas for youth and young adults who fit this criterion and was an integral part of DCYF’s founding legislation.

In 2021, the Unit made efforts to integrate services across previously siloed programs between child welfare and juvenile rehabilitation. Prior to 2021, the Unit primarily provided services to child welfare-only involved youth and young adults, while juvenile rehabilitation has continued to function separately both in program administration and as indicated on the agency’s organizational chart.

In 2021, to address the need for further integration, the Unit took the lead on institutional education for the agency, particularly regarding the work outlined in [HB 1295](#) *Providing public education to youth in or released from institutional education facilities*. Additionally, the program announced at the end of 2021 that it will partner with Juvenile Rehabilitation on the implementation of Community Transition Services (HB 1186 of 2021) to develop and expand therapeutic and supportive community-based custody options. Other work planned and initiated in 2022 includes the establishment of a co-design process to create a new transition process and planning for youth people exiting child welfare and juvenile rehabilitation.

The Unit has established a strong partnership with the Office of Homeless Youth in the Department of Commerce. Both these offices meet on a biweekly basis to form better solutions to eliminate the discharge of youth and young adults from care into homelessness and to ensure youth and young adults who exit care are able to obtain sustainable housing options.

- To adequately measure multisystem involvement, the agency needs an intermediary IT system to allow for the child welfare data system (FamLink) to communicate and connect with data in the juvenile rehabilitation system (Automated Client Tracking, or ACT). Advances in data collection will also result in the ability to establish a baseline to assess future performance of DCYF’s integrated adolescent services. This should be taken into consideration with the development of the Comprehensive Child Welfare Information System (CCWIS).

<sup>37</sup> DCYF. (March 2020). *Child Welfare and Juvenile Rehabilitation Overlap Data Sheet*. <https://dcyf.wa.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/cw-jr-overlap.pdf>

- The DCYF Oversight Board urges even bolder attempts to integrate adolescent services across child welfare and juvenile rehabilitation, as this was a key component of the establishing legislation that created DCYF in 2017 (RCW 43.216.015).

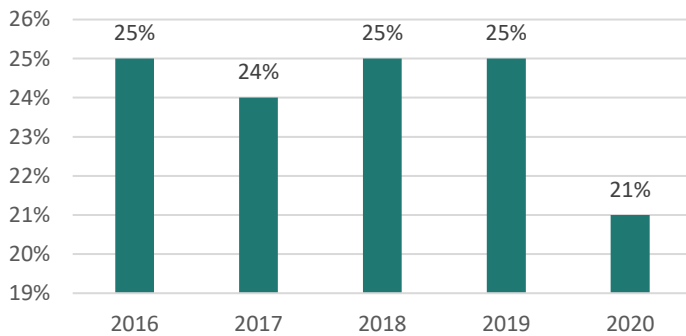
**Reduce Homelessness:**

**PERFORMANCE STATUS:** On Track

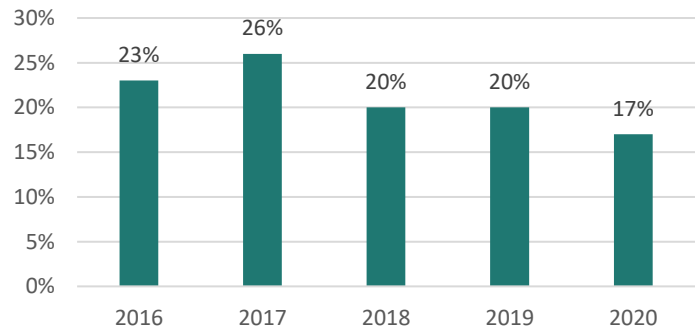


Most recent report on homelessness of adolescents (age 12 to 17) and young adults (18 to 24) after exiting a system of care was published in 2020, though the most recent data available due to data lag analysis reflects the 2017 exit-from-care cohort, a cohort that exited either previous to, or during, the creation of DCYF.<sup>38</sup>

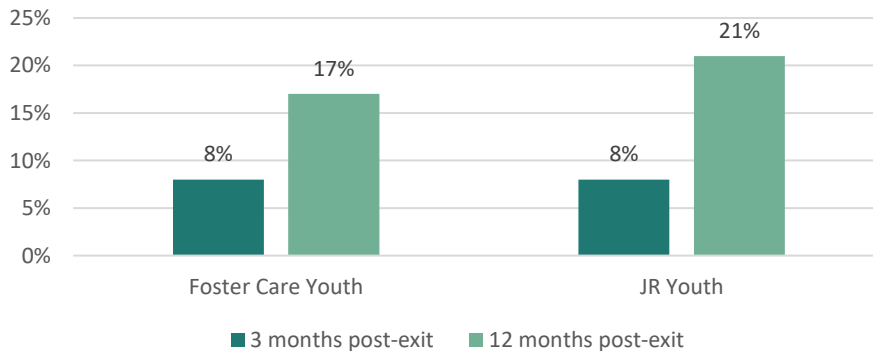
Percentage of JR Youth and Young Adults Who Are Homeless 12 Months After System Exit



Percentage of Foster Care Youth and Young Adults Who are Homeless 12 Months After System Exit



Percentage of Homelessness Rates for Foster Care Youth and JR Youth for SFY2020



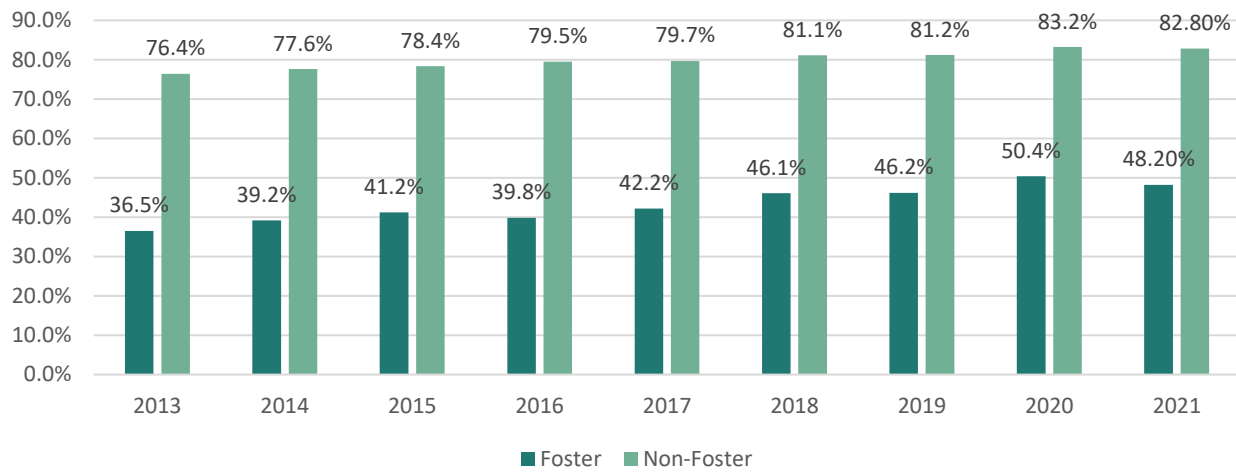
<sup>38</sup> DSHS RDA. Homelessness Among Youth Exiting Systems of Care in Washington State. Report 11.254. 2022.

Note: Due to a change in how data is calculated in the 2022 *Homelessness Among Youth Exiting Systems of Care in Washington State* report, published by DSHS’s RDA, previous years data has been adjusted to reflect those changes, specifically years 2016-2017.

**Educational Outcomes:**

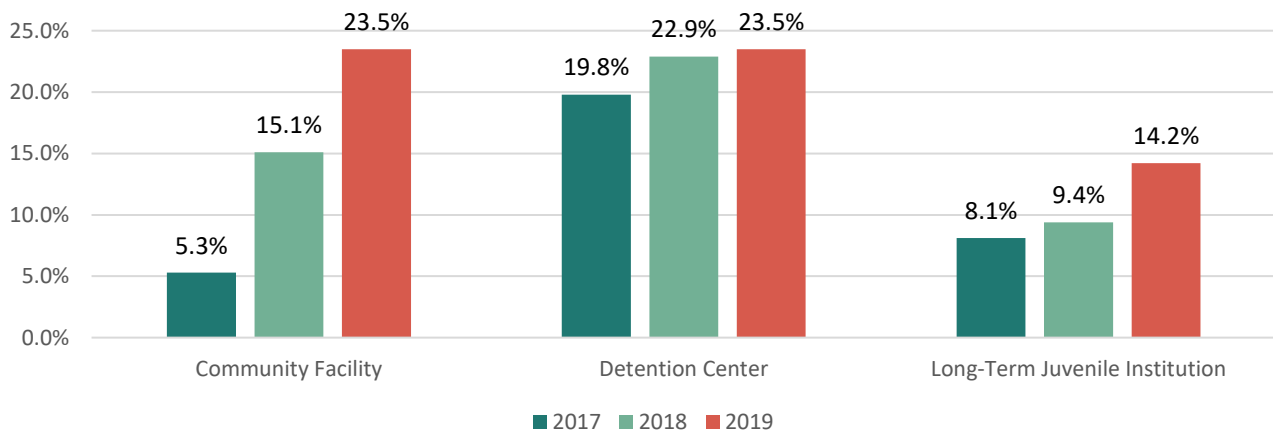
**PERFORMANCE STATUS:** Needs Improvement →

**High School Graduation Rates for Youth in Child Welfare**



39

**Four Year Graduation Rate for Students Enrolled in Institutional Education at some point in grade 9-12**



<sup>39</sup> OSPI Report Card.


<sup>40</sup> *Improving Institutional Education (IE) Programs and Outcomes Taskforce Workgroup, September 3, 2020. Presented by Katie Weaver Randall, OSPI Director of Student Information*

Since 2013, high school graduation rates for youth in foster care have consistently increased with the exception of the 2020-2021 school year when graduation rates fell. This drop in graduation rates for the 2020-2021 academic year is likely the result of the educational impacts resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, and not only impacted youth in foster care, but the entire youth population as a whole. Youth in institutional facilities are improving in educational outcomes though at an unacceptable rate far below the rate of counterparts in the child welfare system or the general youth population.

Improving educational outcomes for youth in care has improved over the years due to partnerships with youth serving organizations, such as the impact of Treehouse’s Graduate Success program on the graduation of foster youth since the program’s inception in 2013.

Recent legislation, such as [HB 1295 \(2021\)](#), provides legislative reporting requirements on educational outcomes for youth in foster care and juvenile rehabilitation, respectively. With initial annual reports beginning in 2021, robust data and outcome assessments in this area will help inform future agency performance assessments regarding educational outcomes.

## Successful transitions to adulthood:

**PERFORMANCE STATUS:** Needs Improvement 

According to DCYF’s Strategic Priorities Plan for 2021-2016, *Create successful transition into adulthood for youth and young adults in our care*, has been identified as one of the agency’s top six priorities. In the plan, the agency has identified the following outcome measures to determine its performance: (1) high school graduation rates (reviewed on pages 45), and (2) workforce participation following exit, both disaggregated for child welfare, juvenile rehabilitation, and crossover youth. Additional consideration of performance includes the monitoring of balancing indicators: (1) five-year graduation rates, and (2) rates of homelessness following exit (reviewed on pages 44). As DCYF continues to develop additional measures, the agency plans to produce a consistent analysis of substance use disorder treatment need and treatment referral/enrollment for youth exiting care and transitioning to adulthood.

In addition to DCYF’s considerations for assessing performance in this area of focus, the Oversight Board urges DCYF to include other pathways to adulthood as indicators of successful transitions, including higher education enrollment. The Oversight Board also believes additional context comparing the state’s performance in these domains to regionally or nationally would provide valuable insight into the agency’s performance. Additionally, the Oversight Board urges the agency to continually assess performance by seeking parity with outcomes of non-system involved youth counterparts.

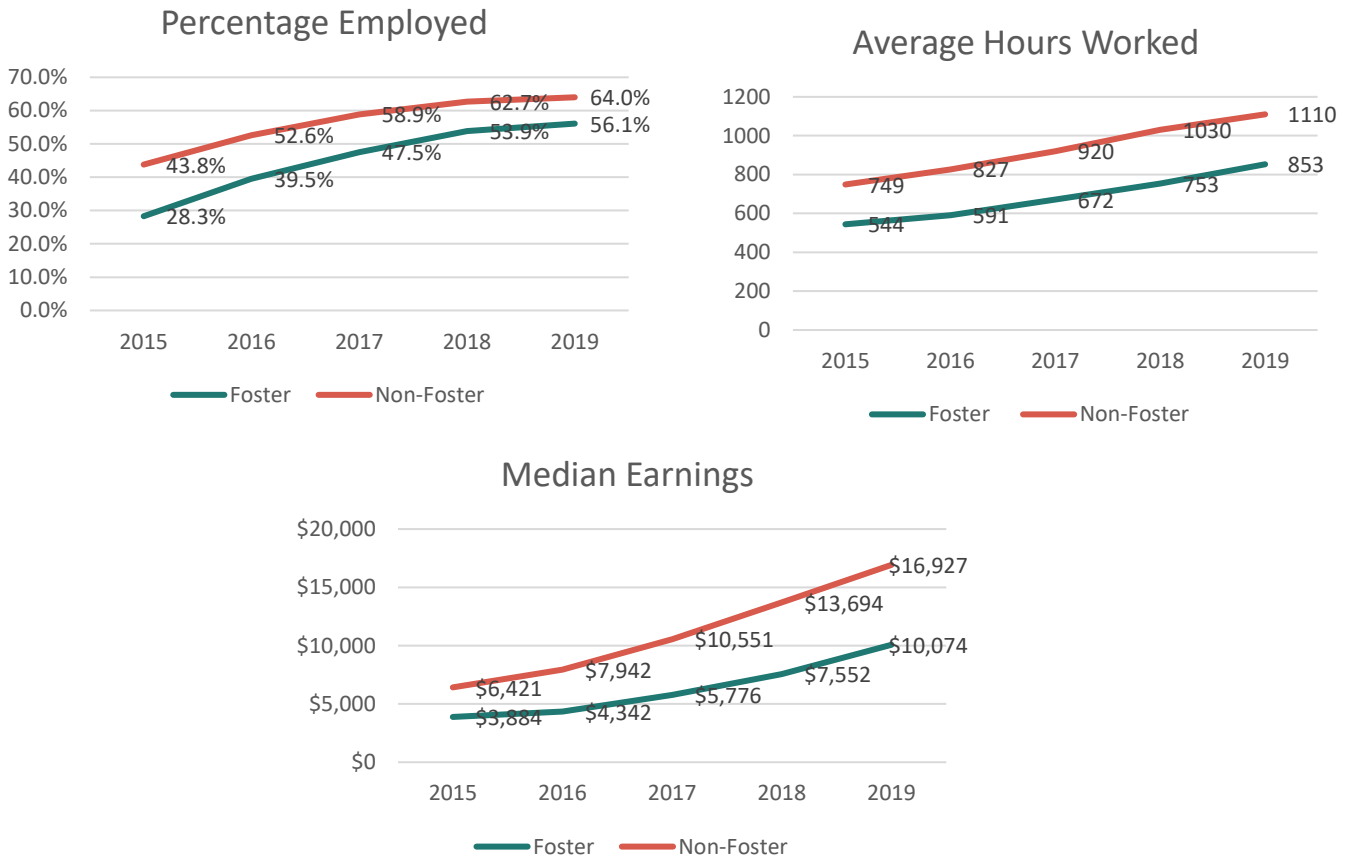
## **Employment Outcomes**

A recent analysis produced in December 2021, provides insight into employment outcomes for young adults with any experience in foster care.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Chen, V. and Hough, G. *Education and Workforce Outcomes for Children and Youth in Foster Care, 2021 Report*. 2021. <https://erdc.wa.gov/publications/student-outcomes/education-and-workforce-outcomes-children-and-youth-foster-care-2021>

### Employment Outcomes for Young Adults, Age 18 or Older, by Foster Care Status, 2015-2019



Data provided in this analysis illustrates upwards trends for foster youth employment outcomes, though there remains a gap in employment outcomes compared to non-foster counterparts.

A lagged analysis for youth and young adults who experienced JR in FY14-FY18 is summarized as follows.

#### Percentage of Youth Released from JR Residential Facilities who find Employment within One-Year Post-Release<sup>42</sup>

	SFY14	SFY15	SFY16	SFY17	SFY18	SFY19	SFY20
Any work in the year post-release	49.5%	47.2%	61%	55.1%	59.6%	60.5%	59.3%

Data is analyzed from FY14-FY20, based on the collection of data in a post-release period and by matching data with the Employment Security Department regarding reported wages.

Data indicates that youth exiting JR have the highest likelihood of starting employment within the first quarter

<sup>42</sup> DCYF Office of Innovation, Alignment, and Accountability. *Employment Outcomes for Youth Released from Juvenile Rehabilitation*. September 14, 2020. [EmploymentOutcomes-ReleasedJR2022.pdf \(wa.gov\)](https://www.dcyf.wa.gov/employment-outcomes-released-jr-2022)



of their release, 44.2% for FY19 and 41.9% for FY20. Both are higher percentages than the same measure in FY18, 39.9%. The longer time has passed since their JR release, there is a declining likelihood a youth or young adult will obtain employment in that first year.

For the youth and young adults who did obtain employment, the greatest percentage, 19.9%, sustained employment for two quarters post-release. This suggesting that youth and young adults are mostly likely to obtain employment immediately after release, but may struggle to maintain employment as time passes.

From the data available, when disaggregated by race and ethnicity, indicates greater disparities in employment outcomes youth and young adults released prior to SFY2018. Data reported in 2022, for SFY19 and SFY20, reflects DCYF's performance in connecting youth to employment post-release and how this is experienced across race and ethnicity. SFY19 indicates an increase in employment post-release for Black/AA and White youth, with a decrease for Hispanic youth. SFY20 indicates an increase for Hispanic youth above employment rates from SFY18, a 15.1% decrease for Black/AA youth over the one year span, and a slight decrease for all other reported youth.

DCYF has partnered with several peer mentor and career pathway organizations to assist youth in finding employment.

### **Extended Foster Care (EFC)**

A 2020 report published by the Washington State Institute for Public Policy (WSIPP),<sup>43</sup> found that Extended Foster Care (EFC) improved a young adults employment outcomes, including increased earnings. Similar effects of EFC included increased educational attainment, reduced likelihoods of homelessness, the need for public assistance, the need for crisis services or treatment, and criminal convictions.

To ensure successful transitions for young adults in EFC during the COVID-19 pandemic, young adults who were scheduled to age-out during the pandemic were allowed to remain in EFC after they turned 21. This ensured young adults had an opportunity to maintain stability during the pandemic and the corresponding economic impacts.

### **Contributing Factors & Future Performance:**

- Foster Youth Development Disability Services Eligibility:** In 2021, 2SHB 1061 passed with the intent to reduce the number of former foster youth with developmental disabilities discharged into homelessness or inappropriate hospital environments, and to maximize the use of appropriate services for this population. DCYF published its first eligibility report on this population in December 2021 and indicated that – through assessment of data available in FamLink and in partnership with the Development Disabilities Administration (DDA) – 74 youth in DCYF care were eligible for DDA services. Cross-agency collaboration between DCYF, DDA and HCA continues in order to best serve youth identified in this population and connect them to available appropriate services.
- Recent Legislation, HB1905:** This change funnels more tools and resources to support the changes implemented by SB 6560 in 2018 that is intended to ensure youth exiting a state system of care do not enter into homelessness. \$5 million in funding is provided over a five-year period. The Office of

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<sup>43</sup> Miller, M., Bales, D., & Hirsch, M. (2020). Extended foster care in Washington State: Final Report. (Document Number 20-05-3201). Olympia: Washington State Institute for Public Policy.

Homeless Youth will administer most of the funding, with DCYF being responsible for convening a new state rapid response team. <sup>44</sup>

**D.S. Settlement** – In response to the D.S. Settlement, DCYF has developed new housing options for adolescents and young adults in agency care. Resources are needed to implement these options and make them available to the target population.

#### Recommendations & Future Follow Up:


- **Public Reporting of Rate of Multisystem Involvement (re-emphasized from 2021):** In 2020, DCYF published a one-page analysis *Child Welfare and Juvenile Rehabilitation Overlap* <sup>45</sup> presenting the percentage of youth with child welfare out-of-home placements prior to an admission to JR for SFY14-SFY18. DCYF should annually update and publish this analysis, as well as seek to expand the population to any child welfare involvement prior to admissions to JR, as well as work with local jurisdictions to identify youth involved in the child welfare system and local juvenile justice systems.
  - Continue collaborating with local county jurisdictions to develop real time reporting on multisystem involved youth across the child welfare system and juvenile justice systems. This data will contribute to improving prevention efforts by identifying service eligibility, service needs, gaps, and opportunities for engagement to avoid further system involvement.
  - Provide transparency on DCYF’s collaboration activities with local jurisdictions would provide further insight into overall efforts and challenges to advancing coordination efforts in service delivery and data reporting.
  - The DCYF Oversight Board will work with the Washington State Center for Court Research (WSCCR) to understand how the Center collects and analyses data in this domain, and how frequently that data is reported.
  
- **Report on Outcomes up to Age 25 (re-emphasize from 2021):** The Board recommends DCYF measure outcomes for all youth and young adults receiving agency services to age 25, in alignment with youth and young adults in the JR system and the implementation [HB 6160 \(2018\)](#), JR to 25. Measuring outcomes for youth and young adults to age 25 across programs and services will provide valuable data on the agency’s performance in assisting youth to successfully transition to adulthood. <sup>46</sup>
  
- **Adolescent Outcomes Monitoring:** As expressed at the beginning of this outcome review, the DCYF Oversight is concerned about what potential changes may occur within the Department that could jeopardize a dedicated focus on adolescent outcomes. At the end of 2022, the Oversight Board requested a written explanation from DCYF leadership to understand the potential changes to the organization’s structure regarding this area of focus, and how the agency plans to maintain a focus on improving outcomes for adolescents. The Oversight Board will continue to monitor the agency’s performance regarding the outcomes reviewed here into 2023 and beyond.

<sup>44</sup> Borkholder, Joy. *Youth leaving foster care, juvenile and other systems are aim of Washington housing effort*. Juvenile Justice Information Exchange. August 22, 2022. <https://jjie.org/2022/08/22/youth-leaving-foster-care-juvenile-and-other-systems-are-aim-of-washington-housing-effort/>

<sup>45</sup> DCYF. (March 2020). *Child Welfare and Juvenile Rehabilitation Overlap Data Sheet*. <https://dcyf.wa.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/cw-jr-overlap.pdf>

<sup>46</sup> Annie E. Casey Foundation. *Thrive by 25: Casey Foundation Announces Increased Focus on Youth and Young Adults*. 2021. <https://www.aecf.org/blog/thrive-by-25-casey-foundation-announces-increased-focus-on-youth-and-young>

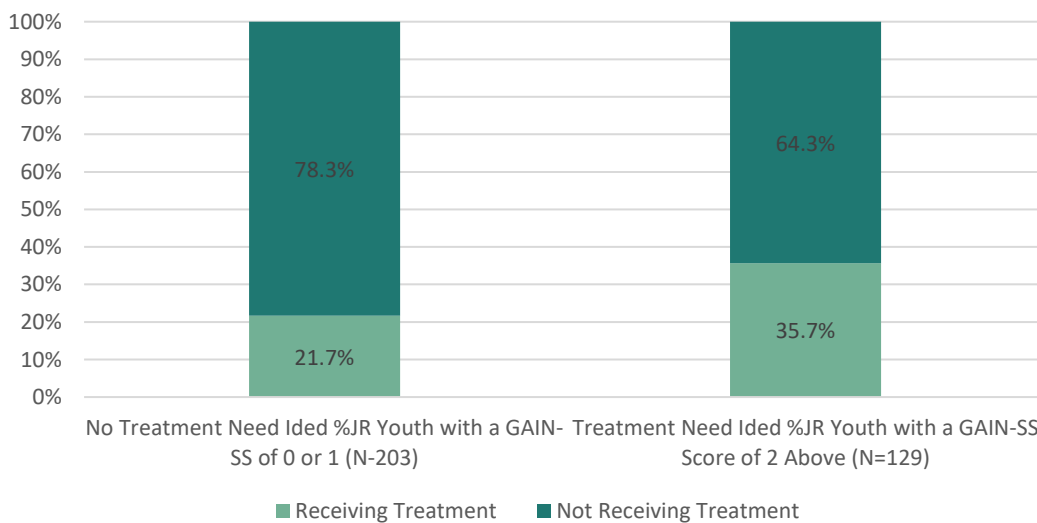
## 15. Reducing future demand for mental health and substance use disorder treatment for youth involved in child welfare and juvenile justice

**PERFORMANCE STATUS:** Needs Improvement, progress made 

To reduce future demand for mental health and substance use disorder treatment for youth and young adults involved in DCYF systems of care, it is first and foremost important that youth and young adults identified with a treatment need while in care of the agency or receiving the agency’s services, are receiving appropriate treatment services.

This year, DCYF published a report, *A Snapshot of Current Juvenile Rehabilitation Youth: Substance Use Disorder & Treatment Needs*<sup>47</sup>, that reviews the rate of current JR youth identified need for substance use disorder (SUD) treatment, and the rate of youth receiving treatment. With the use of the Global Appraisal of Individual Needs – Short Screen (GAIN-SS), youth are typically screened within 48 hours of admission to a JR facility. Youth who score a 2 or higher are identified as having an SUD need. According to this report, youth residing in JR facilities as of August 2021, **38.9%** of youth (129 of 332) were identified as having a treatment need based on their GAIN-SS Score. Of these youth with an identified treatment need, **64.3%** (83 youth), were not receiving treatment.

JR Youth by Identified SUD Treatment Need According to GAIN-SS Score



This report indicates that (1) the majority of youth in JR facilities in need of SUD treatment are not receiving it, and (2) the GAIN-SS is not sufficient at identifying treatment needs. During the September 1, 2022 DCYF Oversight Board meeting, Secretary Hunter discussed that the agency was evaluating and redesigning current assessment tools based on identified insufficient findings as illustrated in this data.

<sup>47</sup> Cross, S. (2022). *A Snapshot of Current Juvenile Rehabilitation Youth: Substance Use Disorder & Treatment Needs*. Washington State Department of Children, Youth, and Families – Office of Innovation, Alignment, and Accountability.

Data presented by Secretary Hunter to the DCYF Oversight Board in September 2022, also indicated the use of the GAIN-SS to identify SUD treatment needs for youth in foster care from 2016-2019, by age:

Age (with N of each group)	Substance Use Disorder indicated by GAIN-SS
13 (142)	6%
14 (165)	10%
15 (156)	11%
16 (113)	12%
17 (73)	15%

Although youth being screened-in as a CPS intake are screened for substance use disorder, data is not published to indicate of those identified with a treatment need, what percentage are receiving treatment.

An additional new analysis was produced by RDA of DSHS to inform DCYF’s placement continuum for children and youth in out-of-home care for SFY15-SFY18. This analysis found that the majority of children and youth in out-of-home placements (**75%**) have a relatively low prevalence of health and behavioral needs at the time of placement. Of the remaining **26%** of children and youth in out-of-home care, **13%** were individual with developmental disabilities and/or chronic health conditions, and the remaining **12%** experienced moderate to high behavioral health needs.<sup>48</sup>

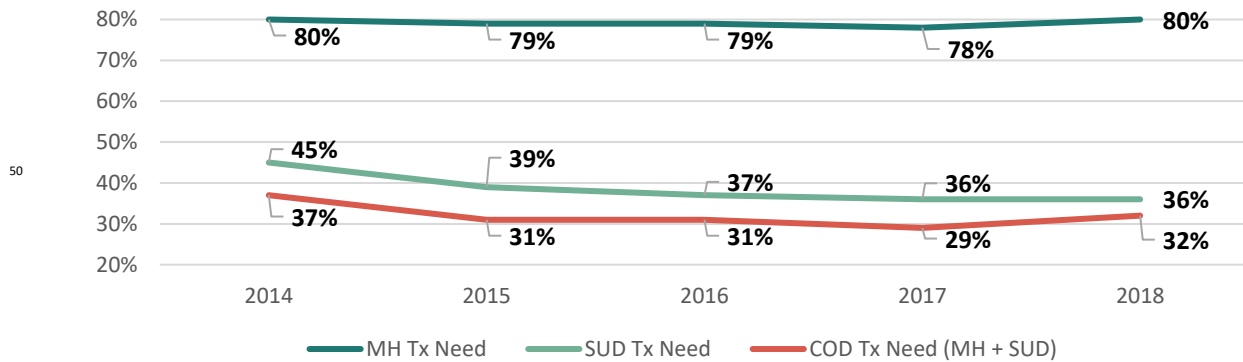
DCYF has utilized RDA’s report to inform the structure of the placement continuum as well as ensure the placement payment structure for caregivers adequately supports the needs of the youth placed in their care. Further enhancements include improved assessment of youth needs when entering out-of-home placement and throughout their time in placement.

These analyses and subsequent work plans indicate progress on behalf of DCYF to ensure that SUD and MH treatment needs are identified, and appropriate services are made available to youth across its continuum of care. These recent analyses assist in informing targeted treatment and service provision, though work remains to be done in order to ensure treatment services and placement options are made available to the youth with identified needs. Data from a 2021 report indicates that, on average from SFY14-SFY18, 79.% of children and youth in foster care with identified mental health treatment needs received services. For the same time period, 38.6% of children and youth in foster care with identified SUD treatment needs received services.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>48</sup> Patton, D., Liu, Q., Lucenko, B, Mancuso, D., and Felver, B. (December 2021). Informing the Placement Continuum: Classifying Children in Out-of-Home Placement Using Integrated Administrative Data. (RDA Report 7.124). DSHS Research and Data Analysis Division.

<sup>49</sup> DSHS Research and Data Center Division. Children’s Behavioral Health Dashboard: Behavioral Health Treatment Needs and Outcomes among Medicaid Enrolled Children in Washington State. February 2021. [https://www.dshs.wa.gov/sites/default/files/rda/reports/DASHBOARD\\_ChildrensBehHealth.pdf](https://www.dshs.wa.gov/sites/default/files/rda/reports/DASHBOARD_ChildrensBehHealth.pdf)

### Percentage of Foster Care Youth Enrolled in Medicaid with an Identified Treatment Need Who are Receiving Treatment



Continued oversight is needed to ensure children with identified needs receiving services while in DCYF’s care to ensure a reduced future demand on MH and SUD treatment services.

**Suicide Prevention & Screening:** In September 2022, OFCO presented to the DCYF Oversight Board data trends in fatalities and near-fatalities of youth in out-of-home care from 2019-2021. Although suicide does not meet the legislative definition of a fatality (RCW 74.13.640) – which prompts an executive fatality review initiated by DCYF and conducted by a panel of stakeholders – OFCO did examine 20 cases over that period that were determined to be suicides.

Currently, youth placed in out-of-home care are screened with the GAIN-SS at entry into out-of-home care and six months after entry. Youth entering JR are screened with the GAIN-SS at entry. The GAIN-SS is used to identify SUD treatment needs, as well as mental health needs including identifying when a child or youth has suicidal ideation. Although the GAIN-SS is currently being evaluated for accuracy and equity, data from 2016-2022 indicate the following regarding youth in out-of-home care and in JR facilities who have indicated suicidal ideation.

#### Percentage of Youth by Age in Child Welfare Identified with Suicidal Ideation based on GAIN-SS Scores, 2016-2019 Cohort

Age and N in each group	Percent of Cohort Indicating Suicidal Ideation
13 (142)	20%
14 (165)	22%
15 (156)	26%
16 (113)	25%
17 (73)	25%

<sup>50</sup> DSHS Research and Data Center Division. *Children’s Behavioral Health Dashboard: Behavioral Health Treatment Needs and Outcomes among Medicaid Enrolled Children in Washington State*. February 2021. [https://www.dshs.wa.gov/sites/default/files/rda/reports/DASHBOARD\\_ChildrensBehHealth.pdf](https://www.dshs.wa.gov/sites/default/files/rda/reports/DASHBOARD_ChildrensBehHealth.pdf)

**Percentage of Youth Entering JR Identified with Suicidal Ideation based on GAIN-SS, SFY2016-SFY2022**

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Youth entering JR	1.5%	1.1%	.5%	3.4%	7%	6.8%	8.1%

Acknowledging the trauma experienced by youth in out-of-home care, the DCYF Oversight Board sees an opportunity to better serve youth by improving screening of treatment needs at system entry and throughout a youth’s placement in out-of-home care, as well as introducing suicide prevention training for foster parents and kinship caregivers to identify warning signs and know how to seek professional help. Further details on recommendations regarding suicide prevention are included in the recommendations section below.

**Contributing Factors & Future Performance:**

- **DCYF Placement Continuum:** In response to the increase in the use of exceptional placements over the last several years, and as a follow up to RDA’s analysis informing the placement continuum, DCYF is working to identify service and placement gaps in its existing options and is pursuing resources to support a more robust system that can meet the needs identified by youth in care.
- **DCYF Assessment Redesign Work, and Service Penetration Data and Reporting:** With the acknowledgement that current assessment tools are not accurately identifying all youth treatment needs, DCYF is undergoing a redesign of its screening tools to incorporate evidence-based approaches to identifying substance use and mental health treatment needs. Additionally, DCYF leadership has requested that OIAA make use of assessment and service data to regularly report on service penetration and tracking within the agency’s continuum of care.
- **Community Transition Services:** The passage of E2SHB 1186 in 2021, requires that youth and young adults receiving community transition services must have appropriate treatment and programming as determined by DCYF.
  - Additionally, the establishment of the Substance Use Recovery Services Advisory (SURSA) Committee, created in [ESB 5476 of 2021](#) and in response to the *State v. Black* decision, is mandated to create a plan by December 2022 to increase diversion pathways for individuals who may have been charged in the criminal justice system with drug possession, and refers them to community-based care when possible and appropriate to serve complex or co-occurring behavioral health conditions.
- **Early Mental Health Interventions:** The Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation (IECMHC) system for child care is a prevention-based service for adults working with infants and children in early learning and care settings. Providing mental health services and supports to children at a young age, and strengthening the capacity of the parents, caregivers, and providers, ensures children and families are receiving needed services as early as possible, reducing further future demand on treatment services.

**Recommendations & Future Follow Up:**

- **Increase Access to Substance Use Disorder Treatment in JR Facilities:** A current need for SUD treatment in JR facilities is observable and not fully met. As assessment tools are redesigned and implemented for accuracy, that need may increase.


- **Suicide Screening & Prevention:** The DCYF Oversight Board supports the recommendation made in OFCO’s 2022 Critical Incident Report on page 18: (1) Train all caseworkers on universal suicide screening tools and implement the use of these screening tools to better identify the suicidal ideation, and (2) Provide training to foster parents and kinship caregivers on suicide prevention.<sup>51</sup>
- **Bolster Collaboration Efforts with Local Juvenile Justice Systems:** As reviewed in the following pages, DCYF should bolster collaboration efforts with county juvenile court administrations to increase diversion and disposition alternatives in order to reduce the likelihood of juvenile incarceration resulting in negative adult mental health outcomes.<sup>52</sup> The *State v. Blake* decision, and the passage of SB 5476, provides more opportunities for collaboration between DCYF and local court jurisdictions to improve outcomes for youth.
- **Partnering with Children and Youth Behavioral Health Workgroup:** Continue to prioritize an active partnership and consultation with the Children and Youth Behavioral Health Workgroup, particularly regarding the Workgroup’s recommendations regarding prenatal through five relational health and expanding the IECMH-C to meet families’ needs.

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<sup>51</sup> Bokan, E., and Saeteurn, S. (August 2022). *Washington State Office of Family and Children’s Ombuds: Child Fatalities and Near Fatalities in Washington State*. OFCO. [https://ofco.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2022-08/2022\\_Critical\\_Incident\\_Report.pdf](https://ofco.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2022-08/2022_Critical_Incident_Report.pdf)

<sup>52</sup> Barnet, Elizabeth S., et al. “How Does Incarcerating Youth People Affect Their Adult Health Outcomes?” *Pediatrics*. vol. 139, no.2, 2017. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5260153/>

## 16. An increase in the number of youth who successfully complete the terms of diversion or alternative sentencing options

**PERFORMANCE STATUS:** Inconclusive 

The DCYF Oversight Board recognizes the challenge in assessing DCYF’s performance on this outcome when the number youth who successfully complete the terms of diversions and disposition alternatives are decided at the level of local court jurisdictions. DCYF’s main role in this outcome is the utilization of the Juvenile Court Block Grant funding formula that provides some incentives for increasing diversion and disposition alternatives.

### Diversions:

Juvenile diversion programs seek to hold youth accountable for their actions while connecting youth with appropriate services, without formal court processing in local county juvenile justice systems. Most recent data on diversions reported published end of CY2020 reflects data from SFY18 and SFY19, prior to when JR officially became part of DCYF.<sup>53 54</sup>

	SFY2017	SFY2018	SFY2019
Referrals from law enforcement	19,211	17,695	16,412
Diversion	8,644	7,853	6,966
Cases filed	9,350	8,705	7,280

*Note: Referrals are frequently not resolved in the same year the referral occurs. Therefore, a diversion or case filed in a specific state fiscal year is not necessarily a resolution of a referral reported during that same fiscal year. In addition to diversion and cases filed, other actions such as “no action taken” and “informal action taken” may take place when a referral is made. Only referrals, diversions and cases filed are provided here simply to illustrate decreasing trends across all domains over the three reporting years.*

Juvenile justice involvement is declining in Washington.<sup>55</sup> Even with declining involvement, DCYF has the opportunity to further engage with juvenile courts to urge higher utilization of diversion. In particular, an increased utilization of diversion can reduce racial and ethnic disparities within the juvenile justice system.<sup>56</sup>

In addition to diversion, the 2021 Juvenile Court Block Grant Report highlights the continued importance and role of state funding, administered by JR to local courts, to incentivize the use of evidence-based programs and disposition alternatives to improve outcomes for youth involved in the juvenile justice system.<sup>57</sup> As dispositions continue to decline, there continues a need to increase disposition alternatives to best serve youth to meet their needs.

<sup>53</sup> Referred and Diverted Youth, December 2020: <https://dcyf.wa.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/reports/Referred-Diverted-Youth2020.pdf>

<sup>54</sup> Referred and Diverted Youth, December 2019: <https://dcyf.wa.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/reports/ReferredDivertedYouth-2019.pdf>

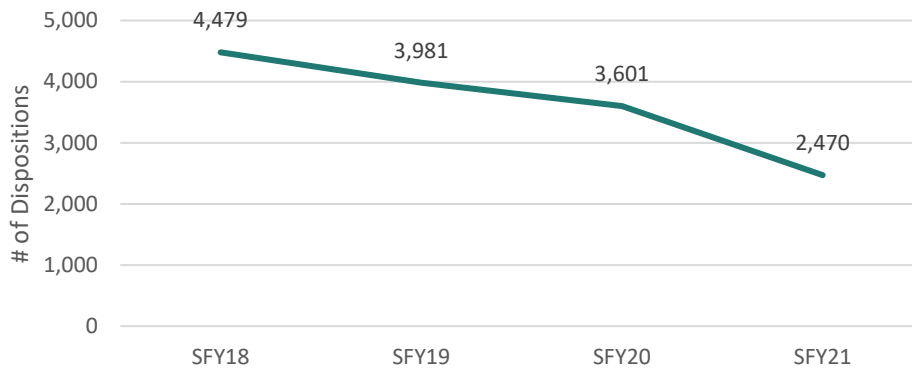
<sup>55</sup> Washington State Juvenile Justice Report to the Governor & State Legislature, August 2020: <https://dcyf.wa.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/2020WA-PCJJgov.pdf>

<sup>56</sup> Annie E. Casey Foundation. Expand the Use of Diversion from the Juvenile Justice System. 2020. <https://assets.aecf.org/m/resourcedoc/aecf-expandtheuseofdiversion-2020.pdf#page=5>

<sup>57</sup> DCYF. *Juvenile Court Block Grant Report 2021*. December 2021. <https://dcyf.wa.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/reports/JuvenileCourtBlockGrant2021.pdf>



### Juvenile Dispositions Rendered by WA State Juvenile Courts SFY2018-SFY21

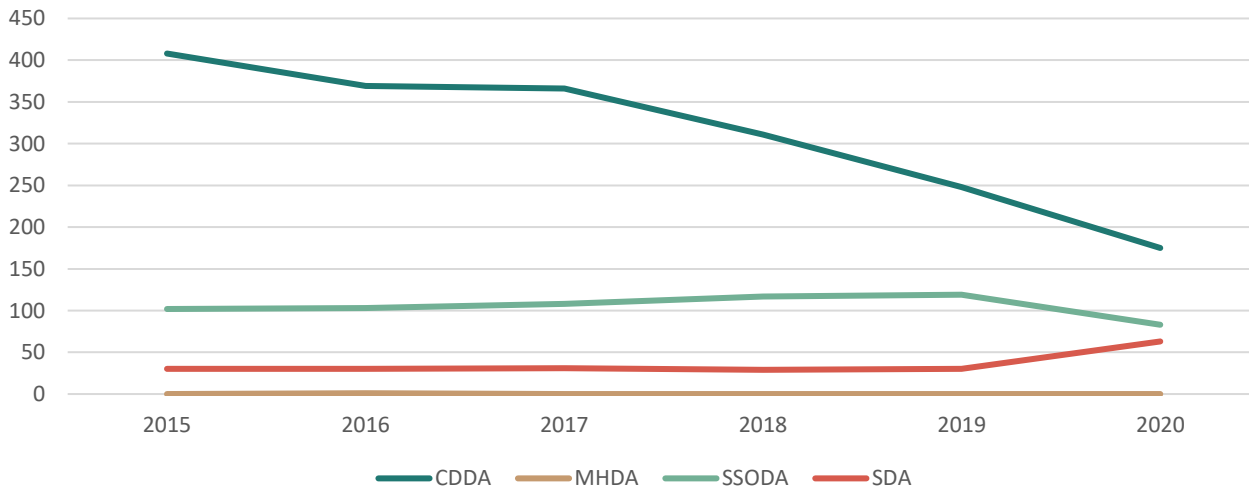


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#### Disposition Alternatives:

Youth who are committed to JR may be eligible for disposition alternatives which allows for a youth to remain in the community to receive local supervision and services through juvenile court, rather than serving their time in a JR facility. Disposition Alternatives include: **Chemical Dependency Mental Health Disposition Alternative (CDMHDA), Special Sex Offender Disposition Alternative (SSODA), and Suspended Disposition Alternative (SDA).**<sup>5960</sup>

### Initiated Disposition Alternatives, SFY 2015-2021



In 2016, the WA State Legislature combined the Chemical Dependency Disposition Alternative (CDDA) and the Mental Health Disposition Alternative (MHDA) to create the Chemical Dependency Mental Health Disposition Alternative (CDMHDA). This information is provided to explain the data reported in the line chart above shows trends in the previous disposition alternative options, while the bar chart below portrays the juvenile

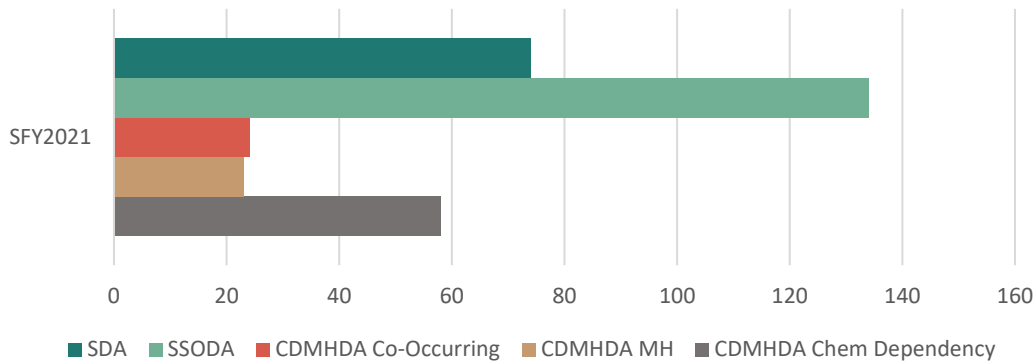
<sup>58</sup> Washington State Caseload Forecast Council. (2018-2021). *Juvenile Disposition Summary Fiscal Year 2018-2021*.

<sup>59</sup> DCYF. *Juvenile Court Block Grant Reports*. (2019-2021).

<sup>60</sup> DCYF. *Washington State Juvenile Justice Report to the Governor & State Legislature*. August 2020. <https://dcyf.wa.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/2020WA-PCJGov.pdf>

disposition alternative categories as of SFY2021. From this point forward, additional data will focus on the current disposition alternatives categories and only provide the previous data as context when appropriate.

### Initiated Disposition Alternatives, SFY 2021



In addition to disposition alternatives, the Juvenile Court Block Grant administered by DCYF Juvenile Rehabilitation also provides funding to incentivize local jurisdictions to increase the use of evidence-based programs to serve youth and reduce the likelihood of an individual to recidivate. A limited number of juvenile courts across the state offer EBPs, though the EET program has recently expanded from 6 courts in 2019 to 16 courts in 2022.

Even with financial incentives, the overall reduction in the number of youth being referred to the juvenile justice system, as well as the challenges to provide services during the COVID-19 pandemic, have both resulted in a continual decrease in the number of EBP starts over the past three years.

### Evidence-Based Program Starts (Count), SFY2019-SFY2021<sup>61</sup>

Evidence-Based Program	SFY2019	SFY2020	SFY2021
Washington State Aggression Replacement Training (WSART)*	815	405	177
Coordination of Services (COS)	655	405	339
Education Employment Training (EET)	232	235	162
Family Functional Therapy (FFT)	501	421	293
Family Integrated Transitions (FIT)	14	10	1
Multisystemic Therapy (MST)	44	67	52
Totals	2,261	1,543	1,024

\*Washington State Institute of Public Policy (WSIPP) conducted an outcome evaluation of WSART in 2019. The findings of the evaluation concluded that participants in WSART were more likely to recidivate than a comparison group who did not receive the training. For this reason, WSART lost its research-based classification and the ability for juvenile courts to use state funding to provide it.

<sup>61</sup> DCYF. Juvenile Court Block Grant Reports. (2019-2021).

### Contributing Factors & Future Performance:

- **State v. Blake and SB 5476:** The WA Supreme Court *State v. Blake* decision, and subsequent passage of SB 5476 by the State Legislature, assumes an increase in diversion pathways opportunities, as well as the number of youth eligible for diversion, to seek and receive appropriate community-based care services. To fulfill the intent of these changes, there is a need to ensure enough diversion services are available in each local jurisdiction to appropriately meet the needs of eligible youth. If the amount of services and providers available cannot meet the need of now eligible youth referred for diversion, performance on this outcome will be impacted. As of 2022, in accordance with SB 5476, HCA has established Substance Use Recovery Services Advisory (SURSA) Committee, which is mandated to create a plan to increase diversion pathways by December 2022.
- **ESB 5429 (2019):** In 2019, the state passed a law and provided funding to allow referred youth to access state-funded EBPs prior to any official juvenile justice involvement. The funding is administered to local juvenile courts through JR. As of SFY21, Pierce County is the only local jurisdiction utilizing this opportunity.
- **Expanded what programs can be funded under Juvenile Court Block Grant** – broadened categories
- **Naselle Youth Camp Closures** – access to services and impact on youth reentry and outcomes.

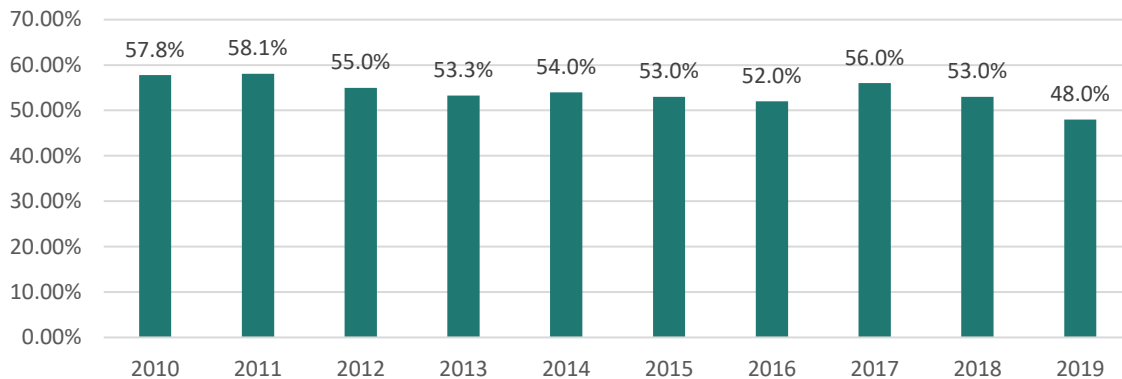
### Recommendations & Future Follow Up:

- **Revisit Juvenile Court Block Grant Funding Formula:** DCYF should review and adjust, as necessary, the Juvenile Court Block Grant funding formula to assure outcomes match the goals of the programs, including incentivizing local juvenile courts to increase diversion pathways for youth. The DCYF Oversight Board urges DCYF to increase collaboration with local jurisdictions to understand any challenges with the current funding formula and how to better incentivize diversion and disposition alternative opportunities for youth.

## 17. A decrease in the number of youth and young adults who commit subsequent crimes

**PERFORMANCE STATUS:** Inconclusive due to data lag and reporting reflecting performance prior to the initial creation of DCYF in 2017, and Juvenile Rehabilitation’s subsequent joining of DCYF in July 2019. ➔

Youth Released from JR Found Guilty of Another Offense within 18 Months, 2010-2019



The juvenile recidivism rate is calculated in the 32 months after the fiscal year release of a youth or young adult from a JR facility. This timeframe includes an 18 month period to determine if a youth or young adult commits a crime post-release, along with an additional 12 months provided for case completion and adjudication of the new offense, and an additional 2 months for reporting.

The most recent data available reflects SFY2019. The Board recognizes that JR did not officially join DCYF until July 2019, thus a true assessment of DCYF’s impact on juvenile recidivism can’t fully be ascertained until reporting years 2024, 2025 and 2026, to reflect DCYF’s performance in SFY2020, SFY2021 and SFY2022. Three years can indicate if a trend is occurring or if the results are mixed.

### Contributing Factors & Future Performance:

- **Closure of Naselle Youth Camp in 2022:** The Naselle Youth Camp, a medium security institutional facility, was closed in 2022. The geographic location of this facility created barriers to family visitations, the availability of education, employment and treatment services, and often impacted a youth’s ability to successfully re-enter the community due to the distance from their home communities. The closure of this facility may have future impacts on the recidivism rate for youth exiting JR beginning in 2023.
- **Peer Mentoring:** To improve re-entry outcomes after a youth or young adult is released from a JR institution, DCYF has been increasing the number of peer mentor programs – including Choose 180, SPARK and Hope for Homies<sup>63</sup> – made available to youth and young adults while they are incarcerated. Continuing to offer opportunities for youth and young adults to connect with mentors while

<sup>62</sup> DCYF. (2020). *Automated Client Tracking System (ACT) and the Administrative Office of the Court – Washington State Center for Court Research.*

<sup>63</sup> “Behavioral Healthcare System – Community Public Performance Review.” Results Washington, Sept. 2021. <https://www.tvw.org/watch/?eventID=2021091068>

incarcerated, through release and post-release while in the community, reduces the likelihood a youth or young adult will recidivate.<sup>64</sup>

**Community Transition Services** ([HB 1186 of 2021](#)) will increase the community transition services provided to youth and young adults incarcerated in a JR facility. These services are expected to improve re-entry outcomes and reduce recidivism. As of 2022, the Community Transition Services Stakeholder Group was established and issued a report with recommendations addressing a landscape analysis of community-based, re-entry related services and the gaps in services that are identified as necessary to ensure successful community transition services across the state.<sup>65</sup>

### Recommendations & Future Follow Up:


- **Institutional Education Outcomes:** In 2023, the DCYF Oversight Board will review work being done to improve institutional outcomes, and how the agency assists youth who transition back to their home communities and schools.

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<sup>64</sup> Hawkins, Stephanie, et al. *Mentoring for Preventing and Reducing Delinquent Behavior Among Youth: National Mentoring Resource Center Research Review*. Feb. 2020. [https://nationalmentoringresourcecenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Mentoring\\_for\\_Preventing\\_and\\_Reducing\\_Delinquent\\_Behavior\\_Among\\_Youth\\_Research\\_Review.pdf](https://nationalmentoringresourcecenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Mentoring_for_Preventing_and_Reducing_Delinquent_Behavior_Among_Youth_Research_Review.pdf)

<sup>65</sup> DCYF. (May 2022). *Community Transition Services Stakeholder Group Recommendation Report*. [https://dcyf.wa.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/reports/CTS\\_Workgroup\\_Recommendations2022.pdf](https://dcyf.wa.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/reports/CTS_Workgroup_Recommendations2022.pdf)

## 18. Eliminating the discharge of unaccompanied youth from institutional settings into homelessness

**PERFORMANCE STATUS:** Needs Improvement 

The responsibility for eliminating the discharge of unaccompanied youth from institutional settings into homelessness is not the sole responsibility of DCYF. Institutional settings includes JR institutions and group care settings within child welfare, both regulated and administered by DCYF, but also includes residential behavioral health settings under the authority of the Healthcare Authority (HCA) and programs administered by the Office of Homeless Youth (OHY) in the Department of Commerce (RCW 43.330.720). Achieving this outcome requires effective collaboration among these state agencies and assessing performance on this outcome must acknowledge this fact. The following discussion provided in this section is focused on the areas under DCYF’s authority.

Recent homelessness data analysis, reviewed on pages 44, indicates that 8% of youth and young adults exiting foster care and 8% of youth and young adults exiting the juvenile rehabilitation system experienced homelessness within the first three months of their exit. Although this data does not reflect homelessness at the point of discharge, it does indicate that work remains to be done to ensure that youth and young adults are discharged from an institutional setting into stable and appropriate housing options.

Available, affordable, appropriate housing options for youth and young adults exiting DCYF care is the greatest obstacle ensuring youth and young adults are not discharged into homelessness. During the 2022 legislative session, the Legislature recognized the need to resource the mandates outlined in SB 6560 of 2018, and passed 2SHB 1905 to do so, as well as to require the development of a rapid response team, led by DCYF in coordination with OHY, to appropriately respond to support youth and young adults exiting publicly funded systems of care. Data and recommendations on the rapid response team will be available on November 1, 2023.

In 2022, DCYF introduced a plan to improve placement supports in response to the increasing use of exceptional placements over the past several years. The agency’s plan to expand placement options includes developing supportive housing options for youth ages 16-17, as well as expanding capacity of the Responsible Living Skills Program. Both expansions are intended to support youth and young adults as they prepare to exit from DCYF’s care.

The Child Welfare Housing Assistance Pilot Program issued its first report on outcomes in 2022. The pilot program was established to work with families, property owners, and partners to create safe and stable housing opportunities to support families reuniting with their dependent children. The outcomes of the first report indicate the COVID-19 pandemic presented significant limitations to the program’s ability to reach many families, yet considerable progress was made in regard to DCYF’s capacity and leverage to provide housing opportunities to child welfare involved families.<sup>66</sup>

Further strengthening these efforts and underlining the agency’s commitment to this outcome, the DCYF Strategic Plan’s clearly states the agency will ensure “youth exiting foster care and JR have safe, affordable, supportive housing plans.” The agency’s strategic plan’s monitoring plan also identifies *rates of homelessness*

<sup>66</sup> DCYF. (2022). *Child Welfare Housing Assistance Pilot Program Outcomes*. <https://www.dcyf.wa.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/reports/CWHPReport2022.pdf>

*following exit as a balancing indicator for the agency's priority of creating successful transitions into adulthood for youth and young adults in care.*

**Contributing Factors & Impacts to Future Performance:**

- **Community Transition Services:** The passage of [HB 1186](#) intends to assist with youth and young adults in the JR system with reentry services, by increasing the opportunity for youth and young adults to benefit from community transition services, including accessing housing assistance services, and reside in a community facility. Enhanced efforts aimed at successful reentry may influence the agency's performance on connecting youth and young adults to appropriate housing upon exit.
- **Recent Legislation, HB 1905:** As described above, this recent legislation and corresponding funding will provide resources and the development of a rapid response team to work with youth and young adults preparing to exit from DCYF's care.

**Recommendations & Future Follow Up:**

- **Continued Collaboration (consistent from 2021):** Continue to collaborate with other state agencies assisting families and youth and young adults seeking accessible and appropriate housing in an effort to expand the array of housing options and streamline efforts across systems.

## Conclusion

Over the last year, the DCYF Oversight Board's work has mostly focused on challenges facing today's child welfare system, including the need to balance child and youth safety and well-being, with goals to reduce the overall population of children and youth separated from their families and home communities.

The DCYF workforce is essential and central to ensuring the well-being of children and families alike, and they require intentional and informed support from their agency's leadership when managing overwhelming workloads and complex and traumatizing caseloads.

In addition to the demands made on the child welfare workforce, ongoing impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic not only complicate service provision and connecting families and youth to programs, but also have impacted hiring and retention efforts experienced across many other sectors and industries. The Oversight Board will continue to monitor the pandemic's direct and indirect impacts on agency operations and performance.

DCYF's overall performance across the outcomes reviewed in this report illustrate ongoing challenges presented by external factors, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as internal shifts in the operations, priorities, and staffing of an agency evolving into its fourth full year of operating an entire continuum of care of services for children, youth and families.

In 2023, the DCYF Oversight Board will be prioritizing the monitoring of adolescent outcomes given proposed agency changes to its organizational structure, as well as providing oversight on the multiple layers of early learning outcomes discussed in this report. The Oversight Board also plans to conduct further review of the implementation and collateral impacts of recent reforms to the juvenile rehabilitation system and multi-year, multi-project child welfare reforms introduced within the last couple of years. Throughout this work, the Oversight Board will continue to expect DCYF to make progress in advancing racial equity throughout the continuum of care and on its journey to becoming an anti-racist organization.

As summarized throughout this report, the DCYF Oversight Board acknowledges where progress has been made and when new opportunities for improvement have been identified. As DCYF moves forward in its work, the Oversight Board will continue to monitor expectations of the agency as laid out in the founding legislation codified in RCW 43.216.015, as well as to seek opportunities for innovation, partnership and improved outcomes for children, youth, and families across Washington State.



## Appendices

### Appendix A: 2022 Membership

Name	Representing
<b>Katie Biron</b>	Foster parent representative
<b>Annie Blackledge, Mockingbird Society</b>	Representative of an organization that represents the best interest of the child
<b>Bobbe Bridge, Center for Children &amp; Youth Justice</b>	Juvenile rehabilitation and justice subject matter expert
<b>Tom Dent, House of Representatives (Board Co-Chair)</b>	Legislator
<b>Ben de Haan, UW School of Social Work</b>	Child welfare subject matter expert
<b>Sydney Forrester, Governor's Policy Office</b>	Governor's Office representative (non-voting)
<b>Loni Greninger, Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe</b>	Western Washington tribal representative
<b>Ruth Kagi, State Representative (ret.)</b>	Early learning subject matter expert
<b>Anne Lee, TeamChild</b>	Subject matter expert in reducing disparities in child outcomes by income, race, and ethnicity
<b>Diane Liebe, Yakima Valley Farm Worker's Clinic/Children's Village</b>	Physician with experience working with youth
<b>Charles Loeffler, Department of Children, Youth, and Families</b>	Child welfare caseworker representative
<b>Lois Martin, Community Day Center for Children</b>	Early childhood program practitioner representative
<b>Shrounda Selivanoff, Office of Public Defense (Board Co-Chair)</b>	Parent stakeholder group representative
<b>Tana Senn, House of Representatives</b>	Legislator
<b>Judy Warnick, Senate</b>	Legislator
<b>Claire Wilson, Senate</b>	Legislator

## Appendix B: Follow Up from 2021 Recommendations

In the 2021 DCYF Oversight Board Annual Report, the Board made a number of recommendations to DCYF to improve performance by each outcome area. Below summarizes the follow up, where appropriate, per each recommendation made in that report. If a recommendation did not have a response from the agency since the 2021 report, it is re-emphasized in the 2022 report under “Recommendations & Future Follow Up” for each outcome area.

<p><b>1. Eliminating racial and ethnic disproportionality and disparities in system involvement and across child and youth outcomes in collaboration with other state agencies</b></p>
<p><b>2021 Recommendation   Bolder Commitments:</b> In response to calls for concrete commitments and deliberate actions to address racial inequities observed in child and family services, more work remains to be done to eliminate racial and ethnic disparities and disproportionalities across DCYF’s continuum of care, but the progress outlined in this section is encouraging. DCYF is making progress in the development of internal workforce structures to advance racial equity and social justice within the agency, while also seeking and implementing policy reforms that address systemic practices that previously exacerbated racial and ethnic disparities, as outlined above.</p>
<p><b>2. Increasing number and proportion of children kindergarten-ready as measured by WA kindergarten inventory of developing skills (WaKIDS) assessment including mathematics</b></p>
<p><b>2021 Recommendation   EOGOAC Review of WaKIDS 2022 Report:</b> In 2021, the Oversight Board recommended DCYF consider the recommendations resulting from the Education Opportunity Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee (EOGOAC) legislatively-mandated review of the WaKIDS assessment. As a result of a 2021 review conducted by the EOGOAC, the Committee submitted a report<sup>67</sup> in 2022 with recommendations on how to improve the WaKIDS assessment for all children, BIPOC children in particular. Of the recommendations in this report, the following recommendations that mirror recommendations submitted by the Oversight Board in the 2021 report:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Creating a WaKIDS whole-child assessment that identifies the strengths of all children regardless of and including culture, languages, learning styles and abilities.</li> <li>○ Create continual opportunities for families to share with educators the strengths they see in their child and ensure families are partners in their children’s education.</li> <li>○ Develop and utilize regional structures of support for more regular interaction between kindergarten classroom teachers and child care and early learning providers.</li> </ul>
<p><b>3. Increasing the proportion of children in early learning programs that have achieved the level 3 or higher early achievers quality standard</b></p>
<p><b>2021 Recommendation   Expand FSKA Communication Strategies:</b> DCYF has employed a variety of methods to communicate the opportunities made available by FSKA to families and providers across the state, including the development of a monthly newsletter as well as a regularly updated webpage. Additional communication strategies include outreach to stakeholder groups and regular updates on implementation progress and tracking of expansion opportunities.</p>
<p><b>4. Increasing the available supply of licensed child care in both child care centers and family homes, including providers not receiving state subsidy</b></p>

<sup>67</sup> Rees, Heather. (2022). *The Educational Opportunity Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee (EOGOAC) Review of the Washington Kindergarten Inventory of Developing skills (WaKIDS) 2022 Report*. Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction. <https://www.k12.wa.us/sites/default/files/public/workgroups/eogoac/pubdocs/EOGOAC%20Review%20of%20The%20Washington%20Kindergarten%20Inventory%20of%20Developing%20Skills%202022.pdf>

<p><b>2021 Recommendation   Detailed Reporting on Open Licensed Capacity:</b> DCYF has launched a Child Care Need and Supply Dashboard that includes reporting on capacity for ECEAP, Head Start, Early Head Start, child care centers and family homes centers. The dashboard allows for filtering by geographic layers for care eligibility and estimated need, income level, as well as children served and percentage of need met. The dashboard board includes filters by age group of children served, but does not include slot type regarding part day, school day, and working day.<sup>68</sup></p>
<p><b>5. Preventing child abuse and neglect</b></p>
<p><b>2021 Recommendation   Theory of Change:</b> In July 2022, DCYF presented to the DCYF Oversight Board on their prevention strategies across the agency, as well as explaining the agency’s theory of change and logic for its goal setting.</p>
<p><b>2021 Recommendation   Outcome Data Reporting for Prevention Services:</b> With a more extensive and thorough prevention theory of change developed, the agency has begun collecting preliminary data on prevention programs and services to illustrate effectiveness and where resources and expansion are needed.</p>
<p><b>6. Reducing the number of children entering out-of-home care</b></p>
<p><b>2021 Recommendation   Rationale for 50% Reduction Goal:</b> DCYF presented the logical model and rationale for why the agency identified its 50% reduction goal for reducing children in out-of-home care. That explanation is described under <b>DCYF’s Theory of Change &amp; Goal Setting</b> on page 21.</p>
<p><b>2021 Recommendation   Understanding Impact of Reduced CPS Referrals:</b> In a commitment to safely reduce the number of children in out-of-home care, and to fully understand the decrease in CPS referrals that occurred at the onset of the pandemic, DCYF has been continually monitoring <a href="#">Child Welfare and Health Service Trends in Washington State: Monitoring Child Protective Services Intakes and Medical Visits During the COVID-19 Pandemic</a>.</p>
<p><b>7. Reducing length of stay for youth in out of home care</b></p>
<p><b>2021 Recommendation   Oversight on Potential Collateral Consequences of Adopted Strategies:</b> The DCYF Oversight Board has been monitoring these data trends in partnership with DCYF to ensure advances in one area of focus do not lead to reduced performance in others. The continual progress in <b>reducing the number of children in out-of-home care</b> (pages 23) reflects that children and youth with short stays in out-of-home care, are receiving necessary services to safely remain with their families and avoid removal. The remaining children and youth in out-of-home care reflect cases with greater needs and corresponding longer stays in care. The result is an increase in length of stay for those children and youth in out-of-home care.</p>
<p><b>2021 Recommendation   Develop Useful LOS Measure:</b> The DCYF Oversight Board recommended that DCYF explore means to measure LOS in a manner more useful for informing policy and practice to achieve permanency outcomes. The current measure is difficult to understand and lacks practical application for improving practice. In 2022, DCYF stated the agency can provide median LOS in out-of-home care disaggregated by race/ethnicity. Although helpful to understand which children and youth experience longer stays in out-of-home care, the Oversight Board would still like the agency to work to develop a measure that can meaningfully be understood by the public and lawmakers regarding what children and youth experience while placed in out-of-home care.</p>
<p><b>8. Reducing maltreatment of youth while in out-of-home care</b></p>
<p>2021 Recommendation re-emphasized in 2022 report.</p>

<sup>68</sup> DCYF. (2022). *Child Care Need and Supply Data Dashboard*. <https://www.dcyf.wa.gov/practice/oiaa/reports/early-learning-dashboards/child-care-need-supply-data>

<p><b>9. Licensing more foster homes than there are children in foster care</b></p> <p><b>2021 Recommendation   Continued Oversight on Use of Exceptional Placements:</b> Beginning in summer of 2021 and continuing into 2022, the DCYF Oversight Board has kept close oversight over trends in the agency’s use of exceptional placements. DCYF has identified gaps in the continuum of placement options that are not appropriate to serve all youth experiencing exceptional placements. DCYF developed a plan that requires additional resources to increase rates for foster homes providing more therapeutic environments to youth needing specific behavioral health treatment, as well as to develop additional placement types to meet the needs of youth.</p>
<p><b>10. Reducing the number of children that reenter out-of-home care within 12 months</b></p> <p><b>2021 Recommendation   Explore Revising Performance Measure:</b> After further discussion with DCYF, it was determined that the standard method of measuring re-entry into care rates is the most useful methodology to assess performance across the agency. The agency does track re-entry rates by region and utilizes this information to identify when trends indicate differences in use of the safety framework between regions. The agency is also currently redesigning the Family Practice Model through a co-design process, to ensure standardization is use across the state.</p>
<p><b>11. Increasing the stability of placements for children in out-of-home care</b></p> <p><b>2021 Recommendation   Develop Appropriate Placement Options:</b> Through thorough analysis on the characteristics and needs of youth who have experienced exceptional placements, as well as the gaps in the placement continuum to appropriately serve these youth, DCYF has prioritized addressing this issue by allocating staff and resources through 2022. Additional resources are needed and have been identified by the agency. Continued work and prioritization is required to achieve improved outcomes for this population.</p> <p><b>2021 Recommendation   Detailed Reporting on Placement Type:</b> The complexities presented by finding appropriate sustainable placement for youth in care requires a deeper review of the subgroup data representing the entire population of youth in care. In 2022, DCYF now can report on <i>the rate of placement moves per 100 days in care disaggregated by placement type</i>.</p>
<p><b>12. Developing strategies to demonstrate to foster families that their service and involvement is highly valued by the department, as demonstrated by the development of strategies to consult with foster families regarding future placement of a foster child currently placed with a foster family</b></p> <p><b>2021 Recommendation   Detailed Reporting on Race &amp; Ethnicity:</b> The DCYF Oversight Board acknowledges that the race and ethnicity of caregivers who have taken the survey is publicly available in the appendices of the annual survey report. The Board urges DCYF to continue to make targeted efforts at recruiting a diverse pool of foster caregivers and continue to prioritize the agency’s efforts to license and support kinship caregivers.</p>
<p><b>13. Increasing family reunification by increasing number of youth who are reunified with their family of origin</b></p> <p>2021 Recommendation re-emphasized in 2022 report.</p>
<p><b>14. In collaboration with county juvenile justice programs, improving adolescent outcomes including reducing multisystem involvement and homelessness; increasing school graduation rates and successful transitions to adulthood for youth involved in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems</b></p> <p><b>2021 Recommendation   Investments into Data Systems &amp; Outcome Measure Development:</b> The DCYF Oversight Board encouraged further investments in the cross-divisional systems and development of outcome measures in adolescent outcomes to lead to greater transparency on the agency’s performance. Further development of integrated adolescent outcome measures is needed,</p>

<p>but the Board recognizes the agency’s reasoning for delaying the CCWIS system. DCYF is seeking resources to conduct a feasibility study to ensure effective and smooth implementation of the new data system in reflection of lessons learned from other states.</p>
<p><b>15. Reducing future demand for mental health and substance use disorder treatment for youth involved in child welfare and juvenile justice</b></p>
<p>2021 Recommendation re-emphasized and refined in 2022 report.</p>
<p><b>16. An increase in the number of youth who successfully complete the terms of diversion or alternative sentencing options</b></p>
<p>2021 Recommendation re-emphasized and refined in 2022 report.</p>
<p><b>17. A decrease in the number of youth and young adults who commit subsequent crimes</b></p>
<p>No 2021 recommendations made due to lagged data reflective of performance prior to the establishment of JR at DCYF.</p>
<p><b>18. Eliminating the discharge of unaccompanied youth from institutional settings into homelessness</b></p>
<p><b>2021 Recommendation   Real-Time Data on Housing Status upon Discharge:</b> As established in the passage of 2SHB 1905, data and recommendations on the rapid response team – responsible for appropriately responding to youth and young adults exiting a publicly funded system of care – will be available by November 1, 2023 and shall include the availability and frequency of real-time data on the housing status of youth exiting publicly funded systems of care.</p>