

# Department of Children, Youth, and Families Oversight Board 2024 Annual Report

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DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN, YOUTH, AND FAMILIES  
OVERSIGHT BOARD

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## Executive Summary

The Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) was created by the Washington State Legislature in 2017 to oversee a continuum of care designed to achieve eighteen priority outcomes focused on the well-being of Washington’s children and families. This report, prepared by the DCYF Oversight Board, evaluates the agency’s performance across these outcomes, which span early learning, child welfare, and juvenile rehabilitation.

**Supporting the workforce.** The DCYF Oversight Board recognizes the critical role of DCYF’s workforce in achieving better outcomes for children and families across the agency’s continuum of care. The Board continues to urge DCYF leadership to take responsibility for the challenges faced by staff, including the trauma, demands, and lack of support they experience while managing complex workloads, particularly during critical incidents. The Board reaffirms its call for the development and implementation of an action plan—designed and driven by the workforce—that prioritizes the well-being of staff.

**Assessing disproportionality and disparities.** Aligned with the Board’s [Statement on the Call for Racial Justice](#), this report examines racial and ethnic disparities, as well as disproportionality indexes for outcome measures where data are available. This emphasis reflects DCYF’s strategic priority to eliminate racial disproportionality and advance racial equity.

### Outcomes

DCYF assumed full child welfare authority and responsibilities in July 2018 and began overseeing Juvenile Rehabilitation and the Office of Juvenile Justice in July 2019. As a result, data are presented starting in 2017 when possible, reflecting the year before the agency became fully operational. The report analyzes changes in the most recent years of data for eighteen DCYF outcomes. Of these, **six** showed improvement, **six** need improvement, **five** had mixed results (with both improvements and declines in performance indicators), and **one** showed no change. Please note that each of the eighteen outcomes may have multiple performance indicators. The ratings for the individual indicators that make up the 18 outcomes are shown in Table 1 (page 5). The ratings below specifically reflect changes in the overall outcomes for the most recent years with available data.<sup>1</sup>

#### DCYF achieved improvements for:

- Increasing the number and proportion of children kindergarten-ready as measured by the Washington kindergarten inventory of developing skills (WaKIDS) assessment
- Reducing the number of children entering out-of-home care
- Reducing the length of stay in out-of-home care
- Licensing more foster homes than there are children in foster care
- Increasing stability of placements for children in out-of-home care
- Reducing the discharge of youth from institutional settings (i.e., foster care, juvenile rehabilitation, and residential behavioral health) into homelessness

#### This report indicates that improvements are needed for:

- Increasing the available supply of licensed childcare in childcare centers and family homes, including providers not receiving subsidies
- Reducing child and youth maltreatment while in out-of-home care
- Reducing the number of children re-entering out-of-home care within twelve months

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<sup>1</sup> Overall outcome ratings are based on the ratings of individual performance indicators from the two most recent years of available data. If an indicator(s) was rated as “improved,” the overall outcome was rated as “improved.” If an indicator(s) was rated as “needs improvement,” the overall outcome was rated as “needs improvement.” A “mixed” rating means some indicators showed “improved,” “needs improvement,” or “no change” statuses.

- Increasing family reunification
- Reducing future demand for mental health and substance use disorder treatment for youth involved in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems
- Decreasing the number of youth who commit subsequent crimes after exiting juvenile rehabilitation

**Mixed findings were detected for:**

- Reducing racial and ethnic disproportionality and disparities in system involvement across child and youth outcomes in collaboration with other state agencies
- Preventing child abuse and neglect
- Developing strategies to show foster parents and kinship care families that their service and involvement are valued by DCYF
- Collaborating with county juvenile justice programs to improve adolescent outcomes
- Increasing the number of youth who successfully complete diversion programs or alternative sentencing options in collaboration with county juvenile justice programs

Between 2023 and 2024, there was **virtually no change** in the proportion of providers in early learning programs who achieved a Level 3 or higher on the Early Achievers quality standard. **Table 1** (page 5) provides a summary of the **change in performance indicators** at the individual level by the most recent years for which data were available.

**Considerations for Reviewing Ratings**

When reviewing the ratings, it’s important to remember that we may not have full context for the changes taking place. For example, while the data show a decrease in the number of children entering out-of-home care in recent years, this could reflect improvements in family support services, prevention efforts, or changes in child welfare policy. However, it’s also crucial to consider whether this trend is leading to better long-term outcomes for children and families, or whether it might signal challenges in identifying and addressing child safety concerns early enough. Given this, “improved” ratings in the report are presented with an understanding of this broader context, where appropriate.

**Long-term DCYF Successes**

In October, Secretary Ross Hunter announced that he would not seek reappointment in the next gubernatorial administration. The Board would like to acknowledge the achievements under his leadership that have occurred since the agency’s creation.

- **Kinship care and placement support.** DCYF implemented a kin-first culture, increasing kinship placements from 46% in 2017 to nearly 60% in 2024. Caregiver payments were significantly increased, and a multi-level support model was created to meet children’s needs.
- **Child welfare improvements.** Caseloads for child welfare workers were reduced, and the number of children in out-of-home care dropped by nearly half, from 9,171 in 2018 to 4,998 in 2024, the lowest since the 1980s. Out-of-state group home placements were reduced from 78 in 2017 to fewer than 10 in 2024.
- **Juvenile rehabilitation.** Less restrictive options for juvenile rehabilitation were expanded, including Community Transition Services, and the Adolescent Transitional Living Program was launched to better support youth aging out of foster care.
- **Child care access.** DCYF increased the number of subsidy-eligible providers and expanded access to affordable child care, raising the number of licensed providers from 4,740 in 2017 to 6,072 in 2024.
- **Racial equity.** The agency formed a Racial Equity Change Team and equity-focused advisory groups to guide its work.

These successes reflect the agency’s ongoing commitment to improving outcomes for children and families across Washington State, with a focus on enhancing support for caregivers, reducing reliance on out-of-home placements, increasing access to child care, and advancing racial equity within its services.

### **Acknowledgements**

The Board is grateful to Catherine M. Wilson, PhD, from the DCYF Office of Innovation, Alignment, and Accountability, for her thoughtful assistance with data collection. We also acknowledge Catherine Roller White, MA, for her exceptional help with data collection, interpretation, and visualization. Lastly, we would like to recognize Crista Johnson, the Board’s former Executive Director, for her contributions, dedication, and leadership.

## **DCYF Oversight Board Background**

The Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) was established in 2017 through the passage of [HB 1661](#). DCYF currently 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). This restructuring aimed to improve how the state serves children, youth, and families by providing a more integrated continuum of care, with the goal of achieving better outcomes across Washington’s communities.

[HB 1661](#) also created the DCYF Oversight Board as an independent body responsible for monitoring the department’s performance. The Board ensures that DCYF achieves the outcomes outlined in the legislation and complies with relevant statutes, rules, and policies related to early learning, juvenile rehabilitation, juvenile justice, and children and family services ([RCW 43.216.015](#)). A list of Board members is available in [Appendix A](#).

**Honoring DCYF Oversight Board Members’ Service.** Since the 2022 Annual Report, four board members have completed their four-year terms of service. We would like to express our gratitude to these individuals for their contributions: **Sydney Forrester**, the Governor’s Office representative, **Loni Greninger**, the tribal representative from the west of the Cascade Mountains, **Charles Loeffler**, the child welfare caseworker representative, and **Shrounda Selivanoff**, the parent stakeholder group representative and former Board Co-chair. Their expertise and dedication were invaluable to the Board, and their absence has been deeply felt.

Table 1. Change in Performance Indicators by the Most Recent Years for which Data were Available

Outcomes and Performance Indicators	Change Status	Years
<b>1. Increase the number and proportion of children kindergarten ready as measured by the Washington kindergarten inventory of developing skills (WaKids) assessment</b>		
Percentage of students entered kindergarten ready in all six areas of development and learning by school year	Improved ↑	2022-2023 2023-2024
Students are kindergarten ready in all six domains by race and ethnicity by school year	Improved ↑	2022-2023 2023-2024
<b>2. Increase the proportion of children in early learning programs that have achieved the level 3 or higher early achievers quality standard</b>		
Estimated number and percent of children served by all types of providers, by quality and SFY <sup>2</sup>	No Change →	2023-2024
<b>3. Increase the available supply of licensed childcare in childcare centers and family homes, including providers not receiving subsidies</b>		
Number of licensed childcare providers, by type, SFY	Needs Improvement ↓	2022-2023
<b>4. Prevent child abuse and neglect</b>		
Number and percent of screened-in CPS intakes by type	Improved ↑	2022-2023
Percentage of families who had their Family Voluntary Services case closed that experienced a subsequent screened-in CPS intake or placement of one or more children, SFY	No Change →	2021-2022
<b>5. Reduce the number of children entering out-of-home care</b>		
Number of children entering out-of-home care, SFY	Improved ↑	2023-2024
Number of children in out-of-home care, SFY	Improved ↑	2023-2024
Percentage of children in care by race/ethnicity, last day of SFY	No change →	2023-2024
<b>6. Reduce the Length of Stay in out-of-home care</b>		
Median length of stay in out-of-home care, SFY	Improved ↑	2021-2022
<b>7. Reduce maltreatment of youth while in out-of-home care</b>		
Rate of victimization of children in out-of-home care per 100,000 days in care	No Change →	2022-2023

<sup>2</sup> State Fiscal Year (SFY).

Outcomes and Performance Indicators		Change Status	Years
<b>8. License more foster homes than there are children in foster care</b>			
Bed-to-child ratio, last day of SFY, by region and overall		Improved ↑	2023-2024
<b>9. Reduce the number of children re-entering out-of-home care within twelve months</b>			
Percentage of children who re-enter care within 12 months of exit, SFY		Needs Improvement ↓	2022-2023
<b>10. Increase stability of placements for children in out-of-home care</b>			
Rate of placement moves per 1,000 days in care		Improved ↑	2022-2023
Relative placement, SFY		Improved ↑	2023-2024
Total count of placement exceptions - individual night stays - per year		Improved ↑	2023-2024
<b>11. Develop strategies to show foster parents and kinship care families that their service and involvement are valued by DCYF</b>			
Foster parents and kinship care families are valued by DCYF and consulted with on future child placements	Foster parent:	Needs Improvement ↓	2022-2023
	Kinship caregiver:	Improved ↑	
<b>12. Increase family reunification, as measured by the number of youths reunified with their family of origin</b>			
Percentage of total exits that are reunifications each year, SFY		Needs Improvement ↓	2023-2024
Percent and number of children reunified annually, by racial/ethnic group, SFY		Needs Improvement ↓	2023-2024
<b>13. Collaborate with county juvenile justice programs to improve adolescent outcomes including ...</b>			
Percentage of foster care and JR <sup>3</sup> youth and young adults who were homeless 12 months after system exit		Mixed →	2021-2022
Four-year graduation rates for youth in child welfare by school year		No Change →	2021-2022 2022-0223
Four-year graduation rates for JR students enrolled in institutional education at Echo Glen Children's Center and Green Hill School by school year		Needs Improvement	2021-2022 2022-2023

<sup>3</sup> Juvenile Rehabilitation (JR).

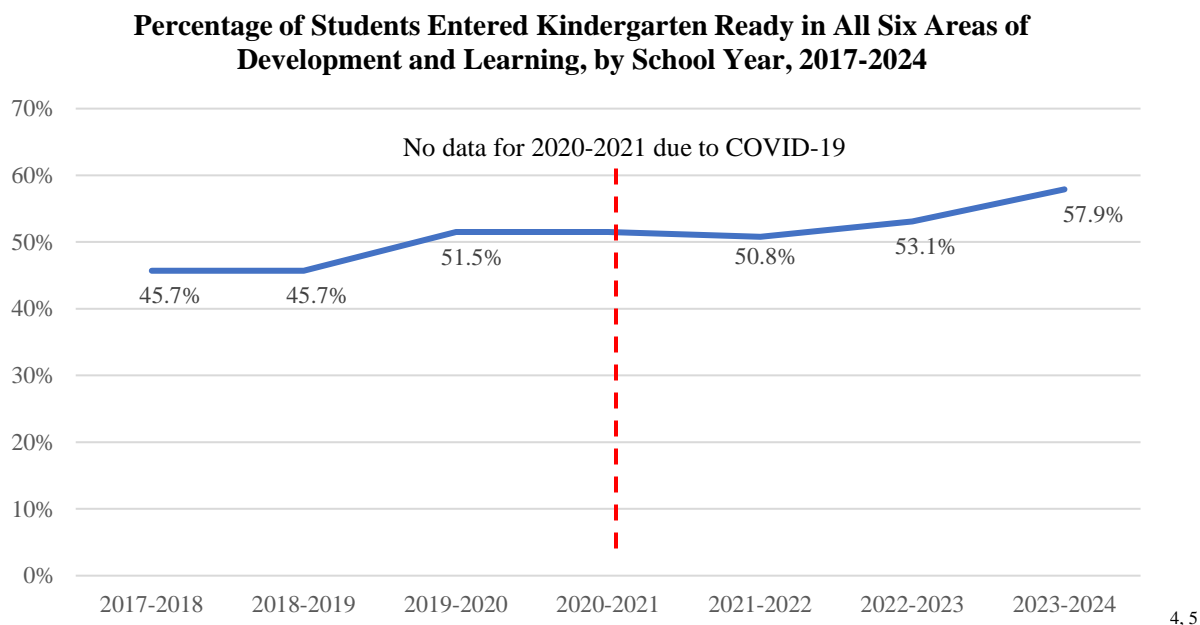
Outcomes and Performance Indicators	Change Status	Years
	↓	
Percentage of young adults ages 18 and older released from JR residential facilities who find employment within one-year-post release, SFY	Needs Improvement ↓	2021-2022
<b>14. Reduce future demand for mental health and substance use disorder treatment for youth involved in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems</b>		
Average number of Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) individual sessions and skills groups attended per month by JR facilities residents, by race/ethnicity, SFY	Needs Improvement ↓	2024
Average number of Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) skills groups attended per month by JR facilities residents, by race/ethnicity, SFY	Needs Improvement ↓	2023-2024
Treatment rate for Medicaid-enrolled children and youth in foster care with mental health or substance abuse treatment need	No Change →	2020-2021
<b>15. Increase the number of youth who successfully complete diversion or alternative sentencing options in collaboration with county juvenile justice programs</b>		
Initiated disposition alternatives	Mixed →	2023-2024
Evidence-based program starts for Juvenile Justice-Involved Youth, SFY	Improved ↑	2023-2024
Successful completes of evidence-based programs among Juvenile Justice-Involved Youth	Mixed →	2023-2024
<b>16. Decrease the number of youth who commit subsequent crimes after exiting juvenile rehabilitation</b>		
Recidivism rates for residential releases by year	Needs Improvement ↓	2020-2021
<b>17. Eliminate the discharge of youth from institutional settings into homelessness</b>		
Percent of youth exiting systems of care who experience homelessness within 12 months of exit	Improved ↑	2020-2021
<b>18. Eliminate racial and ethnic disproportionality and disparities in system involvement across child and youth outcomes in collaboration with other state agencies</b>		
30-day rate of room confinement/isolation in JR by race/ethnicity, SFY	Mixed →	2023-2024
Racial/ethnic disparity ratios for community facility placement in JR, SFY	Mixed →	2023-2024
Racial/ethnic disparity ratios for discretionary parole placement, SFY	Mixed →	2023-2024



# 1. Increase the number and proportion of children kindergarten ready as measured by WA kindergarten inventory of developing skills (WaKIDS) assessment

**Overall Outcome: Improved**

**SY22-23 and SY23-24 Performance Indicator: Improved**



**Background.** Students are considered ready when they demonstrate readiness in all six areas of development and learning. These include cognitive, language, literacy, math, physical, and social-emotional readiness.

**Findings.** Between the 2022-2023 and the 2023-2024 school years, the percentage of entering kindergarteners ready in all six WaKIDS areas increased from 53.1% to 57.9%. This is the highest rate of kindergarten readiness in the last decade.

**Summary.** There has been a steady increase in the percentage of students considered “kindergarten ready” over time. This upward trend suggests growth in early childhood development and preparedness for school, with more students meeting the benchmarks for readiness each year.

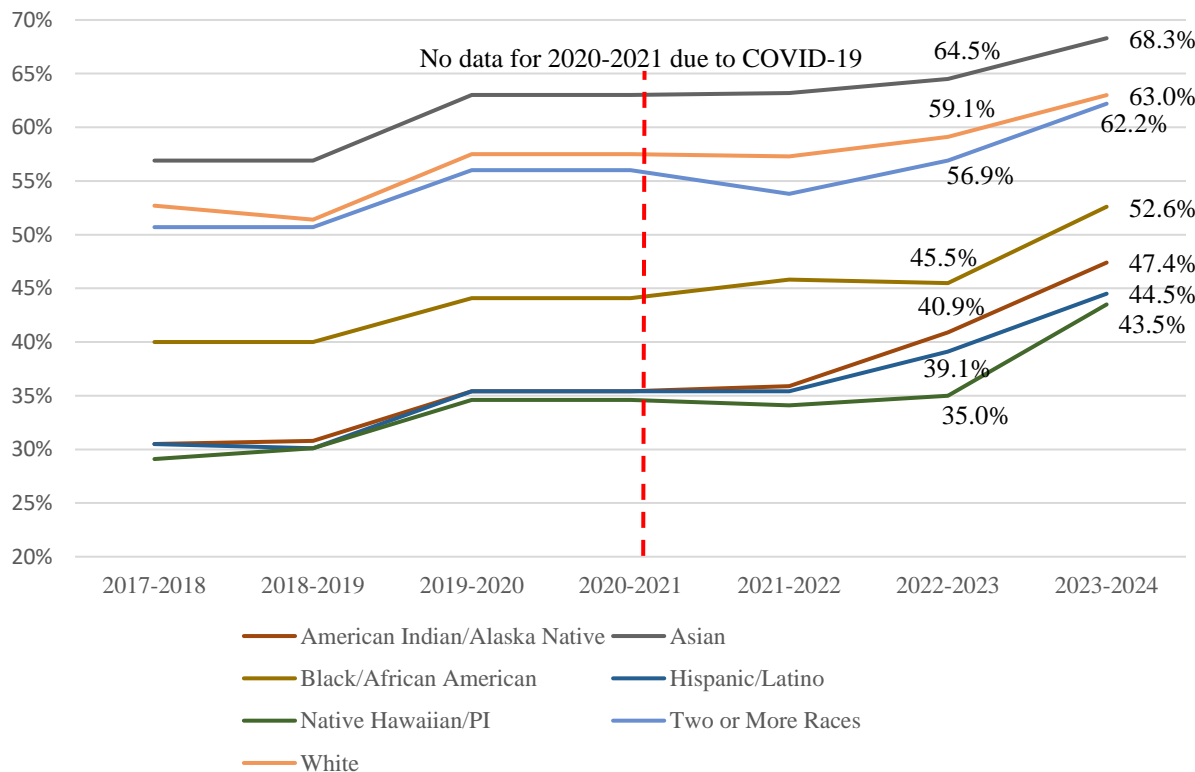
**Recommendations.** To maintain and build upon recent progress, it is crucial to sustain and potentially expand educational policies and early childhood programs that have contributed to these improvements, ensuring continued support for students' development across all six areas. Although the trend is positive, over 40% of students did not meet all six developmental areas. Targeted interventions should be implemented for students who may be lagging in specific areas, particularly in schools or districts where readiness rates are lower.

<sup>4</sup> Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (2024). WaKIDS report card. Washington Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills (WaKIDS) [2024]. <https://reportcard.ospi.k12.wa.us/ReportCard/ViewSchoolOrDistrict/103300>

<sup>5</sup> <https://dcyf.wa.gov/practice/oiaa/reports/early-learning-dashboards/early-achievers-data-dashboard>

**SY22-23 and SY23-24 Performance Indicator: Improved**

**Students Kindergarten Ready in All Six Domains by Race and Ethnicity, by School Year 2017-2024**



6.7

Note: Hispanic/Latino individuals may be of any race.

**Background.** Students are considered ready when they demonstrate readiness in all six areas of development and learning. Although these data come from the Washington State Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, results for certain racial/ethnic groups should be interpreted with caution due to the small number of children in these groups.

**Findings.** Between the 2022-2023 and the 2023-2024 school years, the number of entering kindergarteners ready in all six WaKIDS domains increased for every race and ethnicity. The highest gains were for Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander students (8.5% increase), followed by Black/African American students (7.1%), and American Indian/ Alaska Native students (6.5%). At the same time, disparities in readiness exist between students who are Asian, White, or Two or More Races and their peers who are Black/African American, American Indian/Alaska Native, Hispanic/Latino, or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander.

**Summary.** Most racial/ethnic groups had steady increases in kindergarten readiness, particularly Asian (3.8%), Two or More Races (5.3%), and White (3.9%) students by 2023-2024. American Indian/Alaska Native and Hispanic/Latino groups showed notable improvement from 2017-2018, with readiness rates of

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.dcyf.wa.gov/practice/oiaa/agency-performance/racial-equity>

<sup>7</sup> Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (2024). WaKIDS report card. Washington Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills (WaKIDS) [2024]. <https://reportcard.ospi.k12.wa.us/ReportCard/ViewSchoolOrDistrict/103300>

32.1% and 32.3%, respectively. Despite improvements disparities persist. Groups like Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (43.5%) and American Indian/Alaska Native (47.4%) still have the lowest readiness rates, while Asian (68.3%) and White (63.0%) students are more likely to be kindergarten ready.

### **Recommendations**

- Although many groups showed improvements in kindergarten readiness, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, American Indian/Alaska Native, and Hispanic/Latino students continue to face disparities in readiness. Focused interventions and targeted support should be implemented for these groups to address the remaining gaps.
- The increases in readiness for Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (8.5%), Black/African American (7.1%), and American Indian/Alaska Native (6.5%) students suggest that specific strategies may be helping these groups. Successful practices should be identified and scaled to other underrepresented groups to boost their readiness.

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

**Overall Outcome: No Change**

**2023-2024 Performance Indicator: No Change**

### Estimated Number and Percent of Children Served by All Types of Providers, by Quality and State Fiscal Year<sup>8</sup>

Rating	2023		2024	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Not yet rated	102,940	57.5%	108,000	59.0%
Under 3 rating	2,614	1.5%	2,433	1.3%
Rating 3 and Above	73,625	41.1%	72,596	39.7%
Total	179,179	57.5%	183,029	59.0%

Note: Early Achievers is Washington state’s Quality Recognition and Improvement System. It uses a rating system to track growth in quality improvement of participating early care and education providers. At Levels 1 and 2, providers are “participating in quality improvement” through training and activities. Facilities that are rated at Levels 3 to 5 have achieved a “quality level of excellence.”

**Background.** DCYF developed a way to estimate the number of children served through its new Early Learning Data Store (ELDS) 2.0 system. This new way of measuring this information does not contain data prior to 2023.

#### Findings

- **Increase in children being served by unrated providers:** There was a small increase (57.5% to 59%) in the percentage of children being served by providers who have not yet been rated for quality.
- **Slight decrease in children attending care rated as high quality:** The percentage of children served by providers with a quality rating of 3 or above slightly decreased (41.1% to 39.7%)
- **Slight decline in the number of children attending lower-rated care:** The percentage of children served by providers rated below 3 decreased very slightly (1.5% to 1.3%).

**Summary.** The data suggests that (a) just over half of children were attending unrated programs, (b) there is a small shift away from both lower-rated and higher-rated providers and (c) a slight increase in children attending unrated programs.

#### Recommendations

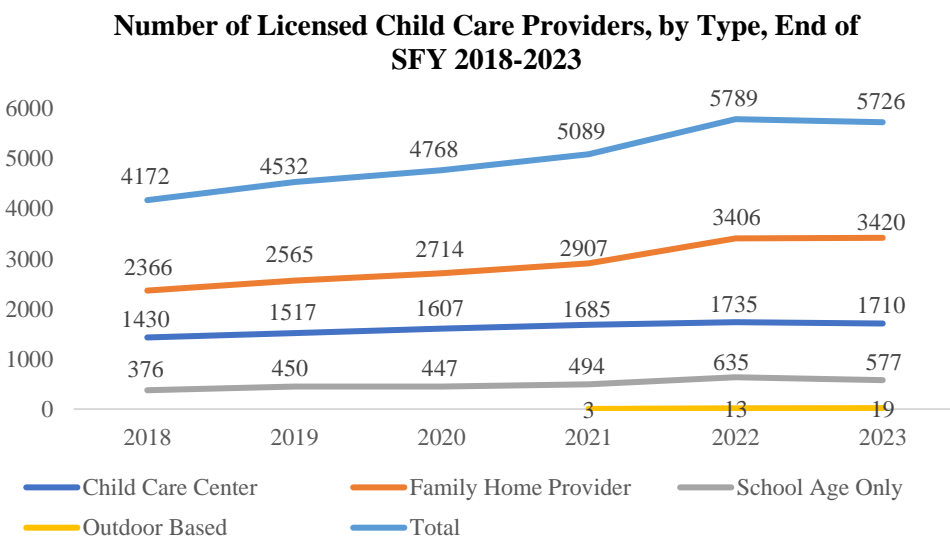
- With just over half of children attending unrated programs (59%), it is crucial to prioritize the evaluation and rating of these providers. Accelerating the process of rating providers will help ensure that more children are attending programs with recognized quality standards.
- Given the higher percentage of children served by unrated providers, targeted outreach efforts to families, especially those in underserved communities, could help raise awareness about the importance of high-quality care. Additionally, support should be offered to help families navigate available provider options, thereby promoting access to higher-rated providers.

<sup>8</sup> DCYF. (October 2024). Early Learning Data Store 2.0 (ELDS 2.0) [June 2022-June 2024].

### 3. Increase the available supply of licensed childcare in both childcare centers and family homes, including providers not receiving state subsidies

**Overall Outcome: Needs Improvement**

**2022-2023 Performance Indicator: Needs Improvement**



9

**Background.** DCYF reports on the licensed capacity of child care providers and the number of licensed child care providers annually.

**Findings.** After increasing steadily since 2018, the number of licensed child care providers fell slightly between 2022 and 2023 from 5,789 to 5,726. This was primarily due to a decrease in the number of licensed providers serving school age children only, from 635 in 2022 to 577 in 2023, a decrease of 58 providers. Between 2022 and 2023, the number of family home providers increased by 14 providers, the number of child care centers decreased by 25 providers, and the number of outdoor-based programs increased by six providers.

**Licensed Capacity of Child Care Providers, by Type, End of SFY 2018-2023<sup>10</sup>**

Provider Type	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Child Care Center	108,526	113,794	119,790	124,052	126,706	126,512
Family Home	24,612	26,659	28,175	29,870	33,727	33,382
School Age Only	23,953	28,346	28,666	30,892	37,550	33,846
Outdoor Based	0	0	0	48	294	358
<b>Total</b>	<b>157,091</b>	<b>168,799</b>	<b>176,631</b>	<b>184,862</b>	<b>198,277</b>	<b>194,098</b>

<sup>9</sup> DCYF. (November 2023). [July 31, 2023]. Wacompass. Available at <https://www.dcyf.wa.gov/practice/oiaa/agency-performance/early-start-act>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.dcyf.wa.gov/practice/oiaa/agency-performance/early-start-act>

As the number of licensed child care providers has increased, the statewide capacity has also increased, from capacity for 157,091 children in 2018 to capacity for 198,277 in 2022, decreasing slightly to 194,098 children in 2023. Note that these numbers reflect the maximum number of children that a licensee is authorized to have on the child care premises at any one time, not a measure of the number of children a provider intends to serve.

### **Recommendations**

- Investigate the reasons behind the decrease in the number of child care centers, particularly the drop of 25 providers. This may involve gathering feedback from current and former child care center operators to understand the challenges they face, such as financial sustainability, staffing shortages, or changing regulations.
  
- Utilize data on the number of licensed providers and capacity to guide future investments, policy decisions, and strategic planning. A deeper analysis of regional variations, provider types, and specific barriers faced by different racial and ethnic groups could help tailor support and create targeted solutions. Data-driven decisions such as these would help allocate resources efficiently and respond to specific needs within the child care sector, ensuring that policy and funding efforts are aligned with actual trends and challenges.

## 4. Prevent child abuse and neglect

**Overall Outcome: Mixed**

**2022-2023 Performance Indicator: Improved**

**Number and Percent of Screened-In CPS Intakes by Type, 2019-2023<sup>11</sup>**

Intake Type	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
<b>Total screened in for</b>					
Intakes <sup>12</sup>	128,695	105,080	115,246	122,818	132,471
CPS Response	46,624 (36%)	37,923 (36%)	42,301 (37%)	43,018 (35%)	42,805 (32%)
CPS Investigation	16,426 (13%)	13,932 (13%)	15,598 (14%)	15,369 (13%)	15,132 (11%)
CPS Risk Only	6,252 (5%)	5,790 (6%)	6,410 (16%)	5,822 (5%)	5,023 (4%)
CPS Family Assessment Response (FAR)	21,452 (17%)	16,475 (16%)	18,434 (16%)	19,916 (16%)	20,459 (15%)
Licensing Division (LD) Investigation-Risk Only	2,493 (2%)	1,724 (2%)	1,859 (2%)	1,909 (2%)	2,191 (2%)

Note: These numbers are not de-duplicated. See [https://www.dcyf.wa.gov/sites/default/files/pubs/CWP\\_0113.pdf](https://www.dcyf.wa.gov/sites/default/files/pubs/CWP_0113.pdf) for definitions of some of these terms.

**Background.** In 2022 the Washington State Legislature passed [E2SHB 1227](#) - the Keeping Families Together Act. The act made several changes to RCW 13.34, the Juvenile Court Act, regarding child dependency cases creating a higher threshold for state intervention. It increased the standard for the court to order that a child be removed from the home at a shelter care hearing. The evidence for **imminent risk of physical harm** must now show a causal relationship between conditions in the home and the threat of harm.<sup>13</sup>

### Findings

- **Total Screened-In Intakes.** This category represents the total number of new intakes. These intakes are either screened out and completed or screened in and processed into something else (e.g., investigation, placement). However, they only remain classified as “intakes” for a moment. Intakes can be viewed in terms of the number of calls or the number of reports received. Overall, the total number of screened-in CPS intakes increased from 128,695 in 2019 to 132,471 in 2023, suggesting that the CPS intake volume is rising.
- **CPS Response.** This category refers to the total number of intakes where a CPS response was required. Specifically, it includes all the CPS responses: Investigations, Risk Only, FAR, and LD cases. Although the number increased over time, the percentage of screened-in intakes requiring a CPS response decreased. In 2019, **36%** of all intakes required a CPS response, but by 2023, this decreased to **32%**. This suggests that while more intakes are being screened in overall, the proportion of those receiving a full CPS response declined slightly.

<sup>11</sup> DCYF. (October 2024). *Intakes by category and decision type* [July 2023-June 2024]. OIAA Reporting Portal.

<sup>12</sup> The “Intakes” row includes all intakes, both screened-in and screened-out, without duplication. DCYF does not screen in a large number of intakes. Although the total number of intakes has increased, the data in other rows show that the number of screened-in intakes varies by category, with some trends going up and others going down. Additionally, though this is not shown in the table, DCYF has had an overall increase in intakes, but a modest decrease in the number of unique children represented in those intakes. Stated differently, they are receiving more calls, but for somewhat fewer children.

<sup>13</sup> <https://dcyf.wa.gov/practice/practice-improvement/EB-1227>

- **CPS Investigation.** The number of investigations stayed relatively stable over time (dropping during the start of the COVID-19 pandemic), but the percentage of total intakes that resulted in an investigation declined from **13%** in 2019 to **11%** in 2023.
- **CPS Risk Only.** This category indicates that while not all sufficiency screening criteria were met, the information provided suggests that the child is at imminent risk of serious harm, but no maltreatment occurred. Risk-Only is a similar response to an investigation, but unlike an investigation, no findings are produced. The number of cases decreased from 6,252 in 2019 to 5,023 in 2023. The percentage of total cases decreased from **5%** in 2022 to **4%** in 2023.
- **CPS Family Assessment Response (FAR).** This category includes cases where CPS provides a family assessment response rather than a full investigation. After dropping between 2019 and 2020 (likely due to the COVID-19 pandemic), the number of FAR cases increased between 2020 and 2023. The percentage of total intakes that lead to FAR remained relatively stable, dropping slightly from **17%** to **15%** over the five years.
- **Licensing Division Investigation-Risk Only.** This refers to allegations in a Licensing Division facility that indicate imminent risk of harm but no maltreatment (all sufficiency screening criteria were not met). The percentage stayed about the same (around **2%**) across all five years.
- **Between 2022 and 2023,** there was a **3%** decrease for the number of CPS Responses, a **2%** decrease for CPS Investigations, a **1%** decrease CPS FAR, and **no change** in Licensing Division Investigation-Risk Only.

**Summary.** The percentage of cases requiring a full CPS response or investigation declined over time. This could reflect a trend toward more targeted interventions like Family Assessment Response where CPS provides a family assessment response rather than a full investigation.

**2021-2022 Performance Indicator:** No Change

**Percentage of Families who Had their Family Voluntary Services Case Closed that Experienced a Subsequent Screened-in CPS Intake or Placement of One or More Children<sup>14, 15</sup>**

State Fiscal Year	WA State Performance
2018	31.1%
2019	27.7%
2020	28.9%
2021	33.4%
2022	32.8%

**Background.** Family Voluntary Services (FVS) allows parents to voluntarily engage in services to increase their protective capacities and meet children’s safety, health and well-being needs. The desired state performance according to the Annual Progress and Services Report is 20% or less. This measure is lagged by 18 months to allow for the 12-month re-referral period, data stabilization, and data analysis and reporting.

**Findings.** There was a small decrease (< 1%) from 2021 to 2022. These results suggest that, while there was only a very small fluctuation, there may be some concern about continued child welfare involvement after FVS case closure. This increase may suggest that certain factors—such as the social and economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020—may have influenced the outcomes for these families, leading to a higher percentage of families requiring CPS intervention after FVS closure.

<sup>14</sup> Johnson, C., & Colgan, N. (2022). 2022 Annual Report. <https://dcyfoversight.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2023-01/DCYF%20Oversight%20Board%202022%20Annual%20Legislative%20Report.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> DCYF. (October 2024). Child welfare priority performance measures [July 2021-June 2024]. OIAA Reporting Portal.



**Summary.** Overall, the data reflect a relatively stable but concerning trend of families requiring further CPS involvement after their FVS cases are closed.

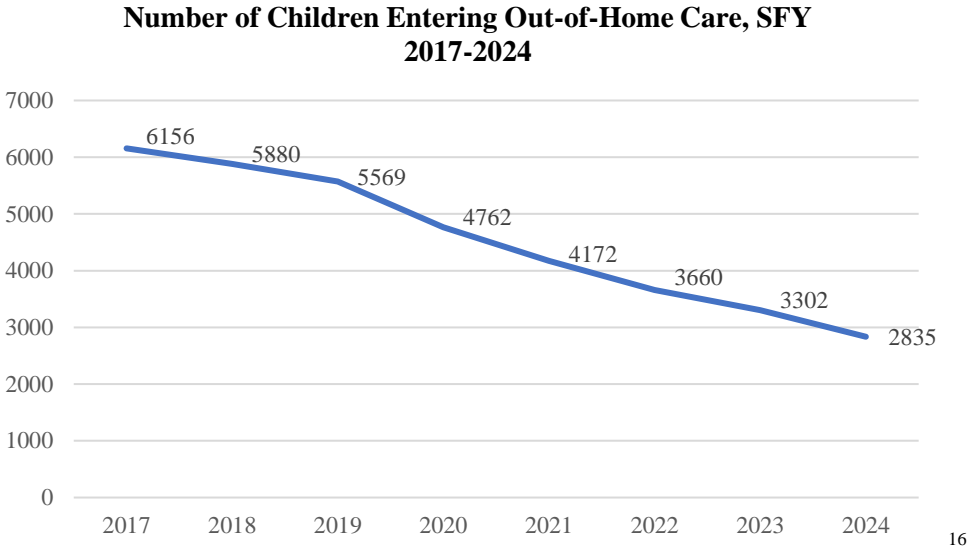
**Recommendations**

- Strengthen transition services and support for families nearing FVS case closure to reduce the likelihood of re-referral to CPS.
  
- Evaluate the implementation and effectiveness of current Family Voluntary Services and explore potential modifications to improve long-term outcomes for families after case closure.

## 5. Reduce the number of children entering out-of-home care

**Overall Outcome: Improved**

**2023-2024 Performance Indicator: Improved**



**Background.** Out-of-Home Care is defined as the number of children, both estimated and actual, aged 0-17 who are placed in out-of-home care on the last day of the state fiscal year and are under the placement and care authority of DCYF.<sup>17</sup>

**Findings.** Between 2017 and 2024, there was a steady decrease in the number of children entering out-of-home care from 2017 (6,156 children) to 2024 (2,835 children). The drop is substantial, with the number falling by over **50%**. From 2023 to 2024, the number of children entering out-of-home care decreased by 467 children, continuing the decline seen in previous years.

**Summary.** The data demonstrate a reduction in the number of children entering out-of-home care over the last several years, which may reflect improvements in family support services, prevention efforts, and possibly shifts in child welfare policy. However, it is important to understand the broader context, including whether this trend is leading to better long-term outcomes for children and families, or if it might indicate challenges in identifying and addressing child safety concerns early enough. To address the concern that the drop in children entering care may have contributed to an increase in fatalities and near fatalities, we reviewed OFCO’s 2024 Child Fatality and Near Fatality Report, which describes critical incidents (child fatalities and near fatalities) during the 2023 calendar year.<sup>18</sup> Critical incidents related to child maltreatment increased from 74 in 2022 to 102 in 2023. Of these critical incidents, 42 qualified for executive review<sup>19</sup> in 2022 and 49 qualified for executive review in 2023. OFCO’s report did not conclude that the increase in child fatalities and near fatalities was specifically due to fewer children

<sup>16</sup> DCYF. (October 2024). Out of home exits and entries [July 2023-June 2024]. OIAA Reporting Portal.

<sup>17</sup> [https://data.wa.gov/health/Children-in-out-of-home-care-single-point-in-time-/4g8r-4ydu/about\\_data](https://data.wa.gov/health/Children-in-out-of-home-care-single-point-in-time-/4g8r-4ydu/about_data)

<sup>18</sup> [https://ofco.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2024-10/2024\\_OFCO\\_Annual\\_Report.pdf](https://ofco.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2024-10/2024_OFCO_Annual_Report.pdf)

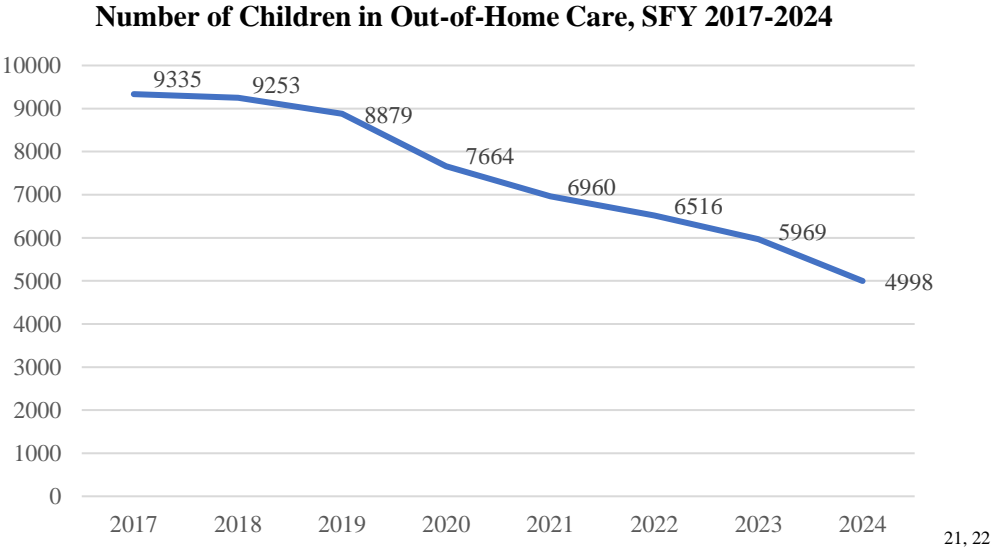
<sup>19</sup> DCYF conducts an Executive Child Fatality Review when the death of a child was suspected to be caused by abuse or neglect, and the child or child’s family received services from DCYF at the time of death, or in the preceding 12 months (see [https://ofco.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2023-09/2023\\_OFCO\\_Critical\\_Incident\\_Report\\_0.pdf](https://ofco.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2023-09/2023_OFCO_Critical_Incident_Report_0.pdf)).

being placed in state care. While this could be a factor, other issues, such as the fentanyl crisis are also driving the fatality incidents.<sup>20</sup>

**Recommendations**

- **Enhance Preventative Services and Early Interventions.** Given the steady decline in children entering out-of-home care, it is important to build on the success of family support services and prevention efforts.
- **Maintain a Joint Focus on Safety and Reduction.** Review and refine child welfare policies and practices to ensure that they strike the right balance between reducing placements and maintaining child safety. Training for caseworkers on early identification of risk factors, combined with clear guidelines for intervention, will help prevent children from entering care when it's avoidable.
  - The board acknowledges that for any of these changes to take place, especially the implementation of a stronger intervention and prevention strategy, sufficient funding would be required.
- **Address Systemic Gaps.** Investigate and address any potential gaps in the child welfare system that might lead to underreporting or delayed interventions.

**2023-2024 Performance Indicator: Improved**



- **Findings.** Between 2017 and 2024, the number of children and youth in out-of-home care decreased by 46%. Between 2023 to 2024, the number of children in care dropped by 971 (16.3%), continuing a consistent pattern of reduction and reliance on out-of-home care.
- **Recommendations.** Given the 46% reduction in the number of children in out-of-home care from 2017 to 2024, and the continued decline between 2023 and 2024, it is important to continue strengthening preventative, community-based, and in-home services to support families and further reduce reliance on out-of-home placements. Additionally, ongoing monitoring of long-term outcomes

<sup>20</sup> [https://ofco.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2024-10/2024\\_OFCA\\_Annual\\_Report.pdf](https://ofco.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2024-10/2024_OFCA_Annual_Report.pdf)

<sup>21</sup> DCYF. (October 2024). Relative versus non-relative placements [July 2023-June 2024]. OIAA Reporting Portal.

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.dcyf.wa.gov/practice/oiaa/agency-performance/reduce-out-of-home-care>

for children, youth, and families is essential to ensure that these reductions lead to positive, sustainable results.

**2023-2024 Performance Indicator:** No Change

**Percentage of Children in Care by Race/Ethnicity, Last Day of SFY 2017-2023<sup>23</sup>**

Race/Ethnicity	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
American Indian/Alaska Native	14%	14%	14%	15%	16%	18%	17%	17%
Asian/Pacific Islander	4%	4%	4%	4%	4%	4%	3%	3%
Black/African American	17%	17%	18%	18%	17%	16%	15%	16%
Hispanic	16%	15%	15%	16%	17%	16%	17%	17%
White	49%	49%	48%	47%	47%	46%	46%	47%

**Findings.** Between 2017 and 2024, there was virtually no change in the percentage of children in care by race/ethnicity who are Asian/Pacific Islander, Black/African American, or Hispanic. There was a slight increase (3%) for American Indian/Alaska Native children and a slight decrease (2%) for White children. Between 2023 and 2024, the increase in the percentage of Black/African American and White children in care (both +1%) was modest. For American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian/Pacific Islander, and Hispanic children, there were no notable changes between 2023 and 2024, indicating that their proportions in care remained relatively stable.

**Summary.** Overall, the changes from 2023 to 2024 were minor. At the same time, the high percentage of American Indian/Alaska Native children in care (17% in 2024) is likely indicative of disproportionality for this group.

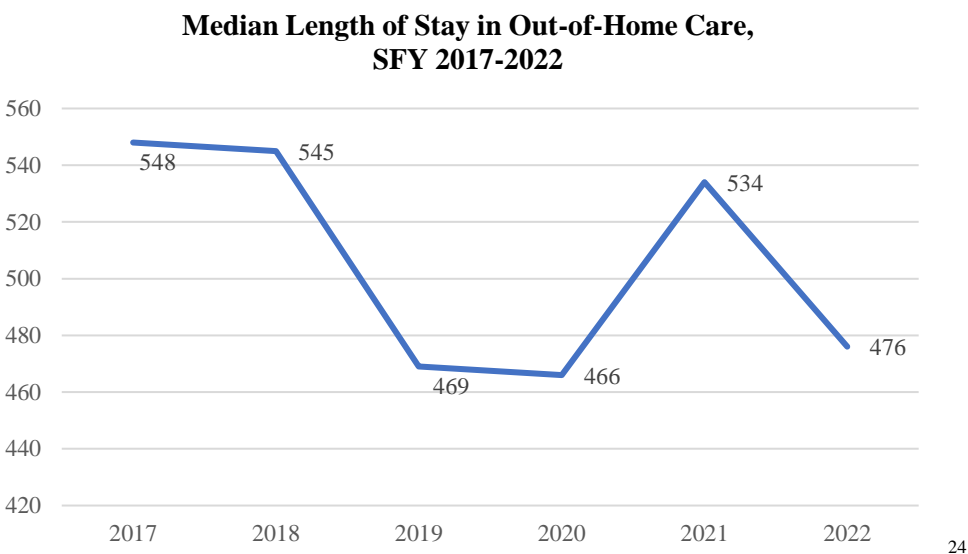
**Recommendations.** The data in their current form do not allow us to understand whether, and the extent to which, disproportionalities by race/ethnicity exist for children in care. The board encourages DCYF to calculate disproportionality indexes for this outcome to align with the agency’s strategic priority of reducing disproportionality in child welfare. At the same time, we would expect to see greater reductions in disparities, given the overall decrease in the number of children in out-of-home care. This is in contrast to the lack of change observed for this particular performance indicator.

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.dcyf.wa.gov/practice/oiaa/agency-performance/child-welfare>

## 6. Reduce length of stay for children and youth in out-of-home care

**Overall Outcome: Improved**

**2021-2022 Performance Indicator: Improved**



**Background.** 2022 reflects the most current data because this measure is lagged, typically by about two years.

**Findings.** There is a downward trend in the median length of stay, with a notable decrease from 2017-2019 (about 80 days) followed by an increase in 2021 and a decrease in 2022. The sharp increase in 2021 is potentially linked to the COVID-19 pandemic, which may have contributed to challenges in reunification or case resolution.

**Summary.** The DCYF Oversight Board acknowledges the agency for its efforts to reduce the median length of stay in out-of-home care from 2021 to 2022. As shown below in Section 9, for this same time period, the percentage of children who re-entered care within 12 months of exit, virtually stayed the same (i.e., a decrease of 0.7% between 2021 and 2022), suggesting that children might not be re-entering care as a result of these reductions.

### Recommendations

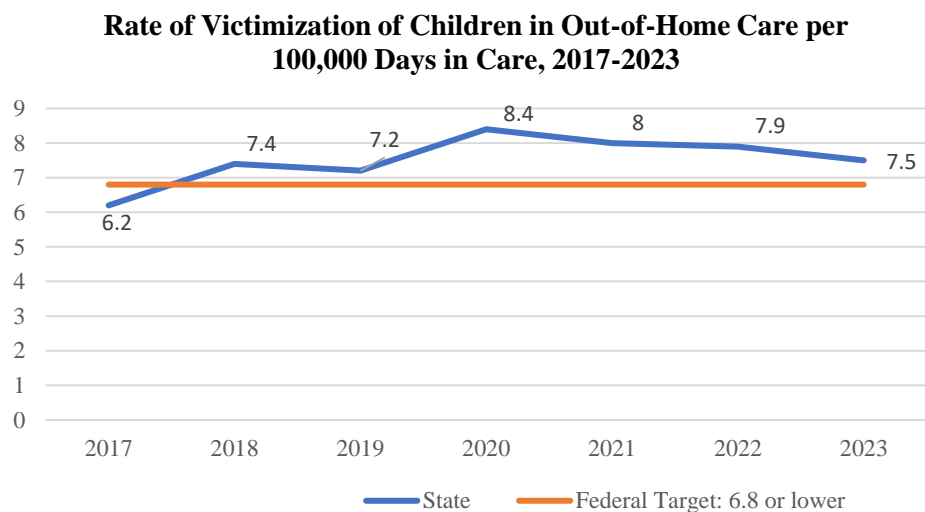
- Strengthen reunification efforts, particularly for families impacted by the long-term effects of pandemic-related disruptions.
- Monitor trends in length of stay and adjust services as needed to reduce unnecessary time spent in out-of-home care.
- Enhance training, resources, and support for foster families, out-of-home caregivers, and parents to facilitate smoother transitions and reunification.
- Improve case processing efficiency by streamlining case management and court processes to reduce delays and ensure children are not in out-of-home care longer than necessary.

<sup>24</sup> DCYF. (October 2024). *Child welfare priority performance measures* [July 2023-June 2024]. OIAA Reporting Portal. <https://www.dcyf.wa.gov/practice/oiaa/agency-performance/reduce-out-of-home-care>

## 7. Reduce maltreatment of youth while in out-of-home care

**Overall Outcome: No Change**

**2022-2023 Performance Indicator: No change**



25

**Background.** DCYF measures the number of founded reports of maltreatment for the total number of days children were in DCYF placement and care authority and displays this as the rate of maltreatment per 100,000 care-days. This measure is lagged by six months to allow for data stabilization, analysis, and reporting.

**Findings.** Between 2022 and 2023, the victimization rate fell by <1% to 7.5 per 100,000 days in care. This reflects a consistent decrease since 2020 when the rate peaked at 8.4, which was likely attributable, at least in part, to the COVID-19 pandemic (possibly due to closer proximity and increased stress). While there has been a slight decline since 2020, the data show an overall average of about 7, which is slightly higher than the federal target rate of 6.8 or lower.

**Summary.** While the data indicates periods of both improvement and setbacks, overall, there is no dramatic decline or increase over the years. The numbers suggest ongoing challenges in ensuring the safety of children in out-of-home care.

### Recommendations

- Strengthen training and support for foster parents and caregivers to prevent harm and promote child safety.
- Ensure placement stability to reduce the risk of victimization from frequent moves or unstable environments.
- Increase monitoring of safety standards in out-of-home care settings to reduce incidents of victimization.

<sup>25</sup> DCYF. (October 2024). Child welfare priority performance measures [July 2022-June 2023]. OIAA Reporting Portal. <https://www.dcyf.wa.gov/practice/oiaa/agency-performance/child-welfare>

## 8. License more foster homes than there are children in foster care

**Overall Outcome: Improved**

**2023-2024 Performance Indicator: Improved**

### Bed-to-Child Ratio, Last Day of State Fiscal Year, by Region and Overall<sup>26</sup>

Region	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Region 1	1.2%	1.2%	1.1%	1.1%	1.3%	1.2%	1.2%	1.1%	1.5%
Region 2	1.2%	1.3%	1.4%	1.5%	1.5%	1.4%	1.2%	1.3%	1.7%
Region 3	0.9%	0.9%	1.2%	1.3%	1.6%	1.8%	1.9%	1.8%	1.9%
Region 4	1.3%	1.1%	0.9%	0.9%	1.0%	1.2%	1.2%	1.3%	1.4%
Region 5	0.9%	1.0%	1.2%	1.4%	1.6%	1.7%	1.6%	1.8%	2.2%
Region 6	1.8%	1.4%	1.2%	1.2%	1.3%	1.4%	1.3%	1.3%	1.6%
<b>State</b>	<b>1.1%</b>	<b>1.1%</b>	<b>1.1%</b>	<b>1.2%</b>	<b>1.3%</b>	<b>1.4%</b>	<b>1.4%</b>	<b>1.4%</b>	<b>1.7%</b>

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

**Background.** In 2004, the state’s welfare system set a goal of 2.0 licensed beds per child or youth in care.

**Findings.** Between 2023 and 2024, there was an increase in the state bed-to-child ratio from 1.4% to 1.7% (the highest ratio since 2016). Likewise, each region showed increases in these ratios between 2022 and 2023. Region 5 exceeded the state goal at (2.2%) and Region 3 nearly met the goal (1.9%). Although progress is still needed to achieve the goal of a 2.0 bed-to-child ratio, a consistent upward trend is observable statewide, with some slight regional variations.

**Summary.** The DCYF Oversight Board commends the agency for its efforts in increasing the number of licensed foster homes for children statewide. At the same time, licensing more foster homes per child in foster care is less meaningful as a measure given recent investments in kinship caregivers.

### Recommendations

- Prioritize resource allocation in regions with the greatest gaps in bed availability to help achieve the 2.0 ratio.
- Regularly assess future projections of bed capacity and child population trends to ensure the continued adequacy of resources.

<sup>26</sup> DCYF. (October 2024). *Counts of CA licensed providers by location and type & relative versus non-relative placement* [June 30, 2023 & June 30, 2024]. OIAA Reporting Portal.

## 9. Reduce the number of children who reenter out-of-home care within 12 months

**Overall Outcome: Needs Improvement**

**2022-2023 Performance Indicator: Needs Improvement**

**Percentage of Children who Re-enter Care within 12 Months of Exit, by State Fiscal Year<sup>27</sup>**

2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
8.2%	8.4%	7.3%	8.4%	8.2%	7.5%	8.6%

**Background.** The performance indicator in this report reflects DCYF’s in-state measure, which is calculated differently from the recently updated re-entry measure on DCYF’s website.<sup>28</sup> The indicator presented here includes all removals within a reporting period, which results in a higher re-entry rate for DCYF, as it accounts for all re-entries. In contrast, the federal measure on DCYF’s website excludes re-entries that occur within the same reporting period. This measure is lagged by 15 months to allow for 12 months of possible re-entry after exit and data stabilization, analysis, and reporting. The national standard to which DCYF is held, is 5.6 percent or less.

### Findings

- The re-entry rate has fluctuated but remained consistently above the national standard of 5.6%, with the 2023 rate reaching 8.6%.
- **Increase in 2023:** The percentage of children who re-entered care within 12 months of exit, increased from 2022 to 2023. The increase, which exceeds the national standard, may indicate a potential challenge or shift, resulting in more children re-entering care.

**Summary.** The small fluctuation in these percentages highlights that while progress was made from 2020 to 2022 in reducing re-entry, there were setbacks in 2023.

### Recommendations

- Strengthen preventive services to address the root causes of re-entry, with the goal of reducing the rate to below the national standard.
- Enhance case planning and follow-up support to ensure that children and families receive the necessary services and support after exit to prevent re-entry.

<sup>27</sup> DCYF. (October 2024). Child welfare priority performance measures [July 2019-June 2023]. OIAA Reporting Portal.

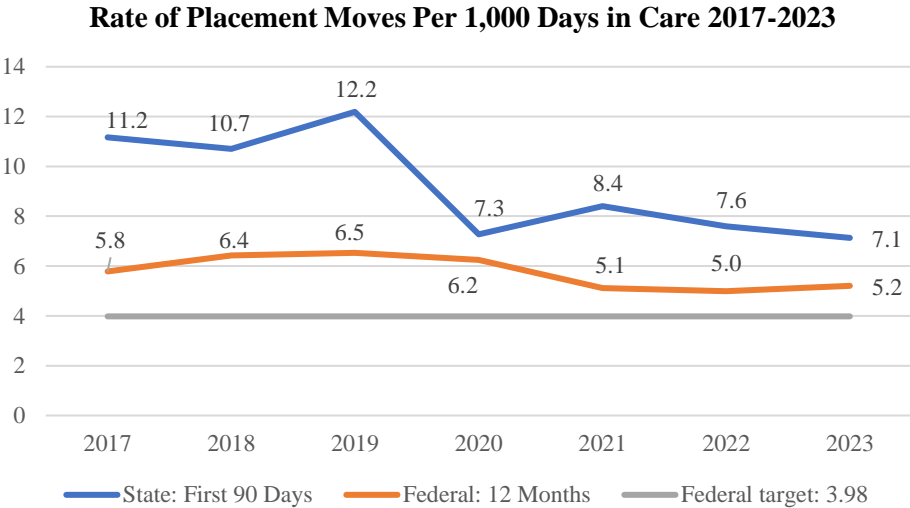
<sup>28</sup> <https://dcyf.wa.gov/practice/oiaa/agency-performance/reduce-out-of-home-care>



## 10. Increase the stability of placements for children in out-of-home care

**Overall Outcome: Improved**

**2022-2023 Performance Indicator: Improved**



29

Note: The Federal cohort period is 12 months, and the State cohort period is 90 days. The State measure is typically higher because children tend to experience more placement moves earlier on. The federal target is 3.98 or fewer placement moves per 1,000 days in care.

**Background.** Because this measure is lagged by 3-6 months to allow for data stabilization, analysis, and reporting, 2024 data are not yet available.

**Findings.** Statewide, the number of placement moves per 1,000 days in care peaked in 2019 at 12.2, fell sharply to 7.3 moves in 2020, and stayed between 7 and 8 moves between 2021 and 2023.

Although the state placement move rate decreased slightly from 2022 to 2023 (from 7.6 to 7.1 moves), state rates continue to be approximately three to four moves higher than the actual federal rate and above the target federal placement rate (3.98).

**Summary.** Despite modest improvement, the state placement move rates were approximately three to four moves higher than the federal target. This indicates that while there has been progress in reducing placement moves, there remains a need for continued focus on achieving greater stability for children in care to meet the federal benchmark of less than four moves.

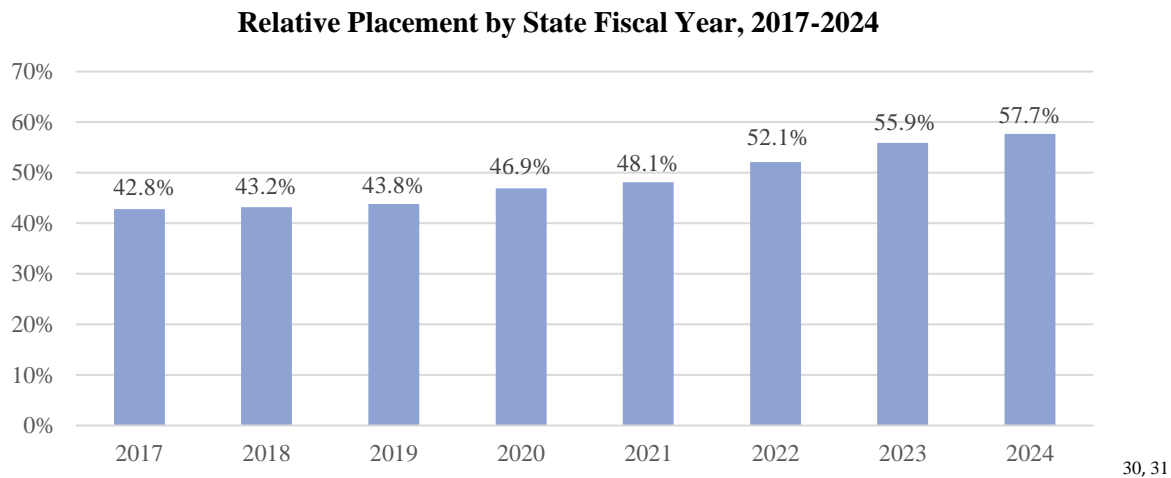
**Recommendations**

- Carefully assess children’s needs and match them with appropriate out-of-home care providers to increase compatibility and reduce the risk of disruptions.
- Provide ongoing training, support, and respite care for foster parents and kinship caregivers to enhance their ability to care for children and prevent burnout.

<sup>29</sup> <https://www.dcyf.wa.gov/practice/oiaa/agency-performance/child-welfare>

- Ensure timely services for children’s mental health and support for families to facilitate reunification when possible.
- Address children’s cultural, ethnic, and familial needs while involving birth families and care providers (foster parents and kinship caregivers) in the permanency planning process.

**2023-2024 Performance Indicator:** Improved



**Findings.** In 2024, the percentage of relative placements was 57.7%, which continued the trend of steady increases over time.

**Summary.** The increase in relative placements is the result of a strategic effort by DCYF to enhance placement stability and emotional well-being for children by keeping them within their family networks. Being placed with family members is often seen as beneficial for maintaining familial connections and support. This finding is also aligned with the DCYF priority to fully license kinship foster parents with the ultimate goal of safely reducing the number of children and youth in out-of-home care by half.<sup>32</sup>

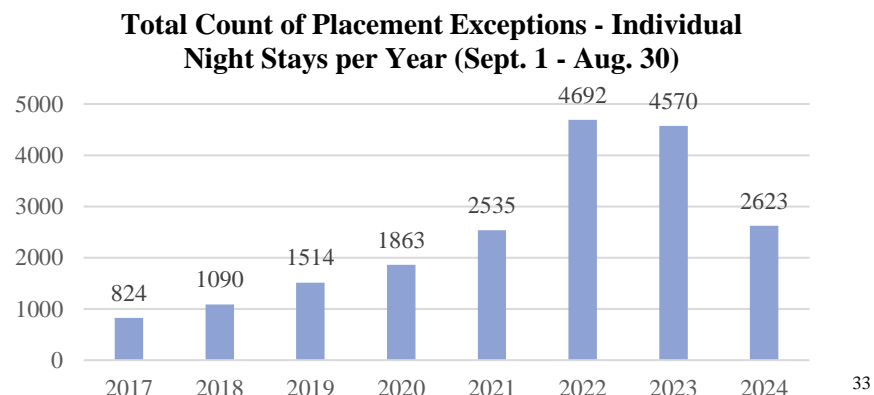
**Recommendations.** Continue and expand efforts to increase relative placements by further supporting and incentivizing kinship foster care. This includes strengthening the licensing process for kinship caregivers and providing additional resources and training to ensure their success.

<sup>30</sup> DCYF. (October 2024). Relative versus non-relative placement [June 30, 2024]. OIAA Reporting Portal.

<sup>31</sup> <https://dcyf.wa.gov/practice/oiaa/agency-performance/child-welfare>

<sup>32</sup> [https://dcyf.wa.gov/sites/default/files/pubs/COMM\\_0058%20DCYF\\_Strategic\\_Priorities\\_2021-2026.pdf](https://dcyf.wa.gov/sites/default/files/pubs/COMM_0058%20DCYF_Strategic_Priorities_2021-2026.pdf)

**2023-2024 Performance Indicator: Improved**



**Background.** This figure shows the total count of placement exceptions, which are defined as individual night stays that fall outside standard placement protocols. These include night-to-night licensed foster homes, hotels, and leased facilities operated by DCYF, which are used when no other placements that can meet the child’s needs are available. Housing children in hotels and temporary facilities is disruptive for children and often traumatic. These placements also contribute to circumstances that can endanger youth, DCYF staff, and other professionals.<sup>34</sup>

**Findings.** DCYF reduced the number of placement exceptions from 2023 to 2024 by 57%, from 4,570 to 2,623. Further, the number of placement exceptions using hotels (6.3% of placement exceptions) fell 91% from 2023 to 2024. Most placement exceptions (84%) occurred in leased facilities, and 9% occurred in night-to-night licensed foster homes.<sup>35</sup>

**Summary.** The dramatic decline in placement exceptions from 2023 to 2024 suggests that DCYF increased the availability of appropriate placements and potentially utilized more effective case management strategies. This reduction may also indicate that systemic issues associated with the COVID-19 pandemic are being addressed leading to more stable placements among children in care.

**Recommendations.** Build on the success of the 57% reduction in placement exceptions by expanding the availability of appropriate, stable, permanent, and long-term placements, while further reducing reliance on leased facilities and night-to-night licensed foster homes to maintain this positive trend.

<sup>33</sup> [https://ofco.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2024-10/2024\\_OFCO\\_Annual\\_Report.pdf](https://ofco.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2024-10/2024_OFCO_Annual_Report.pdf)

<sup>34</sup> [https://ofco.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2024-10/2024\\_OFCO\\_Annual\\_Report.pdf](https://ofco.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2024-10/2024_OFCO_Annual_Report.pdf) (pages 6-7).

<sup>35</sup> [https://ofco.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2024-10/2024\\_OFCO\\_Annual\\_Report.pdf](https://ofco.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2024-10/2024_OFCO_Annual_Report.pdf)

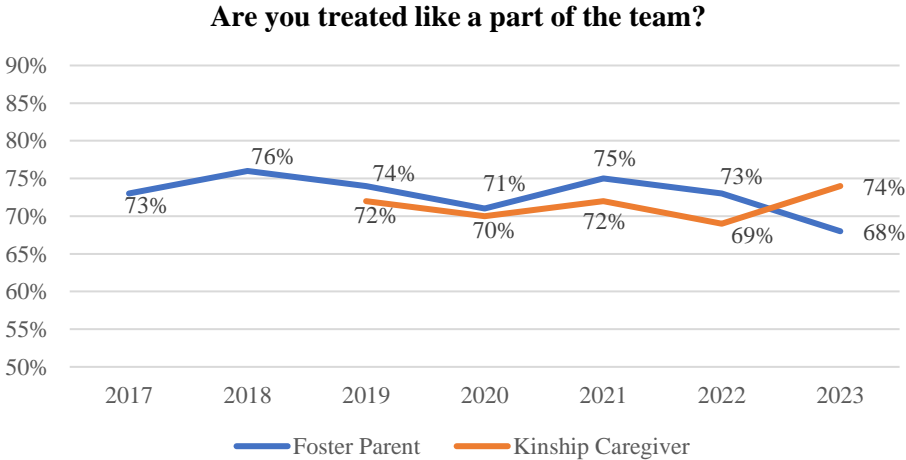
# 11. Develop strategies to show foster parents and kinship care families that their service and involvement are valued by DCYF, including consulting them on future child placements

**Overall Outcome: Mixed**

**2022-2023 Performance Indicator:**

Foster parent: Needs Improvement

Kinship caregiver: Improved



36

**Background.** The “2023 Caregiver Survey” was conducted between September 2022 and August 2023. DSHS surveyed 1,349 caregivers (495 foster and 854 kinship) who had a child in care within six months of the sampling date (August and November 2022; February and May 2023). Caregivers were asked about their satisfaction with support, staff, access and process, information, licensing, and training provided by DCYF and private agencies contracted by the agency.<sup>37</sup> Specific items were selected from the survey to allow for comparisons with data from previous Annual Reports. Response rates are provided in a table at the end of this section for reference.

**Findings.** Overall, foster parents reported a slight decline in feeling that they are treated as part of the team between 2017 (73%) and 2023 (68%). Kinship caregivers were first asked this question in 2019. Their responses have fluctuated slightly between 69% (the lowest, in 2022) and 74% (the highest, in 2023).

<sup>36</sup> <https://www.dshs.wa.gov/sites/default/files/rda/reports/research-11-270.pdf>

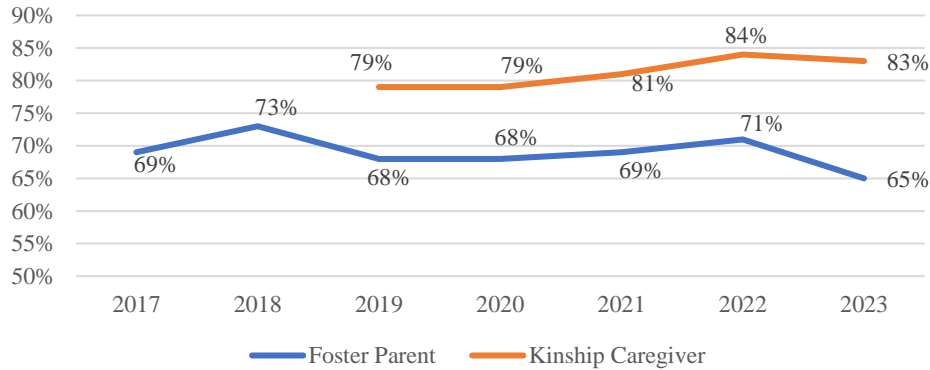
<sup>37</sup> <https://www.dshs.wa.gov/sites/default/files/rda/reports/research-11-270.pdf>

**2022-2023 Performance Indicator:**

Foster parent: Needs Improvement

Kinship caregiver: No Change

**Do you get adequate information about the needs of the children placed with you, such as medical, behavioral, development and educational needs?**



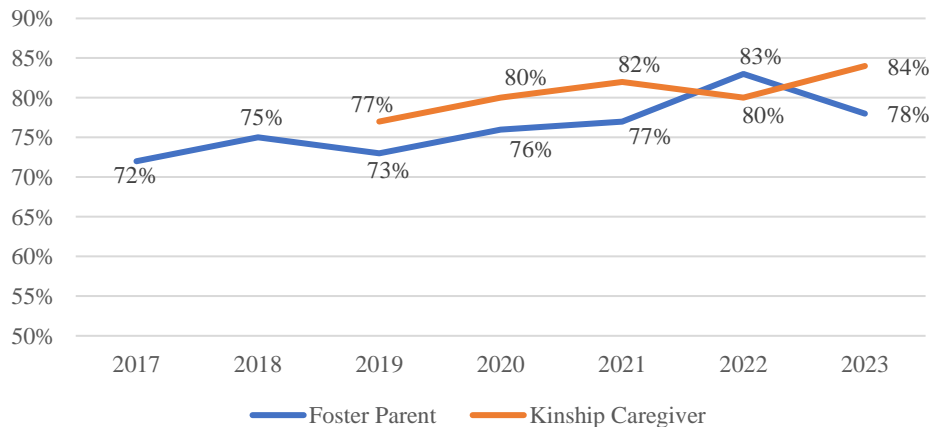
**Findings.** More kinship caregivers reported receiving adequate information compared to foster parents from 2019 through 2023. Foster parents reported a decline in information adequacy between 2022 and 2023, from 71% to 65%. Kinship caregivers reported relatively stable rates of information adequacy (84% in 2022 and 83% in 2023).

**2022-2023 Performance Indicator:**

Foster parent: Needs Improvement

Kinship caregiver: Improved

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

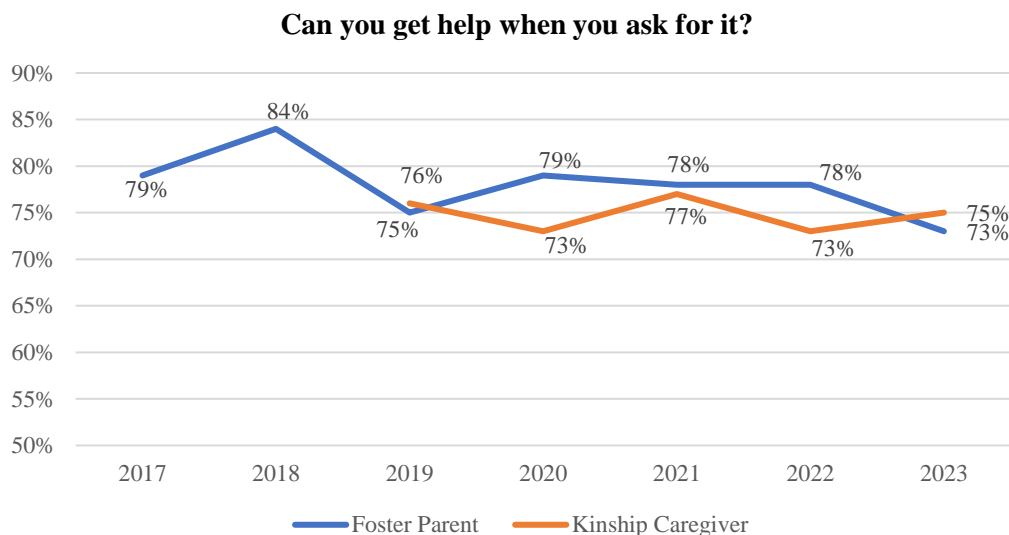


**Findings.** Foster parents’ reporting of inclusion in meetings about the child(ren) in their care steadily increased from 72% in 2017 to a peak of 83% in 2022, before declining to 78% in 2023. Similarly, kinship caregivers’ reporting of inclusion also rose over the years, starting at 77% in 2019 and reaching 84% in 2023.

**2022-2023 Performance Indicator:**

Foster parent: Needs Improvement

Kinship caregiver: Improved



**Findings.** Between 2022 and 2023, foster parents experienced a decline in their ability to get help when they ask for it (from 78% in 2022 to 73% in 2023), while kinship caregivers reported a slight improvement (from 73% in 2022 to 75% in 2023).

**2022-2023 Performance Indicators**

Foster parent: Improved

Kinship caregiver: Improved or No Change

**Foster care and kinship caregiver interactions with licensing staff**

Question	Type	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Did licensing staff treat you with respect?	Foster Parent	97%	95%	96%	94%	96%
	Kinship Caregiver	96%	94%	94%	93%	96%
Were licensing or home study staff knowledgeable about the process?	Foster Parent	95%	97%	96%	94%	98%
	Kinship Caregiver	95%	94%	94%	94%	94%

**Findings**

- Foster parents and kinship caregivers’ **ratings of respect during interactions with licensing staff are consistently very high** (93% or higher for both groups across all years). Both groups experienced small gains in this area between 2022 and 2023, from 94% to 96% for foster parents and from 93% to 96% for kinship caregivers.
- Foster parents and kinship caregivers’ **ratings of licensing staff knowledge was very high and stable** (94% or higher for both groups across all years). Overall, foster parents reported a small increase in confidence regarding staff knowledge over the years, while kinship caregivers maintained stable and high ratings.

**2022-2023 Performance Indicator:**

Foster parent: Needs Improvement  
 Kinship caregiver: Improved

**Do you feel personally supported by DCYF staff?** <sup>38, 39</sup>

	2022	2023
Foster Parent	66%	60%
Kinship Caregiver	66%	70%

**Findings.** Foster parents and kinship caregivers’ ratings of feeling personally supported by DCYF staff were low in 2022 (66% for both). In 2023, fewer foster parents reported feeling personally supported (60%). More kinship caregivers reported feeling personally supported in 2023 (70%) than in 2022 (66%).

**Response Rates**

Year	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Rate	92%	89%	86%	83%	85%	86%	92%

**Findings.** Overall, survey response rates were high. They increased from 86% to 92% between 2022 to 2023. Since 2017, the lowest response rate was 83% in 2020; the COVID-19 pandemic was likely a contributing factor to this. Note that the response rates for 2017 and 2018 are for foster parents only.

**Summary.** Satisfaction in these areas remained relatively high in 2023. Overall, kinship caregivers had a more positive experience compared to foster parents for these survey items.

**Recommendations.** The Board would like to emphasize a recommendation from a previous Annual Report: amend the outcome measure in Statute (RCW 43.216.015(3)(c)(iii)(G)) to reflect the value of both foster parents and kinship caregivers. As the benefits of placing children and youth with kin become increasingly evident, the agency should be held accountable for demonstrating value to kinship caregivers in the same way it does for foster parents.

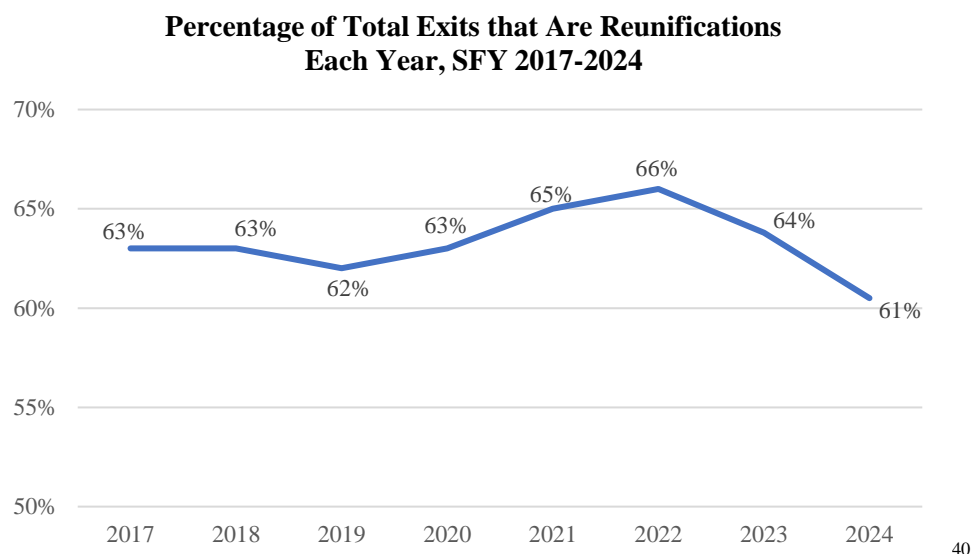
<sup>38</sup> <https://www.dshs.wa.gov/sites/default/files/rda/reports/research-7-126.pdf>

<sup>39</sup> <https://www.dshs.wa.gov/sites/default/files/rda/reports/research-11-270.pdf>

## 12. Increase family reunification by raising the number of children/youth who are reunified with their family of origin

**Overall Outcome: Needs Improvement**

**2023-2024 Performance Indicator: Needs Improvement**



Note: This chart shows the percentage of all exits that are reunifications.

**Findings.** The overall reunification rate peaked at 66% in 2022 and declined to 61% by 2024.

**Summary.** There have been small fluctuations in reunification rates over the years (between 1% and 5%), with a slight decline observed in the most recent years.

### Recommendations

- **Address systemic factors.** Examine the underlying causes of the recent decline in reunification rates. This may involve assessing case-specific barriers, systemic issues (e.g., court process delays, service access, or caseworker turnover) or challenges in service delivery that could be preventing reunification.
- **Targeted supports for families.** Strengthen support services for families to address the root causes of child removal, including parental substance abuse, mental health issues, and unstable housing.
- **Provide timely and targeted support for parents.** Identify families with a higher risk of unsuccessful reunification, such as those with multiple removals or those from underserved and historically marginalized communities. Tailor interventions to meet their unique needs, with an emphasis on culturally competent (pro-equity and anti-racist) services.
- **Caseworker supports.** Ensure caseworkers have the necessary resources and training to facilitate quicker reunification for children who are safe to return home.

<sup>40</sup> DCYF. (October 2024). *Out of home care exits and entries* [July 2022-June 2024]. OIAA Reporting Portal.



**2023-2024 Performance Indicator: Needs Improvement**

**Percent and Number of Children Reunified Annually, by Racial/Ethnic Group, 2018-2024<sup>41</sup>**

Race/Ethnicity	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
American Indian/Alaska Native	42.0 (N=79)	59.3 (N=108)	58.4 (N=115)	52.4 (N=77)	63.6 (N=84)	69.4 (N=75)	58.6 (N=65)
American Indian/Alaska Native, Multiracial	60.8 (N=290)	57.1 (N=319)	59.9 (N=354)	68.5 (N=361)	64.1 (N=289)	60.9 (N=299)	56.5 (N=249)
Asian/Pacific Islander	78.6 (N=110)	76.0 (N=111)	74.0 (N=120)	62.1 (N=77)	81.5 (N=97)	62.8 (N=59)	74.7 (N=65)
Asian/Pacific Islander, Multiracial	71.3 (N=82)	62.9 (N=66)	63.6 (N=68)	63.0 (N=58)	65.6 (N=61)	62.9 (N=44)	43.4 (N=33)
Black/African American	65.9 (N=278)	65.1 (N=267)	65.9 (N=329)	65.0 (N=260)	67.5 (N=226)	66.8 (N=223)	58.7 (N=168)
Black/African American, Multiracial	64.9 (N=342)	66.2 (N=319)	64.7 (N=355)	66.8 (N=279)	65.4 (N=280)	64.9 (N=233)	57.1 (N=208)
Hispanic	67.3 (N=733)	69.7 (N=674)	65.1 (N=623)	69.5 (N=570)	67.8 (N=539)	69.1 (N=461)	59.7 (N=403)
White	61.5 (N=1,720)	59.4 (N=1,759)	62.3 (N=1,872)	62.1 (N=1,414)	64.4 (N=1,406)	61.5 (N=1,135)	62.2 (N=1,131)
<b>All reunifications</b>	<b>63.2</b> (N=3,643)	<b>63.4</b> (N=3,635)	<b>63.4</b> (N=3,861)	<b>64.6</b> (N=3,113)	<b>65.9</b> (N=3,003)	<b>63.8</b> (N=2,570)	<b>60.5</b> (N=2,357)

**Background.** This table shows the percentage of all exits that are reunifications broken down by racial/ethnic group. Due to the small number of children in certain racial/ethnic groups, some results by racial/ethnic group should be interpreted with caution.

**Findings**

- **American Indian/Alaska Native:** Reunification rates decreased from 69% in 2023 to 59% in 2024.
- **American Indian/Alaska Native, Multiracial:** Similarly, rates fell from 61% in 2023 to 57% in 2024.
- **Asian/Pacific Islander:** Rates increased from 63% in 2023 to 75% in 2024, showing an improvement. Note that the number of children this represents is relatively small (59 in 2023 and 65 in 2024).
- **Asian/Pacific Islander, Multiracial:** In contrast to Asian/Pacific Islanders, rates dropped markedly from 63% in 2023 to 43% in 2024. Note that the number of children this represents is small (44 in 2023 and 33 in 2024).
- **Black/African American:** Reunification rates decreased from 67% in 2023 to 59% in 2024.
- **Black/African American, Multiracial:** Rates also declined from 65% in 2023 to 57% in 2024, percentages similar to the Black/African American group.
- **Hispanic:** Rates fell from 69% in 2023 to 60% in 2024.
- **White:** Rates remained stable (62% in both 2023 and 2024).

<sup>41</sup> DCYF. (October 2024). *Out of home care exits and entries* [July 1, 2017-June 30, 2024]. OIAA Reporting Portal.

**Summary.** The overall reunification rate decreased from 64% in 2023 to 61% in 2024. Most racial/ethnic groups saw a decline in reunification rates from 2023 to 2024, with the exception of Asian/Pacific Islanders and White children.

**Recommendations**

- Prioritize strategies to improve reunification rates for racial/ethnic groups experiencing declines, such as American Indian/Alaska Native, Black/African American, Hispanic, and Multiracial children overall. For example, strengthen family engagement efforts by increasing access to intensive case management, mental health services, substance use treatment, and housing support to ensure birth families receive the assistance needed to meet reunification goals.
  
- Examine the underlying causes behind lower reunification rates for certain groups, such as Asian/Pacific Islander, Multiracial, and Black/African American children and provide targeted interventions and supports to these families.

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

**Overall Outcome: Mixed**

#### Reduce Homelessness

**2021-2022 Performance Indicator: Mixed**

**Percentage of Foster Care and JR Youth and Young Adults who were Homeless 12 Months After System Exit, 2017 through 2022<sup>42</sup>**

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Foster Care	23%	22%	17%	21%	16%	16%
Juvenile Rehabilitation	25%	25%	23%	17%	20%	18%

**Background.** The most recent report on homelessness among adolescents (ages 12-17) and young adults (ages 18-24) after exiting a system of care was published in 2024 by DSHS. Because this measure is lagged by approximately 24 months to allow for 12 months after system exit and to allow for data analysis and reporting, the most recent data provided are from 2022.

**Findings.** Overall, the rates of homelessness within 12 months after system exit among youth and young adults exiting JR decreased from 2017 to 2020. The rate spiked to 20% in 2021, likely due to the impact of COVID, and then fell to 18% in 2022. The percentage of youth and young adults in foster care who were homeless 12 months after exiting the system ranged from 16% to 23% from 2017 to 2022. Between 2021 and 2022, there was no change in the percentage (16%) for youth and young adults in foster care.

There is a marked difference in rates of homelessness by age group for both foster care and JR. The rate of homelessness was notably higher for young adults, with a greater number facing housing instability after leaving foster care and the juvenile justice system. In 2022,<sup>43</sup> **13% of youth** (ages 12-17) and **21% of young adults** (ages 18-24) who exited foster care were homeless within 12 months after system exit. Similarly, in 2022, **13% of youth** (ages 12-17) and **22% of young adults** (ages 18-24) who exited JR were homeless within 12 months after system exit.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>42</sup> Noel-Harrison, D., Danielson, T., & Felver, B. (2024). Homelessness among youth exiting systems of care in Washington state. DSHS Research and Data Analysis Division <https://www.dshs.wa.gov/sites/default/files/rda/reports/research-11-254.pdf>

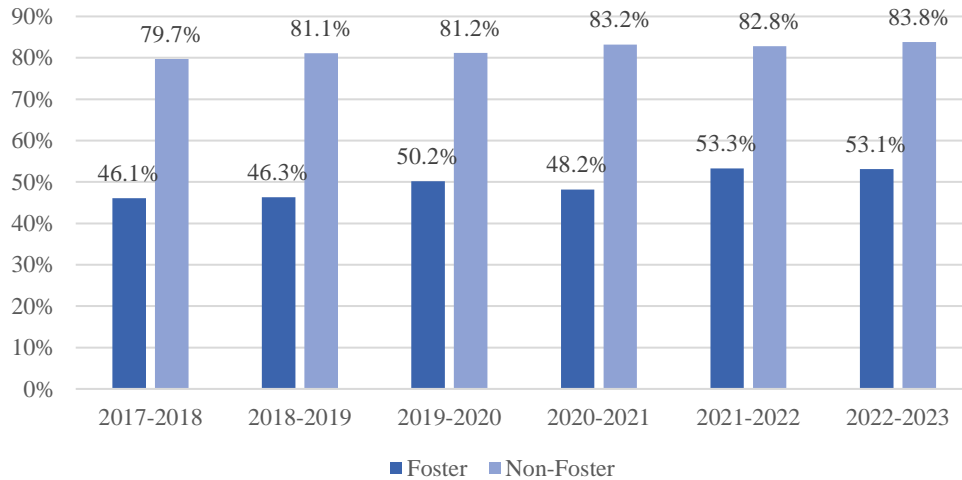
<sup>43</sup> 2022 is the only year for which the data are split by age group for youth and young adults in foster care.

<sup>44</sup> Danielson, T., Noel-Harrison, D., & Varela, V. (2024). Homelessness among youth exiting systems of care in Washington state. DSHS Research and Data Analysis Division.

Educational Outcomes

**SY21-SY22 and SY22-SY23 Performance Indicator: No Change**

**Four Year Graduation Rates for Youth in Child Welfare**



45

Note: School Year (SY).

Graduation rates among youth in foster care increased from 46% in 2017-2018 to a peak of 53% in 2021-2022 where they remained stable through 2022-2023. For non-foster youth, graduation rates were consistently higher, rising from 80% in 2017-2018 to 84% in 2022-2023, with minor fluctuations (4% at most) in between.

**Summary.** While both groups showed improvements over time, youth who were not in foster care consistently graduated at markedly higher rates compared to youth in care. This is consistent with research findings indicating that youth in foster care experience poorer educational outcomes than youth who do not experience foster care.

<sup>45</sup> <https://www.dcyf.wa.gov/node/3302>

**SY21-SY22 and SY22-SY23 Performance Indicator: Needs Improvement**

**Four-year Graduation Rates for JR Students Enrolled in Institutional Education at Echo Glen<sup>46</sup> and Green Hill<sup>47</sup>**

Institution	2021-2022			2022-2023		
	Graduating	% Continuing	% Dropout	Graduating	% Continuing	% Dropout
Echo Glen Children's Center	<30%	<30%	70%	<25%	<25%	75%
Green Hill School	14.3%	55.1%	30.6%	9.2%	56.6%	34.2%

Note: General Education Development (GED) Certificate completions are included in the dropout rate, not the graduation rate.

**Background.** Washington's program of basic education mandates that instruction and associated state funding be provided for school-aged students in residential schools, detention facilities, and adult correctional facilities.<sup>48</sup> Echo Glen Children's Center and Green Hill School are the two State Long-Term Juvenile Institutions in Washington, which are operated by DCYF's JR section. These facilities provide 24-hour-a-day diagnosis, confinement, and rehabilitation of juveniles committed by the courts. State Operated Community Facilities (CF) are also operated by the JR section of the DCYF. These facilities provide 24-hour services to youth referred for services through the juvenile justice system. CF facilities were previously referred to as group homes.

**Findings**

- **Echo Glen Children's Center.** There was a decline in the graduation rate between 2021-2022 and 2022-2023, dropping from <30% to <25%. The dropout rate at Echo Glen was very high, with 70% dropping out in 2021-2022 and rising to 75% the following year.
- **Green Hill School.** The graduation rate dropped from 14% in 2021-2022 to 9% in 2022-2023. The continuation rate increased slightly from 55% in 2021-2022 and 57% in 2022-2023, but the dropout rate also increased slightly, from 31% to 34%.
- **Community Facilities.** Data were not provided or were suppressed for all eight community facilities: Canyon View, Oakridge, Parke Creek, Ridgeview, Sunrise, Touchstone, Twin Rivers, and Woodinville.

**Summary.** The decline in graduation rates at Echo Glen and Green Hill over these two school years is concerning. The data highlight challenges in ensuring the educational success of students in JR settings. Both Echo Glen and Green Hill show high dropout rates and low graduation outcomes, suggesting a need for more effective interventions and supports for students in these facilities to improve educational outcomes. Further, while the expectation is that all residents show up for all scheduled classes, in late 2024 this occurred between 50% and 80% of the time as overall access to education can be impacted by individual behavior as well as staffing shortages.<sup>49</sup> At the same time, it is important to acknowledge that students in JR enter Institutional Education programs with a wide range of credit histories, which influence the likelihood of graduation. Finally, this may also be a case where data interpretations should be approached with caution, as the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction includes GED completion as a "dropout" in their school report card data dashboard.

<sup>46</sup> <https://reportcard.ospi.k12.wa.us/ReportCard/ViewSchoolOrDistrict/101466>

<sup>47</sup> <https://reportcard.ospi.k12.wa.us/ReportCard/ViewSchoolOrDistrict/101855>

<sup>48</sup> <https://app.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=28A.150.200>

<sup>49</sup> Communication with DCYF on October 10, 2024.

## Successful Transitions to Adulthood

**2021-2022 Performance Indicator:** Needs Improvement

### Percentage of Young Adults Ages 18 and Older Released from JR Residential Facilities who Find Employment within One-Year-Post Release by State Fiscal Year<sup>50</sup>

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Any work in the year post-release	61%	55%	60%	61%	59%	68%	60%

Note: Data for 2023 were unavailable because a full year has not passed since these young adults exited from JR.

**Findings.** There is an overall upward trend in youth employment rates from 55% in 2017 to a peak of 68% in 2021. In 2022, the employment rate decreased to 60%.

**Summary.** While the employment rate for youth exiting JR residential facilities showed improvement over several years, it declined again in the most recent year for which data are available.

**Section Note.** Other indicators of successful transitions to adulthood for foster care-involved young adults (ages 18 and older) were unable to be produced internally by DCYF. Specifically, (a) percent employed and (b) median earnings for the years 2020 to 2023. This information was reported previously in a 2021 Education Research and Data Center (ERDC) report<sup>51</sup> that was never updated.

### Overall Recommendations

- **Address Homelessness Post-System Exit.** Continue to monitor and develop targeted interventions to reduce homelessness among youth exiting the juvenile rehabilitation and foster care systems. Focus on prevention strategies during and after system involvement.
- **Enhance Educational Support for Youth in Foster Care.** Invest in additional educational resources and support programs for youth in foster care to help close the graduation rate gap with non-foster youth. Targeted tutoring and mentorship may improve outcomes.
- **Improve Educational Outcomes in JR Settings.** Develop and implement specialized educational interventions at Echo Glen and Green Hill to reduce dropout rates and improve graduation outcomes. Focus on creating a more supportive, safe, and engaging learning environment tailored to the needs of these youth. Continue to increase resources and structures at Washington’s Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction and DCYF to support state-level collaboration, oversight, data collection, and reporting.
- **Support Employment Transitions for Youth Exiting JR.** Enhance employment training and placement programs to support youth exiting juvenile rehabilitation facilities. Address the recent decline in employment rates by improving access to stable, supportive employment opportunities and post-release career services.

<sup>50</sup> DCYF. (October 2024). Automated Client Tracking (ACT). [7/1/2021-6/30/2022]. Employment Security Department (ESD). (October 2024). [7/1/2021-6/30/2022] and <https://dcyf.wa.gov/practice/oiaa/agency-performance/successful-transitions-adulthood>

<sup>51</sup> [https://erdc.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2024-10/SHB2711\\_Report\\_Foster\\_Care\\_2021.pdf](https://erdc.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2024-10/SHB2711_Report_Foster_Care_2021.pdf)

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

**Overall Outcome: Needs Improvement**

**2024 Performance Indicator:** Needs Improvement

**Average Number of Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) Individual Sessions and Skills Groups Attended per Month by Juvenile Rehabilitation Facilities Residents, by Race/Ethnicity, SFY 2024<sup>52</sup>**

Race/Ethnicity	Individual Sessions	Skills Groups
American Indian/Alaska Native	2.8	1.6
Asian/Pacific Islander	2.0	0.9
Black/African American	2.2	1.0
Hispanic/Latino	2.4	0.9
White	2.5	1.3

**Background.** Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) is the primary treatment for youth and young adults in Washington’s Juvenile Rehabilitation (JR) facilities. Two essential components of DBT are individual counseling sessions and skills groups. JR’s standard is for residents to attend four sessions of each type every month.

**Findings.** In 2024, American Indian/Alaska Native residents had the highest average attendance in both individual sessions (2.8 sessions) and skills groups (1.6 sessions), indicating stronger engagement with DBT. In contrast, Asian/Pacific Islander residents had the lowest attendance in both categories, averaging only 2.0 individual sessions and 0.9 skills groups. This disparity highlights a potential area for improvement in encouraging participation among Asian/Pacific Islander residents, though comparisons should be made with caution given potentially small sample sizes.

**Summary.** In 2024, all groups missed JR’s standard.

<sup>52</sup> DCYF. (October 2024). Automated Client Tracking System (ACT) [July 2023-June 2024].

**2023-2024 Performance Indicator:** Needs Improvement

**Average Number of Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) Individual Sessions Attended per Month by Juvenile Rehabilitation Facilities Residents, by Race/Ethnicity, SFYs 2021-2024<sup>53</sup>**

Race/Ethnicity	2021	2022	2023	2024
American Indian/Alaska Native	2.8	2.8	3.1	2.8
Asian/Pacific Islander	2.5	1.9	2.4	2.0
Black/African American	2.7	2.6	2.6	2.1
Hispanic/Latino	3.0	2.7	2.7	2.4
White	3.2	3.0	2.8	2.5

**Findings:** Differences between 2023 and 2024

- **American Indian/Alaska Native:** Attendance declined from 3.1 in 2023 to 2.8 in 2024.
- **Asian/Pacific Islander:** Attendance decreased from 2.4 in 2023 to 2.0 in 2024.
- **Black/African American:** Attendance decreased from 2.6 in 2023 to 2.1 in 2024.
- **Hispanic/Latino:** Attendance declined from 2.7 in 2023 to 2.4 in 2024.
- **White:** Attendance also declined from 2.8 in 2023 to 2.5 in 2024.

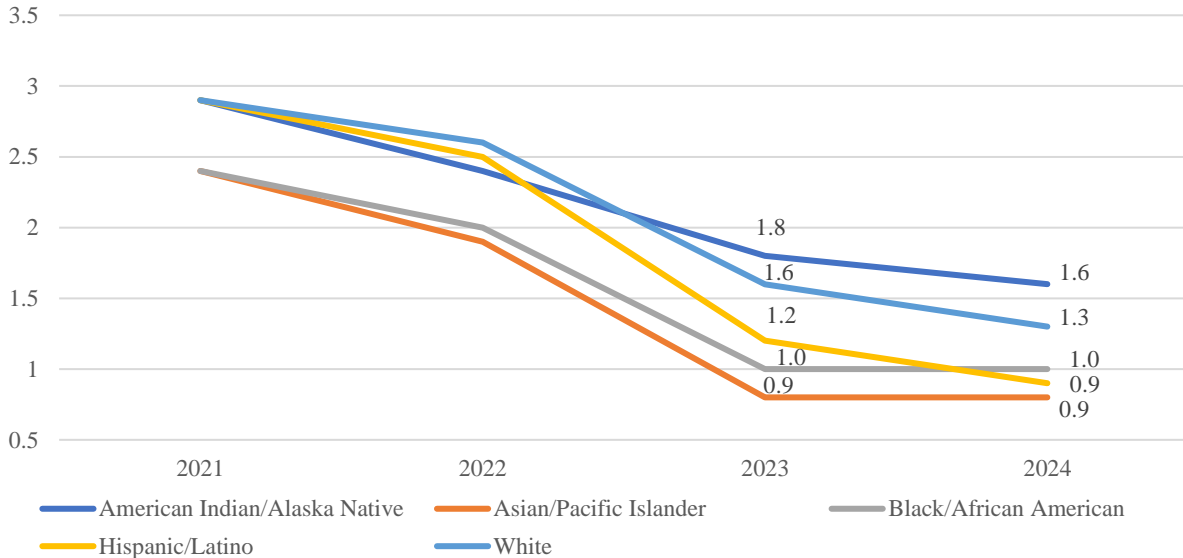
**Summary.** All racial/ethnic groups experienced a decline in the average number of individual DBT sessions attended from 2023 to 2024 with American Indian/Alaska Native residents attending the most sessions in 2023 but also seeing a notable decrease (3.1 to 2.8). For all four years, Asian/Pacific Islanders had the lowest attendance. **Focusing on the average number of sessions by race/ethnicity may obscure the main point of these findings: For each year that we have data, all groups missed JR’s standard of four individual sessions each month.** Further, sample sizes may be inadequate to infer meaningful conclusions about the differences between groups.

<sup>53</sup> <https://www.dcyf.wa.gov/practice/oiaa/agency-performance/racial-equity>



**2023-2024 Performance Indicator: Needs Improvement**

**Average Number of Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) Skills Groups Attended per Month by Juvenile Rehabilitation Facilities Residents, by Race/Ethnicity, SFYs 2021-2024**



54

Note: The figure above shows data for 2023 and 2024 only. The table below presents the same data, but also includes information for 2021 and 2022 for comparison.

**Average Number of Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) Skills Groups Attended per Month by Juvenile Rehabilitation Facilities Residents, by Race/Ethnicity, SFYs 2021-2024<sup>55</sup>**

Race/Ethnicity	2021	2022	2023	2024
American Indian/Alaska Native	3.0	2.5	1.8	1.6
Asian/Pacific Islander	2.5	1.9	0.9	0.9
Black/African American	2.5	2.1	1.0	1.0
Hispanic/Latino	3.0	2.6	1.2	0.9
White	3.0	2.7	1.6	1.3

**Findings - Differences between 2023 and 2024**

- **American Indian/Alaska Native:** Attendance decreased from 1.8 groups in 2023 to 1.6 in 2024.
- **Asian/Pacific Islander:** Attendance remained unchanged at 0.9 groups for both years
- **Black/African American:** Attendance remained unchanged at 1 group for both years.
- **Hispanic/Latino:** Attendance decreased from 1.2 in 2023 to 0.9 groups in 2024.
- **White:** Attendance decreased from 1.6 in 2023 to 1.3 groups in 2024.

**Summary.** Three of the five racial/ethnic groups experienced a decline in the average number of DBT skills groups attended from 2023 to 2024 with no changes for the Asian/Pacific Islanders and

<sup>54</sup> <https://www.dcyf.wa.gov/practice/oiaa/agency-performance/racial-equity>

<sup>55</sup> <https://www.dcyf.wa.gov/practice/oiaa/agency-performance/racial-equity>

Black/African American groups. As noted above, **focusing on the average number of sessions by race/ethnicity may distract from the main takeaway: In every year for which data are available, all groups fell short of JR's standard of four skill groups per month.** Additionally, the sample sizes may be too small to draw meaningful conclusions about differences between groups.

**2020-2021 Performance Indicator:** No Change

**Treatment Rate for Medicaid-Enrolled Children and Youth in Foster Care with Mental Health or Substance Abuse Treatment Need<sup>56</sup>**

Age	All Medicaid					In Foster Care				
	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
0-4	5%	5%	5%	5%	5%	70%	72%	72%	71%	72%
5-11	19%	20%	21%	21%	20%	85%	85%	85%	83%	83%
12-17	31%	33%	36%	37%	37%	77%	79%	78%	78%	81%
with SUD	5%	5%	5%	4%	4%	39%	41%	41%	35%	30%
18-20	32%	34%	37%	38%	38%	54%	56%	58%	57%	59%
with SUD	11%	10%	10%	10%	9%	17%	19%	17%	22%	23%
<b>All ages<sup>57</sup></b>	58%	60%	61%	60%	61%	78%	79%	78%	78%	78%

Note: This report, “Behavioral Health Treatment Needs and Outcomes among Medicaid-Enrolled Children in Washington State” (2023) represents the most current data available on treatment receipt. Substance use disorder (SUD).

**Findings for Foster Care.** Across all age groups, the percent of children and youth with identified mental health (MH) treatment needs who are receiving treatment has remained consistent (78% to 79% across all years). There are differences in treatment rate by age and by need.

- 0-4-year-olds with identified mental health needs received treatment at a stable rate across all years (70% to 72% across all years).
- 5-11-year-olds received MH treatment at the highest rate of any age group (83% to 85% across all years).
- 12-17-year-olds received MH treatment at a rate slightly lower than 5-11-year-olds (77% to 81% across all years). Treatment rates were considerably lower among 12-17-year-olds with substance use disorder, and these rates decreased over time to 30% in 2021.
- 18-20-year-olds received MH treatment at the lowest rate for all age groups (54% to 59% across all years). Treatment rates were lowest among 18-20-year-olds with substance use disorder. These rates increased slightly over time, from 17% in 2017 to 23% in 2021.
- There is a dramatic difference across all age groups in treatment received between Medicaid-enrolled children, youth, and young adults and their counterparts in foster care, indicating a much greater need for treatment among children and youth in care.

**Summary.** Overall, younger age groups (0-4, 5-11, and 12-17) in foster care had higher rates of mental health treatment compared to 18-20-year-olds. Youth (12-17) and young adults (18-20) with substance use disorder had low treatment rates. Between 2020 and 2021, there was little change in treatment rates overall.

<sup>56</sup>[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)

<sup>57</sup> “All ages” refers to the treatment rate for children and youth with mental health needs, excluding those with substance use disorders.

## Recommendations

- **Enhance support and outreach for Juvenile Rehabilitation residents to increase participation in Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT).** Juvenile Rehabilitation residents need additional support and/or outreach to increase their participation in both DBT individual sessions and skills groups. At the same time, contextual factors such as overcrowding should be considered in that it might not be safe for a resident to leave their room. Additionally, recruiting and retaining Mental Health Professionals to lead DBT might be challenging due to issues such as overcrowding and understaffing at Green Hill School, for example.
  
- **Focus on Improving Mental Health Treatment for 18-20-Year-Olds in Foster Care.** The treatment rate for 18-20-year-olds remains the lowest across all age groups (54% to 59%). Special attention should be given to this age group, with targeted interventions and supports to increase engagement in mental health treatment. This may include expanding access to services tailored for young adults, such as mobile mental health units, peer support, and age-appropriate therapies.
  
- **Address Substance Use Disorder Treatment Gaps.** Treatment rates for youth (12-17) and young adults (18-20) with substance use disorder in foster care are notably low, especially among 18-20-year-olds, where treatment rates were at 23% in 2021. Efforts should focus on increasing access to specialized treatment for substance use, including integrating substance use disorder treatment with mental health services to provide a more holistic approach.

## 15. Increase the number of youth who successfully complete the terms of diversion or alternative sentencing options

**Overall Outcome: Mixed**

**2023-2024 Performance Indicator: Mixed**

### Initiated Disposition Alternatives, 2021-2024<sup>58</sup>

Disposition Alternative	2021	2022	2023	2024
Chemical Dependency Mental Health Disposition Alternative (CDMHDA)	105	78	108	104
Special Sex Offender Disposition Alternative (SSODA)	134	131	101	96
Suspended Disposition Alternative (SDA)	74	34	43	99
Total	313	243	252	299

**Background.** Youth who are committed to JR may be eligible for disposition alternatives which allows for them to remain in the community and receive local supervision and services through juvenile court, rather than serving 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>59, 60</sup>

**Findings.** Between 2023 and 2024, there was a slight decrease in the number of youth who had CDMHDA and SSODA. In contrast, there was a notable increase in the number of youth receiving SDAs.

**Summary.** More youth are obtaining SDAs. Overall, the number of youth receiving a disposition alternative fell from a high of 313 in 2021, but there has been an upward trend in recent years, from 243 in 2022 to 299 in 2024.

<sup>58</sup> DCYF. (December 2024). *Juvenile court block grant*. <https://dcyf.wa.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/reports/JuvenileCourtBlockGrant-2023.pdf>

<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-PCJJgov.pdf>

**2023-2024 Performance Indicator:** Improved

**Evidence-Based Program Starts for Juvenile Justice-Involved Youth, SFY 2019-2024<sup>61,62</sup>**

Evidence-Based Program	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Washington State Aggression Replacement Training (WSART)*	815	405	177	--	--	--
Coordination of Services (COS)	655	405	339	314	438	538
Education Employment Training (EET)	232	235	162	166	200	278
Family Functional Therapy (FFT)	501	421	293	224	267	284
Family Integrated Transitions (FIT)	14	10	1	0	0	0
Multisystemic Therapy (MST)	44	67	52	39	40	62
Totals	2,261	1,543	1,024	743	945	1162

\*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 juvenile courts lost the ability to use state funding to provide it.

Note: Family Integrated Transitions (FIT) is a version of Multisystemic Therapy (MST) for youth with co-occurring disorders. JR has not reported any use of FIT since 2021.

**Background.** In addition to funding disposition alternatives, the Juvenile Court Block Grant administered by DCYF Juvenile Rehabilitation also provides funding to incentivize local jurisdictions to expand the use of evidence-based programs aimed at serving youth and reducing the likelihood of recidivism.

**Findings.** Overall, there was an increase in participation in evidence-based treatments (EBTs) between 2023 and 2024, from 945 to 1162 EBT starts. Specifically, increases were observed for Education Employment Training, Family Functional Therapy, and Multisystemic Therapy, and a sizable increase in the use of Coordination of Services.

<sup>61</sup> DCYF. (December 2024). *Juvenile court block grant*. <https://dcyf.wa.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/reports/JuvenileCourtBlockGrant-2023.pdf>

<sup>62</sup> DCYF. (December 2024). *Juvenile court block grant report*.

**2023-2024 Performance Indicator: Mixed**

**Successful Completes of Evidence-Based Programs among Juvenile Justice-Involved Youth for 2023 and 2024<sup>63, 64</sup>**

Evidence-Based Program	2023		2024	
	Count	Percent of All Successful Completes	Count	Percent of All Successful Completes
Coordination of Services (COS)	420	61.0%	510	57.2%
Education Employment Training (EET)	91	13.2%	165	18.5%
Family Functional Therapy (FFT)	151	21.9%	169	18.9%
Multisystemic Therapy (MST)	27	3.9%	48	5.4%
<b>All Successful Completes</b>	<b>689</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>892</b>	<b>100%</b>

Note: Coordination of Services (COS), Education Employment Training (EET), Family Functional Therapy (FFT), Multisystemic Therapy (MST).

**Findings.** In 2023, there were a total of 689 successful program completions. The highest completion rates were for COS (61%), FFT (22%), and EET (13%). The number of successful completes increased to 892 in 2024. The highest completion rates in 2024 were for COS (57%), FFT (19%), and EET (19%).

**Recommendations.** DCYF should review and adjust the Juvenile Court Block Grant funding formula to ensure it aligns with program goals, including promoting diversion pathways for youth. The DCYF Oversight Board encourages increased collaboration with local jurisdictions to address challenges and improve incentives for diversion and alternative dispositions for youth.

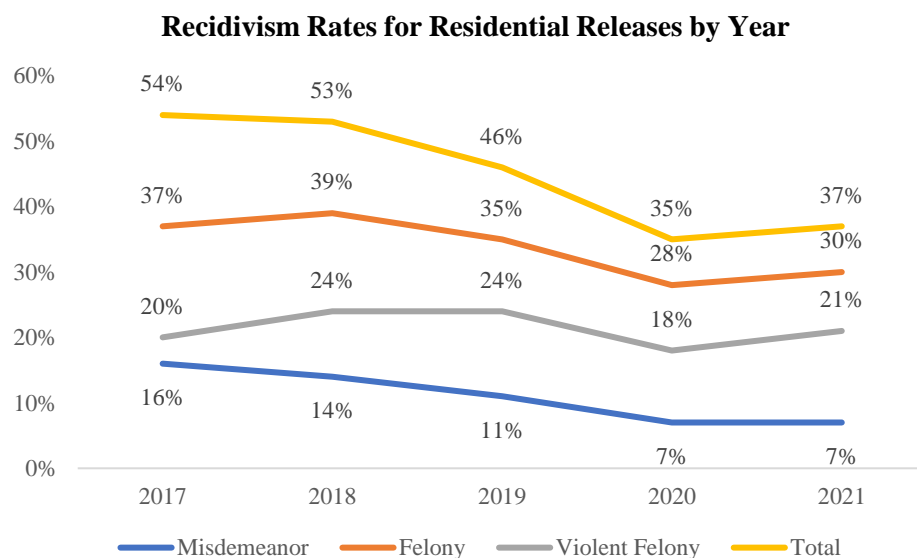
<sup>63</sup> <https://dcyf.wa.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/reports/JuvenileCourtBlockGrant-2023.pdf>

<sup>64</sup> DCYF. (December 2024). *Juvenile court block grant report*.

## 16. Decrease the number of youth and young adults who commit subsequent crimes after exiting juvenile rehabilitation

**Overall Outcome: Needs Improvement**

**2020-2021 Performance Indicator: Needs Improvement**



65

Note: Recidivism is defined as an adjudication as a juvenile or adult for at least one offense occurring in the 18 months following residential release. Years provided are the fiscal year of release.

**Background.** The latest available data are from 2021. This measure is lagged by 32 months, allowing for the 18-month follow-up period, 12 months for case completion or adjudication, and two months for data analysis and reporting. The Board acknowledges that JR did not officially join DCYF until July 2019, so a comprehensive assessment of the relationship between DCYF and juvenile recidivism cannot be fully determined until the reporting years of 2021 and beyond.

**Findings.** Overall, there has been a decrease in the percentage of youth released from JR who commit any offense within 18 months of release, from 54% in 2017 to 37% in 2021, the latest year for which data are available. From 2020 to 2021, there was a slight increase in the total recidivism rate from 35% to 37%. The percentage of youth committing a felony decreased from 37% to 30% between 2017 and 2021, though there was a slight increase from 28% in 2020 to 30% in 2021. The percentage committing a violent felony remained relatively stable between 2017 and 2021 (increasing from 18% to 21% between 2020 and 2021), while the percentage committing a misdemeanor decreased between 2017 and 2021 (staying stable at 7% between 2020 and 2021).

### Recommendations

- The increase in recidivism rates from 35% to 37% overall, and the rise in violent felony offenses from 18% to 21%, warrants further investigation to identify the factors behind these increases and inform targeted interventions.

<sup>65</sup> <https://www.dcyf.wa.gov/practice/oiaa/reports/jr-dashboards/annual-fact-sheet>

- Strengthening collaboration with local jurisdictions and stakeholders is essential to better understand the challenges contributing to recidivism. Regular feedback from these partners, particularly on how the agency supports youth transitioning back to their home communities and schools, will help guide strategic adjustments and ensure alignment with local needs.
- Streamlining data collection and analysis processes, to the extent possible, will help provide more timely insights into recidivism trends. Reducing the lag in reporting would allow DCYF to make data-driven adjustments to programs and policies.



## 17. Eliminate the discharge of unaccompanied youth from institutional settings into homelessness

**Overall Outcome: Improved**

**2020-2021 Performance Indicator: Improved**

### Percent of Youth Exiting Systems of Care who Experience Homelessness within 12 Months of Exit<sup>66</sup>

Systems	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Residential Behavioral Health	18%	17%	17%	15%	13%
Foster Care	23%	22%	17%	21%	15%
Juvenile Rehabilitation	25%	25%	23%	22%	20%
Any System of Care	19%	19%	18%	16%	14%

Note: “Any System of Care” refers to the three systems listed in the table.

**Background.** Many youth who enter institutional settings come from precarious housing situations. When they exit those settings, they are at an increased risk of housing instability or homelessness. For example, in 2022, 13% (N=33) of youth and young adults entering a JR facility had been homeless in the year prior to their entry.<sup>67</sup>

**Findings.** The percentage of youth experiencing homelessness within 12 months of exiting any system of care (residential behavioral health, foster care, or juvenile rehabilitation) decreased from 19% in 2017 to 14% in 2021. Decreases have also occurred in each of those systems – residential behavioral health, foster care, and juvenile rehabilitation – individually. Youth exiting juvenile rehabilitation consistently experience the highest rates of homelessness. In 2021, 7% (N=55) of the 812 youth and young adults exiting a JR facility experienced homelessness within three months of their exit, and 20% (N=160) experienced homelessness within 12 months of exit.<sup>68</sup>

In 2022, 12% (N=32) of the 555 youth and young adults exiting a JR facility experienced homelessness within three months of their exit, and rates of homelessness were higher among youth of color<sup>69</sup> (rates of homelessness within 12 months of exit were unavailable).<sup>70</sup>

### Recommendations

- DCYF should prioritize addressing housing instability for youth exiting juvenile rehabilitation facilities, particularly given the higher rates of homelessness among these youth compared to those exiting other systems of care. This could include developing partnerships with housing agencies and expanding supportive housing options for youth transitioning out of institutional settings.
- Continue collaborating with other state agencies that assist families, youth, and young adults in accessing appropriate and affordable housing, with the goal of expanding housing options and streamlining efforts across systems.

<sup>66</sup> <https://www.dshs.wa.gov/sites/default/files/rda/reports/research-11-254.pdf>

<sup>67</sup> <https://www.dcyf.wa.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/Medicaid-BehavioralHealth-JRFacilities-%202022.pdf>

<sup>68</sup> <https://www.dshs.wa.gov/sites/default/files/rda/reports/research-11-254.pdf>

<sup>69</sup> Exact statistics by race/ethnicity were not available.

<sup>70</sup> <https://www.dcyf.wa.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/Medicaid-BehavioralHealth-JRFacilities-%202022.pdf>

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

**Overall Outcome: Mixed**

**2023-2024 Performance Indicator: Mixed**

### 30-Day Rate of Room Confinement/Isolation in JR by Race/Ethnicity, SFY 2017 to 2024<sup>71</sup>

Race/Ethnicity	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	ADP
American Indian/Alaska Native	0.7	0.8	1.2	0.9	0.8	1.2	1.4	1.8	14
Asian/Pacific Islander	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	0.8	16
Black/African American	1.2	0.9	1.1	1.1	1.0	0.9	1.0	1.1	97
Hispanic/Latino	0.8	1.0	1.1	0.9	0.8	0.9	3.0	1.1	69
White	0.9	0.9	0.8	0.7	0.7	0.8	1.8	1.5	97

Note: [WSRDAC/M](#) - American Indian/Alaska Native, Multiracial combined with American Indian/Alaska Native and Black/African American, Multiracial combined with Black/African American, Asian/Pacific Islander, Multiracial combined with Asian/Pacific Islander. Rates for some racial/ethnic groups are suppressed due to low cell counts. ADP reflect 2024 population counts.

Average Daily Population (ADP), Juvenile Rehabilitation (JR), State Fiscal Year (SFY).

**Background.** JR residents can be placed in room confinement (locked in the room designated for their sleeping, during times when other residents are outside of their rooms) or in isolation (locked in a room that is not designated for their sleeping, often a padded room).<sup>72</sup> DCYF tracks the 30-day rate of room confinement and isolation for residents released from residential facilities each state fiscal year (SFY).

**Room Confinement/Isolation (RCI) rates represent the average number of days Juvenile Rehabilitation residents spend in room confinement / isolation per 30 days.** In SFY 2024, the duration of isolation events was as follows: 108 events lasted less than 2 hours, 90 lasted between 2 to 4 hours (ranging from 2 hours to 3 hours and 59 minutes), 33 lasted between 4 to 12 hours (ranging from 4 hours to 11 hours and 59 minutes), and 15 lasted 12 hours or more.<sup>73</sup> Due to the small sample sizes within certain racial/ethnic groups, results by racial/ethnic group should be interpreted with caution.

### 2023 to 2024 Findings

- **American Indian/Alaska Native** individual rates increased from **1.4** days in 2023 to **1.8** days in 2024, the highest RCI.
- **Asian/Pacific Islander:** Data were only available for 2024, with a rate of **0.8**.
- **Black/African American** individuals had an increase from **1.0** in 2023 to **1.1** in 2024, indicating a small upward trend.
- **Hispanic/Latino** individuals had a decrease from **3.0** in 2023 to **1.1** in 2024, showing a major decrease in confinement/isolation.

<sup>71</sup> DCYF. (October 2024). Automated Client Tracking System (ACT) [July 2023-June 2024], <https://www.dcyf.wa.gov/practice/oiaa/agency-performance/racialequity> and <https://www.dcyf.wa.gov/practice/oiaa/reports/jr-dashboards/room-confinement-isolation>

<sup>72</sup> RCI refers to a youth or young adult being alone in a room. DCYF does not categorize or refer to it as solitary confinement, and room confinement or isolation is not intended to be used as punishment in the traditional sense of solitary confinement. However, RCI involves both isolation and confinement.

<sup>73</sup> <https://www.dcyf.wa.gov/practice/oiaa/reports/jr-dashboards/room-confinement-isolation>

- **White** individual rates decreased from **1.8** in 2023 to **1.5** in 2024, reflecting a decline but at a slower rate than the Hispanic/Latino resident group.

**2023 to 2024 Change Summary.** The data suggests that American Indian/Alaska Native and Black/African American groups had slight to moderate increases in RCI rates. In contrast, the Hispanic/Latino group experienced a sharp decrease, while the White group saw a more modest decline. The Asian/Pacific Islander group has new data for 2024, with a rate of 0.8. When considering these findings, it’s important to recognize that rates can vary considerably from year to year and likely have small sample sizes. For example, in 2023, American/Indian/Alaska Native youth have lower RCI rates than White youth and Black/African American youth had the lowest rate of all groups.

**2024 Summary.** The data reveals some notable racial and ethnic disparities in the use of room confinement or isolation in SFY 2024. For example, American Indian/Alaska Native individuals experienced room confinement at a rate over twice as high as Asian/Pacific Islander individuals, and more than 50% higher than White individuals.

**2023-2024 Performance Indicator:** Mixed

**Racial/Ethnic Disparity Ratios for Community Facility Placement in JR, SFY 2017 to 2024<sup>74</sup>**

Race/Ethnicity	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
American Indian/Alaska Native	1.34	0.75	0.95	1.19	1.17	0.70	0.93	1.10
Asian/Pacific Islander	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	0.98
Black/African American	1.04	1.23	0.99	0.92	1.22	1.36	1.17	0.74
Hispanic/Latino	1.10	0.80	1.09	0.92	1.19	1.15	1.40	1.20
White	0.90	1.02	0.99	0.90	0.68	0.83	0.73	1.04

Note: [WSRDAC/M](#) - American Indian/Alaska Native, Multiracial combined with American Indian/Alaska Native and Black/African American, Multiracial combined with Black/African American, Asian/Pacific Islander, Multiracial combined with Asian/Pacific Islander. Rates for some racial/ethnic groups are suppressed due to low cell counts.

**Background.** DCYF community facilities are typically designed for youth who have been an adjudicated delinquent but do not require the more secure environment of a Juvenile Rehabilitation Center. These facilities are intended to provide a less restrictive environment while still offering supervision, services, and support. These **ratios were calculated to highlight disparities, with a ratio of 1.00 indicating that a group is equally likely to be placed in a community facility relative to the population as a whole.** A ratio less than 1 indicates that a group is less likely to be placed in a community facility, while a ratio greater than 1 indicates that they are more likely to be placed in a community facility.

**Findings**

- American Indian/Alaska Native individuals were **10% more likely** to be placed in community facilities compared to the general population.
- Asian/Pacific Islander individuals were **2% less likely** to be placed in community facilities compared to the general population.
- Black/African American individuals were **26% less likely** to be placed in community facilities compared to the general population.

<sup>74</sup> DCYF. (October 2024). Automated Client Tracking System (ACT) [July 2023-June 2024] and <https://www.dcyf.wa.gov/practice/oiaa/agency-performance/racialequity>

- Hispanic/Latino individuals were **20% more likely** to be placed in community facilities compared to the general population.
- White individuals were **4% more likely** to be placed in community facilities compared to the general population.

### Summary

- **In 2024, Hispanic/Latino individuals** were **20% more likely** to be placed in less restrictive, community facilities.
- **Black/African American individuals**, with a ratio of **0.7**, were the least likely to be placed in community-based settings. The underrepresentation of Black/African American individuals in community facilities could indicate that these individuals were more likely to be placed in higher-security or institutional settings instead of community-based programs. This disparity may reflect broader issues, such as the over-incarceration of Black individuals, or institutional biases in decision-making processes regarding placement. At the same time, when considering these findings, it’s important to recognize that rates can vary considerably from year to year and may be limited by small sample sizes. For example, Black/African American individuals were overrepresented in these settings in 2017, 2018, and from 2021 to 2023, though to differing degrees. A deeper investigation into how racial/ethnic factors are influencing placement decisions is warranted.

### 2023-2024 Performance Indicator: Mixed

#### Racial/Ethnic Disparity Ratios for Discretionary Parole Placement, SFY 2017 to 2024<sup>75</sup>

Race/Ethnicity	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
American Indian/Alaska Native	1.19	1.07	1.29	1.46	1.22	0.70	0.99	1.07
Asian/Pacific Islander	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	0.65
Black/African American	0.92	0.78	0.87	0.90	1.12	0.95	0.93	1.10
Hispanic/Latino	0.96	1.36	1.11	1.12	0.89	1.05	1.21	1.01
White	1.02	1.02	0.98	0.86	0.91	1.04	1.00	0.99

Note: [WSRDAC/M](#) - American Indian/Alaska Native, Multiracial combined with American Indian/Alaska Native and Black/African American, Multiracial combined with Black/African American, Asian/Pacific Islander, Multiracial combined with Asian/Pacific Islander. Rates for some racial/ethnic groups are suppressed due to low cell counts.

**Background.** Approximately 50% of JR residents are assigned to parole aftercare. Although about half of parole assignments are mandatory based on a resident’s committing offense, the remaining half of parole assignment is based on JR discretion.<sup>76</sup> DCYF tracks racial/ethnic disparity in discretionary parole placement using a Disparity Ratio. A ratio of **1.00** indicates that a group is equally likely to be granted discretionary parole relative to their proportion in the population of Juvenile Rehabilitation residents. Ratios greater than **1.00** indicate that a group is more likely to be placed on discretionary parole, while ratios less than **1.00** suggest that a group is less likely to be placed on discretionary parole. Due to the small number of youth in certain racial/ethnic groups, some results by racial/ethnic group should be interpreted with caution.

### Findings (Changes between 2023 and 2024)

- **American Indian/Alaska Native** individuals were granted discretionary parole at a ratio of **1.1** in 2024, an improvement from 2023.

<sup>75</sup> DCYF. (October 2024). Automated Client Tracking System (ACT) [July 2023-June 2024] and <https://www.dcyf.wa.gov/practice/oiaa/agency-performance/racialequity>

<sup>76</sup> <https://dcyf.wa.gov/practice/oiaa/agency-performance/racialequity>

- **Asian/Pacific Islander** data is available only for 2024, with a ratio of **0.7**.
- **Black/African American** individuals were **10%** more likely to be granted discretionary parole in 2024, with the ratio increasing from **0.9** in 2023 to **1.1**.
- **Hispanic/Latino** individuals were less likely to be granted discretionary parole in 2024, with a decrease in the disparity ratio from **1.2** in 2023 to **1.0**.
- **White** individuals were equally likely to be granted discretionary parole, with no change in the ratio from **1.0** in 2023 to **1.0** in 2024.

#### Summary (Changes between 2023 and 2024)

- **Black/African American** individuals saw an increase in disparity, while **Hispanic/Latino** individuals saw a decrease.
- **American Indian/Alaska Native** and **Asian/Pacific Islander** data show some fluctuation, with American Indian/Alaska Native improving.
- **Asian/Pacific Islander** data were newly available for 2024, however, this group had markedly lower rates of parole compared to other groups.

#### Findings (2024)

##### Compared to their overall representation in the Juvenile Rehabilitation population, in 2024

- **American Indian/Alaska Native individuals were 7% more likely** to be granted discretionary parole.
- **Asian/Pacific Islander individuals were 35% less likely** to be granted discretionary parole.
- **Black/African American individuals were 10% more likely** to be granted discretionary parole.
- **Hispanic/Latino individuals were almost equally likely** (1% more likely) to be granted discretionary parole.
- **White individuals were slightly less likely** (1% less likely) to be granted discretionary parole.

**Summary (2024).** The data indicates that **Black/African American** and **American Indian/Alaska Native** individuals are slightly more likely to be granted discretionary parole, while **Asian/Pacific Islander individuals** are significantly less likely. The underrepresentation of **Asian/Pacific Islander individuals** (ratio of **0.7**) in 2024 suggests that these individuals may face significant challenges in being granted discretionary parole. The slightly higher likelihood of **Black/African American** and **American Indian/Alaska Native** individuals being granted discretionary parole may reflect positive developments in efforts to ensure more equitable parole decisions for these groups. **Hispanic/Latino** and **White** individuals are relatively close to parity in terms of their likelihood of parole placement. When considering these findings, it's important to recognize that rates can vary considerably from year to year and may be limited by small sample sizes.

**Recommendations.** Addressing disparities across all three performance indicators should be a priority to ensure that decisions are made fairly and equitably across all racial and ethnic groups. Additionally, further exploration into the factors influencing these disparities could be critical for ensuring that confinement, placement, and parole decisions are made based on individualized assessments rather than group-based stereotypes.

## Conclusion

DCYF’s overall performance across the outcomes reviewed in this report demonstrate both successes and areas for improvement. At the same time, it is important to recognize that we may not have the complete context needed to determine whether the improvements we identified genuinely reflect better outcomes for children, youth, and families. Without a full understanding of all contributing factors, it can be challenging to assess whether these changes are truly having the intended positive impact. This is especially relevant when considering the decrease in the number of children entering out-of-home care. According to our performance indicator, the percentage of children who *re-entered* care within 12 months of exit increased from 2022 to 2023. This trend could suggest that, while the length of stay in out-of-home care has been reduced, it may also be leading to a higher rate of re-entry for some children. Stated differently, shorter stays might be associated with an increased likelihood of children returning to care and greater instability overall.

Compared to the [2022 Annual Report](#), DCYF's strategic priority to eliminate racial disproportionality and advance racial equity is more evident given the increase of performance indicators that show outcomes by race and ethnicity. The Board applauds this improvement. The Oversight Board expects DCYF to continue making progress in advancing racial equity throughout the continuum of care and in its efforts to become an anti-racist organization.

In 2025, the DCYF Oversight Board will prioritize monitoring adolescent outcomes in light of the agency's continued implementation of JR to 25 and Reentry Supports. The Board also plans to review the implementation and early impacts of recent reforms to juvenile rehabilitation facilities. Additionally, the Board looks forward to developing more focused and impactful reports on key topics essential to the agency's success, alongside the annual report.

As highlighted throughout this report, the DCYF Oversight Board acknowledges the progress made and the areas where improvement is needed. Moving forward, the Oversight Board will continue to monitor the agency's performance based on the expectations outlined in the founding legislation, [RCW 43.216.015](#), while also seeking opportunities for partnership, innovation, and improved outcomes for children, youth, and families across Washington State.

## Appendices

### Appendix A 2024 DCYF Oversight Board Membership

Name and Affiliation	Board Role
<b>Katie Biron</b> , Fostering Connections	Foster parent representative
<b>Bobbe Bridge</b> , Center for Children & Youth Justice	Juvenile rehabilitation and justice subject matter expert
<b>Tom Dent</b> , House of Representatives	Legislator
<b>Ben de Haan, PhD</b> , University of Washington School of Social Work	Child welfare subject matter expert
<b>Marian Harris, PhD</b> , University of Washington School of Social Work and Criminal Justice (Professor Emeritus)	Subject matter expert in reducing disparities in child outcomes by income, race, and ethnicity
<b>Pamela Javier</b> , Co-Design Consultant and Lived Expert	Current or former foster youth under 25
<b>Danielle Johnson</b> , Department of Children, Youth, and Families	Child welfare caseworker representative
<b>Ruth Kagi</b> , State Representative (retired)	Early learning subject matter expert
<b>Diane Liebe, MD</b> , Yakima Valley Farm Workers Clinic/Children’s Village (Co-chair)	Physician with experience working with youth
<b>Lois Martin</b> , Community Day Center for Children	Early childhood program practitioner representative
<b>Tana Senn</b> , House of Representatives	Legislator
<b>Barbara Serrano</b> , Office of the Governor	Governor’s Office representative (non-voting)
<b>Judy Warnick</b> , Senate	Legislator
<b>Claire Wilson</b> , Senate (Co-chair)	Legislator

## Appendix B

### Summary of DCYF Presentations to the DCYF Oversight Board in 2024

**Fentanyl Crisis in the Context of Child Welfare.** On March 21, 2024, Vickie Ybarra, PhD, MPH, RN (Assistant Secretary for Partnership, Prevention, and Services at DCYF), presented to the Board on the [Risks of Fentanyl](#). Dr. Ybarra provided a comprehensive overview of the crisis and its impact on child welfare. Experts highlighted the growing risks of fentanyl exposure to children, particularly in cases of child abuse or neglect involving parental fentanyl use. Challenges were discussed regarding the difficulty of assessing child safety and the impact of recent changes in child welfare removal standards, which have led to a 22% decrease in out-of-home placements, resulting in more high-risk cases being managed at home through safety planning. The presentation also addressed the alarming increase in child fatalities and near fatalities linked to fentanyl, as well as the lack of adequate treatment and detoxification services that allow children to remain with their parents. Patrick Dowd, Director of OFCO, reviewed data on fentanyl-related fatalities, while Allison Krutsinger, DCYF Director of Public Affairs, described new laws and upcoming implementation plans aimed at addressing the fentanyl crisis.

**Juvenile Rehabilitation Update.** On August 28, 2024, DCYF officials<sup>77</sup> presented a [Juvenile Rehabilitation Update](#) to the Board. During the presentation, they addressed concerns raised by Board Members regarding overcrowding in juvenile rehabilitation facilities. One key issue discussed was the transfer of young adults from Green Hill School to the Department of Corrections (DOC), which was viewed as contradictory to the Juvenile Rehabilitation (JR) to 25 legislation established under [Senate Bill 6160](#). This legislation was designed to keep young adults in juvenile facilities until the age of 25, but overcrowding during July 2024 contributed to the transfer of 43 young people to adult facilities. This action raised concerns about the effectiveness of DCYF’s current rehabilitation practices and system capacity.

Key discussions during the meeting focused on the rise in juvenile arrests, with a notable 24% increase in juvenile crime based on recent data from the Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs. Questions were raised about the proportion of first-time offenders versus those with prior involvement in the system. Another issue highlighted was the changing demographics of youth served by JR facilities, particularly following the pandemic. Several board members recommended further disaggregation of data to identify specific trends and youth groups in need of targeted interventions. In addition, the impact of overcrowding on staffing ratios and the correlation to rising incidents of aggression within the facilities was discussed.

Several action items and follow-up questions were identified. Among them, there was a request for updates on policy-related legislation and potential solutions to alleviate overcrowding, including diversion efforts and expanding physical facility capacity. A significant concern was DCYF's ability to predict and manage facility space, as they often do not receive advance notice about which youth will be sent to their facilities, complicating their ability to plan ahead. Board Members also raised questions about the data systems in place, with a need for more accurate predictive data to ensure better planning and resource allocation. There was a call for greater collaboration between DCYF and other systems such as the judiciary and probation departments, to ensure more coordinated responses to juvenile justice issues.

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<sup>77</sup> DCYF leadership staff in attendance included: Ross Hunter, Secretary (DCYF); Jenny Heddin, Deputy Secretary Chief of Staff (DCYF); Felice Upton, Assistant Secretary Juvenile Rehabilitation (DCYF); Robert Long, DOC Director of Security & Emergency Management; and Allison Krutsinger, Director of Public Affairs (DCYF).



## Appendix C

### 2022 Annual Report Recommendations

This table outlines the recommendations from the most recent DCYF Oversight Board Annual Report, from 2022.

<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>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Reporting disaggregated data for policy and program claims of advancing racial equity:</b> When DCYF claims changes to programs, policies, or practices achieve advancing racial equity, the agency should transparently provide data to support that claim.</li> <li>• <b>Report on RESJ Team Achievements:</b> 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.</li> <li>• <b>Report on and define racial equity and social justice as two separate concepts:</b> 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.</li> <li>• <b>Increasing Access and Availability of RESJ Resources and Trainings:</b> 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.</li> </ul>
<b>2. Increasing number and proportion of children kindergarten ready as measured by WA kindergarten inventory of developing skills (WaKIDS) assessment including mathematics</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Publicly Report WaKIDS Data for Children in Foster Care (re-emphasized from 2021 with elaboration):</b> DCYF has identified kindergarten readiness as an outcome indicator for the agency’s strategic priority <a href="#">Create high-quality integrated B-8 system</a>. 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.</li> <li>• <b>Addressing Fragmentation of Early Learning System:</b> 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.</li> </ul>
<b>3. Increasing the proportion of children in early learning programs that have achieved the level 3 or higher early achievers quality standard</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>COVID-19 Impacts on Status of Quality Rating System:</b> 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.</li> </ul>
<b>4. Increasing the available supply of licensed childcare in both childcare centers and family homes, including providers not receiving state subsidy</b>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Report on Open Licensed Capacity by Slot Type:</b> 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.</li> <li>• <b>Confirming accuracy of reported data from providers:</b> 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.</li> </ul>
<b>5. Preventing child abuse and neglect</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Outcome Data Reporting for Prevention Services:</b> 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.</li> <li>• <b>Prioritize IT Upgrades to Access Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) Funding:</b> 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.</li> <li>• <b>Transparency on Multi-Year Planning for Multiple Initiatives &amp; Projects:</b> 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.</li> </ul>
<b>6. Reducing the number of children entering out-of-home care</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Indicator for Re-Entry into Out-of-Home Care (OHC) Rate:</b> 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.</li> </ul>
<b>7. Reducing length of stay for youth in out of home care</b>
n/a
<b>8. Reducing maltreatment of youth while in out-of-home care</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Develop Useful Measure for Maltreatment Rate in Out-of-Home Care (re-emphasized from 2021):</b> 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.</li> <li>• <b>Performance Data for SFY2021:</b> 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.</li> </ul>
<b>9. Licensing more foster homes than there are children in foster care</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Revise Performance Measure &amp; Reporting (re-emphasized from 2021):</b> Revise measure to increase licensing for kinship care, therapeutic foster care, and foster care for adolescents needing</li> </ul>

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**

- **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.

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

- **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.

**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**

- **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 youths who are reunified with their family of origin**

- **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 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**

- **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* 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.
- **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.

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

- **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.
- **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. 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.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Partnering with Children and Youth Behavioral Health Workgroup:</b> 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.</li> </ul>
<p><b>16. An increase in the number of youths who successfully complete the terms of diversion or alternative sentencing options</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Revisit Juvenile Court Block Grant Funding Formula:</b> 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.</li> </ul>
<p><b>17. A decrease in the number of youth and young adults who commit subsequent crimes</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Institutional Education Outcomes:</b> 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.</li> </ul>
<p><b>18. Eliminating the discharge of unaccompanied youth from institutional settings into homelessness</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Continued Collaboration (consistent from 2021):</b> 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.</li> </ul>