

## Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF) Oversight Board

### Board Meeting Record

Thursday, May 15, 2025, 9:00 am – 1:00 p.m., virtual meeting & Helen Sommers Building

**Member Attendance:** Anna Armstrong, Rep. Steve Bergquist, Bobbe Bridge, Sen. Leonard Christian, Rep. Tom Dent, Dr. Ben de Haan, Dr. Marian Harris, Pamela Javier, Danielle Johnson, Dr. Diane Liebe (Co-chair), Mary Sprute Garland, April Messenger, Sen. Claire Wilson (Co-chair)

**Staff in Attendance:** Lyscha Marcynyszyn, PhD, *Executive Director* & Nickolaus Colgan, *Administrative Coordinator*

**Public in Attendance:** Kathy Elkins, *community member*, Amy Parks, *community member*, Shannon Anderson, *Region 3 Volunteer 1624 Caregiver Representative*, and Melissa Mitchell, *community member*

*Only public attendees who chose to identify themselves during the meeting, or who made public comment, are recorded in the official meeting minutes.*

### Welcome, Roll Call, and Opening Remarks

The meeting was called into order at 9:00 a.m. and co-chair Senator Claire Wilson started the meeting with introductions. Lyscha Marcynyszyn did roll call of DCYF Oversight Board members and quorum was met. Lyscha proposed approval of the March 20, 2025, meeting minutes and asked for any edits to the draft minutes. An edit was provided by Dr. Ben de Haan. Specifically, given the clarification at the March meeting that CWIS is not linked to the data collection necessary to claim FFPSA the minutes should be amended to reflect this. Lyscha requested a motion be made for approval, Bobbe Bridge made a motion to approve the minutes and Dr. Ben de Haan seconded. Lyscha requested all in favor to approve, all present voted aye. There were no nays or abstentions.

### Supporting the K-12 Education Success of Youth Involved in Child Welfare and Juvenile Rehabilitation (JR) | Dr. Sarah Veele, Director of the Office of Innovation, Alignment, and Accountability, DCYF, Peggy Carlson, Child Welfare Education Program Administrator, DCYF, and Haley Lowe, Director of Education, DCYF

Dr. Sarah Veele, Peggy Carlson, and Haley Lowe from DCYF provided a presentation on supporting the K-12 education success of young people involved in Child Welfare and Juvenile Rehabilitation (JR). This presentation included data about factors related to student success: attendance, inclusive practices, exclusionary, school stability, and teacher effectiveness. The ongoing efforts by DCYF were also highlighted.

### Questions/Takeaways:

- On the JR Attendance slide, what is “Personal Time Outs”?
  - It is a type of individualized support and a way to keep students engaged, if something is upsetting to them, they can step away and unpack what is happening with staff and then see if any further resources are needed.
- On the JR Discipline slide, are there definitions that exist for what defiance is, or what is considered inappropriate language that the JR facilities follow?
  - There are definitions, DCYF wants to have common shared language among the school districts for consistency.
- On the JR Discipline slide, what are the trends? Has there been an increase, decrease, or plateau during the last few years?

- Unable to speak about trends, on the DCYF JR side. It wasn't until 16 months ago that we had dedicated DCYF staff exploring this information. Up until then, DCYF relied on data from the school districts.
- For foster care, DCYF is seeing an increase for exclusionary discipline in data.
- Do we know how much attendance is attributable to kids with diagnosed mental health/behavioral issues?
  - That is not something DCYF has been examining with intention. There are some examples of it, I would need to work with Sarah Veele to get a more exact percentage.
  - Addressing this can help those youth get an IEP and additional supports they need.
- Requests for Sarah Veele
  - Bobbe Bridge: Could you ask Haley if there are participatory survey results for Green Hill residents?

## **Educational Outcomes for JR Involved Youth and Emerging Adults | Matt Frizell, Assistant Superintendent, Office of System and School Improvement, OSPI, and Mikhail Cherniske, Senior Policy Analyst, Government Relations, OSPI**

Matt Frizell and Mikhail Cherniske from the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) provided a presentation on institutional education updates. This included an overview of institutional education, discussion of academic progress measures, and highlights of institutional education legislative reform.

### **Questions/Takeaways:**

- Is there any slack given for those absences that are excused?
  - Information about excused and unexcused absences is collected, but when looking at regular attendance, they are not separated in the data.
- What is being defined as an absence and how is that tracked? For example, is attendance counted as moving from a cell to a classroom for education, or does it also count if you are getting education within a cell? Attendance can look very different in a JR facility versus a standard schooling experience.
  - Not sure we can answer that today. In the data collection site OSPI uses, CEDARS, for a student to be counted as "present" the student would need to be in the classroom." In terms of participation, if the student received education in their cell, it would be counted as an absence.
  - Given the overcrowding in JR facilities, some students are unable to get to their classrooms, not because they don't want to, but because there are too many students.
    - OSPI and DCYF should both consider this when collecting and analyzing the data.
- What evidence-based approaches have worked best with youth in institutional education? For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic some youth did terribly with virtual learning, while some thrived.
  - Access and connection to a caring adult is the biggest thing. Having someone you can trust, who is often an educator, to help young people continuing their journey is so important.
  - Staffing continues to be a challenge, so a lot of education occurs online. Having as many certified teachers as possible in front of kids in-person is the goal.
  - We know that students often enter the system with trauma and may have experienced multiple facility placements. Having a certified and pedagogically experienced teacher can make a big difference in helping youth transition into the next stage of their life.
  - Making sure that students' social and emotional needs are met will make receiving education easier.
- At these facilities when talking about engaging these youth in education, they are not getting reengaged with their home school, the district where they came from. An important part of all this is who is going to handle the transition back to their own schools?
  - That final transition back into the community is the most important. There is some state and federal funding for advocates to help youth when they transition from a facility and to ensure there are no barriers when re-enrolling. OSPI is looking at rulemaking to strengthen this process and to make it even smoother for youth.

- Some emerging adults (aged 18-25) and some young folks entering the emerging adult age range will not be returning to school and some will enter another institution. What does that transition look like and how does this educational journey go?
  - Institutional education has really been focused on K-12, not 18-25 and they don't always come together legislatively.
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  - It's important not to disregard the positive interventions made during K-12 simply because they transition to an adult facility.
- Are there times when a youth who successfully transitioned from a facility comes back to give the current youth some morale?
  - That would be lovely to explore and to get those previously incarcerated youth back in facilities to share their stories.
  - From DCYF: Credible Messengers and a program called Reset are both ways we get stories from people with lived experience in front of youth who are currently in JR facilities.
- Legislators were looking at a bill ([SB 5296](#)) this year that would have moved someone with less than 90 days, instead of 30 days, to a community detention facility. If someone is in a facility for 90 days, what is the impact on education?
  - The impact would be a student wouldn't be required to go through multiple transitions that disrupt their education, and its more likely they could stay within their own community.
    - Yes, overall, the longer a student can stay in the same facility the better results are for their education.
    - Students who have stability and opportunity to bond with educators have a better chance for success.
  - This bill was not necessarily focused on detention, but more keeping kids in their own community. The 90 days were related to staying in a community and having the ability to stay enrolled in the district they are in.
  - When OSPI refers to community facilities, they refer to facilities run by the county, not DCYF.

## Public Comment | Co-Chair Dr. Diane Liebe

Kathy Elkins, *community member*, Kathy said that last year 100% of the applicants for the child abuse pediatricians' board passed and that it has happened multiple years. She continued that it is not a high bar, and this is a red flag. Kathy stated that the position is given too much authority, and the applicants are not adequately vetted. Further, no meaningful expertise is needed to apply. She stated that these doctors can override specialists, due process, and destroy families with no oversight. She stated that the doctor who reviewed her granddaughter did not show any medical rigor and the report that followed was filled with ethical violations. Additionally, during the court case the doctor committed perjury.

Shannon Anderson, *Region 3 1624 Foster Caregiver Representative*, Shannon said that the retention of foster parents has always been a struggle, and that respite is a critical piece of this process. She continued that foster parents work 24/7 with high needs children and the current reimbursement rate for a full day of respite is about \$20. Shannon said that this year is on track to exceed any prior year in terms of fentanyl fatalities. She continued, something dramatic needs to change in the way we act upon the imminent physical harm principle. She encouraged board members to talk with those directly affected including caregivers, families, and community partners.

Amy Parks, *community member*, Amy recounted the series of events that lead to the death of five-year-old Brentlee Lawrence. She said that Brentlee died of fentanyl toxicity and was previously kept in an unfit living environment. Amy read the quote of another foster kid outlining their experience and how they are still

affected today. Amy stated there have been 31 critical incidents since January of this year and reemphasized that something needs to change.

Melissa Mitchell, *community member*, Melissa spoke out against HB 1227 stating that since its implementation there has been an increase of at least 220% of critical incidents against children. She continued that she has firsthand experience about the tragedies that have happened to children due to HB 1227. Melissa recounted a story about a fatal car accident involving a mother and her child, in which it was later discovered that the mother had been drinking. She said that this should not have happened.

### Shared Values Statement | Lyscha Marcynyszyn, Executive Director

Lyscha Marcynyszyn referenced the board's earlier work on the Shared Values statement from the March meeting and presented an updated version, inviting additional feedback. The board responded favorably to the editorial changes and additional feedback was not provided.

### Power Dynamics, Decision Making, & Courageous Conversations Training | Dr. Adrian Thompson, Equity & Employee Development, Department of Enterprise Services

Dr. Adrian Thompson provided a [training](#) to the Board on the topics of power dynamics, decision making, and courageous conversations.

#### Questions/Takeaways:

- Senator Wilson shared the questions she uses in her committee meetings and when crafting agendas to ensure that an equity lens is present in all the work that she does. The questions are:
  - Who are the underrepresented groups affected by this policy, program, practice, or decision? What are the impacts on these groups?
  - Does this policy, program, practice, or decision worsen existing disparities or produce other unintended consequences?
    - If “yes,” or “I don’t know” to either of the above: how have you intentionally involved impacted parties?
  - What impact will this bill have on the social determinants of health (economic stability, education, social and community context, health and health care, and basic needs)?

### Juvenile Rehabilitation Outcomes Subcommittee Update | Bobbe Bridge, JR Outcomes Subcommittee Chair

Bobbe Bridge thanked her fellow subcommittee members Danielle Johnson, Pamela Javier, and Dr. Diane Liebe for their work on the subcommittee and provided an update about subcommittee work. Activities include gathering background information from DCYF, OSPI, and the Washington State Center for Court Research (WSCCR) to determine whether the current metrics are appropriate for assessing outcomes. In tandem with these presentations, the subcommittee has also finalized its work plan, which will be used to guide decisions.

#### Questions/Takeaways:

- Look into the work that the [Sentencing Guidelines Commission](#) (SGC) is doing as well as the recommendations given from the [Joint Select Committee on Governance and Funding for Institutional Education](#).
- How is this subcommittee connecting to other organizations who are doing the same work? It is important to avoid redoing work that has already been done.
  - Some examples of groups to look into: [Justice for Girls Coalition](#), [Capital Classroom](#) program, [American Civil Liberties Union](#) (ACLU), [Columbia Legal Services](#), and the [Washington Defenders Association](#) (WDA).

- We don't want this subcommittee doing work that isn't connected to other groups who have been successful in passing legislative changes.
- The subcommittee is building up their knowledge right now, which will become the Board's knowledge. If at some point during this information gathering, we have h recommendations to advocate for the department, that is our role currently.

### **Closing Remarks and Adjourn**

Co-Chair Senator Wilson thanked all attendees for their time today and reminded the board that the next meeting will take place on July 17 from 9 AM – 1 PM.

**Adjourned at 1:00 pm on Thursday, May 15, 2025.**