



Department of Children, Youth, and Families Oversight Board 2025 Annual Report

DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN, YOUTH, AND
FAMILIES OVERSIGHT BOARD

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Executive Summary

How the 2025 Annual Report differs from previous years

This year's DCYF Oversight Board Annual Legislative Report marks a period of transition. Since its creation, the Oversight Board (OB) has used the annual report as its primary tool to communicate program review outcomes to DCYF leadership, the Governor's Office, the Legislature, and the public. However, interviews with Board members and agency leaders suggest that it is time to reassess the report's value, particularly given the significant staff resources required from both the Board and DCYF to meet the statutory deadline of December 1 ([RCW 43.216.015](#)). This timeline also necessitates report submission to the Governor's Office in early November, which does not align well with DCYF's internal data collection and management schedule.

In January 2025, the Board learned that, due to internal capacity constraints, DCYF would be unable to expedite data analyses for the annual report as it had done in previous years. It is anticipated that updated data will be available by December 31. The Board has included information on the most recent available data in Figure 1.

DCYF's internal capacity constraints and the misalignment between when data are available and when the annual report is due prompted broader conversations about how the Board and DCYF collaborate more generally. These conversations resulted in a proposal, entitled "Oversight Board 2.0" (included in the body of this report), that recommends realigning the relationship between DCYF and the Oversight Board as it relates to monitoring outcomes.

The 18 outcomes and associated performance indicators, traditionally featured in the body of the report, are included this year in Appendix A. The main report instead focuses on proposed changes to future reporting practices (contingent on a minor statutory adjustment) and a shift in the Board's oversight approach. This would allow the Board to better align with statutory intent, respond to evolving agency conditions, and monitor outcomes for Washington's children, youth, and families.

Summary of Appendix A

Outcomes

DCYF assumed full child welfare authority and early learning 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 four DCYF outcomes. No data or insufficient data were available for 14 outcomes. Of the four outcomes for which data were available, one showed improvement, one showed no change, one needed improvement, and one had mixed results. Please note that each of the outcomes may have multiple performance indicators.

Ratings for the individual indicators that make up the 18 outcomes are shown in Appendix A. Figure 1 in Appendix A (page 13) provides a summary of the change in performance indicators at the individual level by the most recent years for which data were available. Of the 39 performance indicators, data



were not available for 28, five showed improvement, nine showed no change, and seven needed improvement.

As noted above, sufficient data were available to assess change in four outcomes. Their ratings are as follows:¹

DCYF achieved improvements for:

Increasing the available supply of licensed childcare in childcare centers and family homes, including providers not receiving subsidies

Improvements are needed for:

Increasing the number and proportion of children kindergarten-ready as measured by the Washington kindergarten inventory of developing skills (WaKIDS) assessment

Mixed findings were detected for:

Developing strategies to show foster parents and kinship care families that their service and involvement are valued by DCYF

No change was detected for:

Reducing the discharge of youth from institutional settings (i.e., foster care, juvenile rehabilitation, and residential behavioral health) into homelessness

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 outcome data show no change in four-year graduation rates for Juvenile Rehabilitation students enrolled in institutional education settings, they do not indicate whether the population of students served in these settings has changed over time. Students served in institutional education settings are higher risk and have greater needs than they used to, given that students with low-level incidents are being served in their communities.² As a result, what looks like “no change” may actually be progress.

¹ Overall outcome ratings are based on the ratings of individual performance indicators from the two most recent years of available data. If all indicators for a particular outcome were rated as “improved,” the overall outcome was rated as “improved.” If all indicators for a particular outcome were rated as “needs improvement,” the overall outcome was rated as “needs improvement,” and if all indicators were rated as “no change,” the overall outcome was rated as “no change.” A “mixed” rating means some indicators showed improvement, while others showed a decrease or no change. If data are not available for all indicators within a particular outcome, the overall outcome was rated as “data are not available.”

² Frizzell, M., & Cherniske, M. (2025, May 15). *Institutional education update* [Presentation to the DCYF Oversight Board]. Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction.



Oversight Board 2.0 Proposal³

Summary

The [DCYF Oversight Board](#) is proposing a shift in its oversight approach to better align with statutory intent, adapt to changing agency conditions, and monitor outcomes for Washington's children, youth, and families. This proposal seeks to improve the Board's role, refocus priorities, and strengthen collaboration with DCYF without requesting additional state funds.

Since its inception, the OB has been a generalist when it comes to DCYF. As we move forward in the next few years, we would like to instead dig deeper into a few targeted areas selected annually or biannually for greater understanding and impact in collaboration with the agency. Therefore, we are proposing the following:

Proposal Objectives

1. Restructure the Annual Report

Transition from a broad, resource-intensive report to a more focused, collaborative model that tracks a small number of agreed-upon outcome areas annually or biannually. A minor statutory change would be requested to allow flexibility in reporting.

2. Collaborate with DCYF Leadership to Create an Annual Progress Report Which Better Reflects Statutory Requirements, Legislative Intent, and Areas of DCYF Impact

Identify and track high-priority metrics and areas of focus that reflects legislative intent, statutory outcomes, and the agency's strategic plan.

3. Create Pathways for Discussion and Analysis

Supplement Board meetings with informal sessions involving DCYF and key stakeholders to promote deeper analysis and shared learning. These sessions would focus on jointly identified priority areas, with their frequency determined after annual or biannual priorities are established.

4. Pursue Philanthropic Support for Additional Capacity for Office of Innovation, Alignment and Accountability (OIAA) to Support a Shared Agenda

Propose philanthropic support for distinct OIAA support of joint oversight efforts and analysis of co-identified priorities. This would enhance public trust and increase the Board's effectiveness. The Board is exploring options for philanthropic support for this proposed objective.

Conclusion

The DCYF Oversight Board is committed to enhancing DCYF's impact through focused, collaborative efforts and data-informed practices that reflect the complexity of DCYF's work and the needs of Washington's children and families, without imposing additional costs on the state.

³ Note that there is only one small statutory change suggested by the three Board subcommittees for 2026: to request greater flexibility from the legislature regarding the contents of the annual report.



DCYF Oversight Board 2.0 Proposal

Background and Purpose

Since the inception of the DCYF Oversight Board, the annual report has served as the primary channel for communicating the results of our oversight activities to DCYF leadership, the Governor’s Office, the Legislature, and to the public. Interviews with Board members, agency leaders, and community stakeholders suggest the need to assess the report’s value, given the amount of OB and DCYF staff resources necessary to produce it. The timing of this review is favorable since the OB has several newly appointed Board members; we have new DCYF leadership, and new staff in the Governor’s Office. Toward this end, the DCYF Oversight Board Co-Chairs created a subcommittee to review the reporting process and to make recommendations to the full Board. After consulting with agency staff and the Assistant Attorney General, reviewing available data, and examining the report structure, the subcommittee identified several ways to improve our monitoring function. This gave rise to a broader discussion about how to create greater alignment between our oversight activities and the requirements of our governing statute.

The purpose of this proposal is to realign the collaborative relationship between DCYF and the Oversight Board, focusing on efforts such as co-creating a few annual outcome priorities rather than pursuing changes to statute. That said, it does include one minor statutory request, which will be made to the Legislature to allow for greater flexibility in the annual report. As a result, we offer four general discussion points and example areas of focus over the next four years. The Oversight Board is well aware of the state’s dire financial condition; therefore, we will not be pursuing additional state funds. While not all recommendations can be accomplished without additional resources, we believe significant near-term progress is possible through a more proactive oversight strategy, one that includes forging stronger collaboration with DCYF and external stakeholders and leveraging philanthropic support.

Oversight Board’s Annual Report Requirements in Statute

The statutory basis for the annual report is defined in some detail (page 17, [RCW 43.216.015](#)); it reads: “The oversight board for children, youth, and families shall issue an annual report to the governor and legislature by December 1st of each year . . .”. The report must review the department of children, youth, and families’ progress toward meeting stated performance measures and desired performance outcomes, and must also include a review of the department’s strategic plan, policies, and rules” (page 16, [RCW 43.216.015](#)). The annual report also satisfies the Board’s mandate to provide “general oversight over the performance and policies of the department and shall provide advice and input to the department and the governor” (page 16, [RCW 43.216.015](#)). Our role as an Oversight Board is to “determine whether the department of children, youth, and families [DCYF] is achieving the performance measures” (page 16, [RCW 43.216.015](#)). The performance measures the Board is required to examine are specified in the statute and shown in Supplement 1. If one considers these reporting requirements within the context of the entire statute, the submission of an annual report addressing the metrics in Supplement 1 is the minimum requirement, not a limitation on the scope of the Board’s authority to define oversight. Indeed, the language includes broad authority to address outcomes “stated” by the agency, beyond those listed in statute.



Oversight Board's Statutory Responsibilities

The statute references several global agency outcomes subject to the Board's oversight; examples include: 1) an increased emphasis on prevention (page 1, [RCW 43.216.005](#)), 2) all services must be evidence/science based (page 1, [RCW 43.216.015](#)), 3) contracted services must be "performance based," (page 3, [RCW 43.216.015](#)), 4) when services are provided through a network administrator, that entity must have the authority to repurpose funds in order to hold providers accountable (page 3, [RCW 43.216.015](#)), 5) services must be provided in an equitable manner (page 1, [RCW 43.216.015](#)), and 6) the Board has access to all information compiled by the agency not prohibited by law (page 4, [RCW 43.216.015](#)). The statute explicitly authorizes the Board to administer surveys, sample contracts, and initiate administrative "investigations" from the [Family and Children's Ombuds](#)—all of which, taken together, represent the Legislature's intent to provide comprehensive, proactive oversight, rather than simply adding another advisory board to the 45 which existed at the time the Oversight Board was created.

Discussion Points

1. *Restructure the Annual Report*

To make the annual report more impactful, the OB proposes focusing on a small number of specific areas identified in collaboration with DCYF. Writing the current report is labor intensive and unlikely to affect practices within the agency since it is largely comprised of information that is already publicly available. Of the 34 performance indicators included in the [2024 Annual Report](#), 28 (82%) came directly from the agency with very little independent analysis. Many of the metrics codified in statute were developed before the Legislature created DCYF, so they are effectively frozen in time, either capturing what was once important or restating data elements required by the federal government. Currently, DCYF and the Board are both required to track these redundant metrics, with no clear prioritization. Effective oversight and effective service provision both require current data to respond to a fluctuating environment. New policies are regularly created by the Legislature, the federal government, or required by changing agency business practices, and policies. Because the statute is very specific about which metrics are required in the annual report, **the only statutory change recommended by the three Board subcommittees for 2026 in this document is to request greater flexibility from the Legislature regarding the contents of the annual report.**⁴ Contingent upon legislative approval, the 2025 report could serve as a transitional document by including the required metrics while identifying a new approach to tracking outcomes.

2. *Collaborate with DCYF Leadership to Create an Annual Progress Report Which Better Reflects Statutory Requirements, Legislative Intent, and Areas of DCYF Impact*

The Board proposes collaborating with DCYF leadership to identify the department's top priority performance measures in a few key areas, allowing the OB and DCYF to jointly focus their efforts. Aligning priorities with DCYF would occur annually or biennially to maintain flexibility and data relevancy. This process should model the values reflected in the enabling statute: openness, collaboration, and public participation, while maintaining a focus on outcomes. The OB is concerned

⁴ Note that Secretary Senn has expressed interest in some general cleanup of the statute (e.g., removing annual review of contracts since the Board doesn't engage in this activity).



that the enabling statute may be too prescriptive, but it does highlight recurring themes that could serve as a foundation for measurable outcomes and greater attention. **The Board suggests reaching out to private philanthropy to fund a third-party facilitator who would guide the development of the annual/biennial progress report.**

Some possible focus areas referenced in statute are described as examples below. Importantly, the Board seeks to collaboratively identify a few key metrics and focus areas to target its attention.

- **Building a Data-Informed, Accountable, and Innovative Culture.** General provision 1 in [Chapter 43.216.005](#) states unambiguously that services to children and families were previously not organized and delivered in a way to achieve optimal outcomes, implying that substantial change was necessary. General provision 7 reiterates that DCYF must be anchored in a culture of innovation, transparency, accountability, rigorous data analysis, and reliance on research and evidence-based interventions. **We would like to partner with DCYF to explore effective ways to measure, support, and strengthen this type of culture**, which includes existing efforts (e.g., Quality Assurance/CQI and performance-based contracts efforts across the agency). As a service organization, DCYF’s quality assurance efforts must include input from those receiving services, which requires the process to be transparent and easily understood by the general public. For example, the online DCYF Data Dashboards could be improved by translating complex information into more accessible formats for the public. This work would likely begin with an assessment of the data currently available, with a focus on how well DCYF is meeting its statutory obligations for transparency and data-driven practice.
- **DCYF Workforce Training & Well-being.** General provision 9 (also in [Chapter 43.216.005](#)) reads: “the legislature finds that the work of the department of children, youth, and families will only be as successful as the workforce.” Increased support for the professionals working with children, youth, and families is critical to improving outcomes. It is a known principle in the organizational development field that an organization is only as strong as its workforce. In human services, positive outcomes are largely determined by the available training, tools and skills of those directly interacting with children and families. On any given day there are thousands of interactions between DCYF front line staff and families statewide.
 - **If a change in DCYF workforce’s well-being is expected, the Board seeks to review and understand retention trends, frontline staff challenges, and the effectiveness of well-being supports and initiatives.**
 - **If high-quality training is to be expected, the Board recommends examining the existing training continuum and delivery, the evaluations and outcomes of the training, and how it relates to and adapts to the changing legislative and legal landscape in early learning, child welfare, and juvenile rehabilitation.**
- **Disparate Outcomes for Children and Youth of Color.** General Provision 6 ([Chapter 43.216.005](#)) reads in part: “the legislature finds that children and youth of color are disproportionately impacted at every key decision point in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. The Department of Children, Youth, and Families must prioritize addressing equity, disproportionality, and disparities in service delivery and outcomes, and provide transparent, frequent reporting of outcomes by race, ethnicity, and geography...” **The Board is particularly**

interested in revisiting how disparities are examined and addressed in culturally relevant supports for families of color; for example, early learning access.

- **Implementing New Initiatives.** One of the greatest challenges facing DCYF is implementing new practices and initiatives while staying focused on existing organizational requirements. Each year, the Legislature enacts new laws affecting the agency and the federal government redefines requirements, each of which may have budgetary impacts. Supreme Court rulings consistently change the legal and practice landscape, often in significant ways. And many emerging service delivery issues require immediate attention. Since 2018, DCYF leadership has created a new agency, struggled with how to maintain services through a global pandemic, overseen unprecedented reductions in the number of children in child welfare, aimed to protect children from the opioid epidemic, implemented new standards for child protection, addressed the needs of a growing, older and more challenging population in juvenile rehabilitation facilities, and significantly expanded access to early learning, while serving a disproportionate number of youth from historically underserved communities. Much of this work continues during the most acute financial crisis in Washington’s history. All of this notwithstanding, the enabling statute which governs DCYF requires external confirmation of the progress made toward reaching stated goals affecting the public. **As any new initiatives or requirements from the Legislature are created, the OB would like to examine the specific data collection and outcomes that are anticipated and funded.**
- **Exploring the Availability of SUD treatment for Youth Involved with DCYF.** Given that one of the outcome measures specified in statute is “(vi) Reducing future demand for mental health and substance use disorder treatment for youth involved in the child welfare and juvenile justice system,” the Board is interested in the mental health and substance abuse services available for youth in the juvenile rehabilitation continuum and child welfare involved families. Better understanding of the available funding, evidence-based practices and other services offered, and the internal and external partners would help inform this important metric. This is an area in which the Board has expressed interest, and the diverse expertise of the Board would be a particular asset here as well.

3. Create Pathways for Discussion and Analysis

The Board has relied heavily on public televised presentations from DCYF staff, which seem less conducive to in-depth conversations or inquiry. There is a need to supplement Board meetings with informal sessions involving DCYF and key stakeholders to promote deeper analysis and shared learning while remaining aligned with the Open Public Meetings Act ([RCW 42.30](#)). These sessions would focus on jointly identified priority areas, with their frequency determined after annual or biannual priorities are established. Additionally, providing regular access to the times and opportunities for Board members to attend existing boards, commissions, and other standing meetings would help ground the Board in the agency’s work. Hosting a listening and feedback session for OB members regarding the upcoming DCYF strategic plan would be another way to engage OB members’ expertise and input in DCYF’s work.



4. Pursue Philanthropic Support for Additional Capacity for OIAA to Support a Shared Agenda

As a practical matter, the Board's broad oversight capacity is not commensurate with the resources allocated to the Board. As a result, there is tension between the level of oversight the public expects and what the Board can reasonably provide with limited resources. To enhance the value of the OB's work, we will seek philanthropic funding for additional capacity in OIAA at DCYF; this will permit OIAA to conduct analysis in support of Board priorities. This work will not be possible without philanthropic support, and the Board is exploring options in this area.

Proposed Next Steps

- Discuss rationale and draft proposal with DCYF Leadership by 9/08/25 (**done**)
- Send draft proposal to the full Oversight Board (OB) by 9/15/25 (**done**)
- Present and discuss draft proposal to the OB at the 9/22/25 Board meeting (**done**)
- Solicit comments from the full OB by 9/25/25 (**done**)
- Solicit comments from DCYF Leadership by 9/26/25 (**done**)
- Vote on the key provisions of the 2.0 Proposal at the 10/29/25 Board meeting (**done**)
- Develop legislative proposal for the law change(s) by 10/30/25 (**in process**)
- Draft a funding proposal for private philanthropy by 11/10/25 (**in process**)
- Complete a transitional annual report that includes the required metrics and a summary of the proposed direction, for submission to the Governor's Office by 11/07/25 (**done**)
- Convene a joint Progress Report Work Group and assign group membership from OB and DCYF (contingent on funding) by 12/10/25
- Finalize the agreed-upon metrics that were jointly selected by 2/1/26

Supplement 1

Outcome Measures Specified in the Statute⁵ ([RCW 43.216.015](#))

(b) In addition to transparent, frequent reporting of the outcome measures in (c)(i) through (viii) of this subsection, the department must report to the legislature an examination of engagement, resource utilization, and outcomes for clients receiving department services and youth participating in juvenile court alternative programs funded by the department, no less than annually and beginning September 1, 2020. The data in this report must be disaggregated by race, ethnicity, and geography. This report must identify areas of focus to advance equity that will inform department strategies so that all children, youth, and families are thriving. Metrics detailing progress towards eliminating disparities and disproportionality over time must also be included. The report must also include information on department outcome measures, actions taken, progress toward these goals, and plans for the future year.

(c) The outcome measures must include, but are not limited to:

- (i) Improving child development and school readiness through voluntary, high quality early learning opportunities as measured by: (A) Increasing the number and proportion of children kindergarten-ready as measured by the Washington kindergarten inventory of developing skills (WaKIDS) assessment including mathematics; (B) increasing the proportion of children in early learning programs that have achieved the level 3 or higher early achievers quality standard; and (C) increasing the available supply of licensed child care in child care centers, outdoor nature-based child care, and family homes, including providers not receiving state subsidy;
- (ii) Preventing child abuse and neglect;
- (iii) Improving child and youth safety, permanency, and well-being as measured by: (A) Reducing the number of children entering out-of-home care; (B) reducing a child's length of stay in out-of-home care; (C) reducing maltreatment of youth while in out-of-home care; (D) licensing more foster homes than there are children in foster care; (E) reducing the number of children that reenter out-of-home care within twelve months; (F) increasing the stability of placements for children in out-of-home care; and (G) 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;
- (iv) Improving reconciliation of children and youth with their families as measured by: (A) Increasing family reunification; and (B) increasing the number of youth who are reunified with their family of origin;
- (v) In collaboration with county juvenile justice programs, improving adolescent outcomes including reducing multisystem involvement and homelessness; and increasing school graduation rates and successful transitions to adulthood for youth involved in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems;
- (vi) Reducing future demand for mental health and substance use disorder treatment for youth involved in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems;
- (vii) In collaboration with county juvenile justice programs, reducing criminal justice involvement and recidivism as measured by: (A) An increase in the number of youth who successfully complete the terms of diversion or alternative sentencing options; (B) a decrease in the number of youth who commit subsequent crimes; and (C) eliminating the discharge of youth from institutional settings into homelessness; and
- (viii) Eliminating racial and ethnic disproportionality and disparities in system involvement and across child and youth outcomes in collaboration with other state agencies.

⁵ Please see RCW 43.216.015, pages 12 to 13.



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DCYF Oversight Board background

The Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) was created in 2017 through the passage of [HB 1661](#) to improve how the state serves children, youth, and families. The agency consolidated services previously managed by two separate state entities, the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) and the Department of Early Learning (DEL), with the goal of providing a more integrated continuum of care and achieving better outcomes across Washington’s communities. DCYF assumed full authority and responsibility for these services in July 2018, and in July 2019, it expanded to include oversight of Juvenile Rehabilitation and the Office of Juvenile Justice.

[HB 1661](#) also established the DCYF Oversight Board in 2017 as an independent body charged with monitoring the department’s performance. Fully formed in March 2019, the Board is responsible for ensuring that DCYF meets 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 B.

Honoring DCYF Oversight Board Members’ Service. Since the 2024 Annual Report, four board members have completed their terms of service. We would like to express our gratitude to these individuals for their contributions: **April Messenger**, Organization Advocating for the Best Interest of the Child Representative, **Tana Senn**, House of Representatives and former Board Co-chair, **Barbara Serrano**, Office of the Governor, and **Judith Warnick**, Senate. The Board benefited immensely from their expertise and dedication, making their absence all the more felt.

Overview of findings

Figure 1 provides an overview of the change in performance indicators between the two most recent years for indicators that have updated data available. Data are available in the [2024 annual report](#) for the previous year for indicators that are not available this year.

Figure 1. Change in performance indicators

Outcomes and performance indicators	Status and years
1. Increase the number and proportion of children kindergarten ready as measured by the Washington kindergarten inventory of developing skills (WaKids) assessment	
a. Students are kindergarten ready in all six areas of development and learning	↓ Needs improvement 2023-2024 to 2024-2025
b. Students are kindergarten ready in all six areas of development and learning (by race/ethnicity)	↓ Needs improvement 2023-2024 to 2024-2025
2. Increase the proportion of children in early learning programs that have achieved the level 3 or higher Early Achievers Quality Standard	
a. Increase the proportion of children in early learning programs that have achieved the level 3 or higher Early Achievers Quality Standard	× Not available (data through SFY 2024 are in the 2024 annual report)
3. Increase the available supply of licensed childcare in both childcare centers and family homes, including providers not receiving subsidies	
a. Increase the number of licensed childcare providers	↑ Improved SFY ⁶ 2024 to SFY 2025
b. Increase the capacity of licensed childcare providers	↑ Improved SFY 2024 to SFY 2025
4. Prevent child abuse and neglect	
a. Decrease the number of screened-in CPS intakes	× Not available (data through 2023 are in the 2024 annual report)
b. Decrease the number 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 within 12 months	× Not available (data through 2022 are in the 2024 annual report)
5. Reduce the number of children entering out-of-home care	
a. Decrease the number of children entering out-of-home care	× Not available (data through SFY 2024 are in the 2024 annual report)
b. Decrease the number of children in out-of-home care	× Not available (data through SFY 2024

⁶ State Fiscal Year (SFY). The Washington State Fiscal Year is from July 1 through June 30 of the following year.

Outcomes and performance indicators	Status and years
	are in the 2024 annual report)
c. Decrease the number of children in out-of-home care (by race/ethnicity)	× Not available (data through SFY 2024 are in the 2024 annual report)
6. Reduce the length of stay for children and youth in out-of-home care	
a. Decrease the median length of stay in out-of-home care	× Not available (data through SFY 2022 are in the 2024 annual report)
b. Decrease the number of days children spend in out-of-home care per calendar year of entry	× Not available (data through 2021 are in the 2022 annual report)
7. Reduce maltreatment of youth while in out-of-home care	
a. Decrease the rate of victimization of children in out-of-home care	× Not available (data through SFY 2023 are in the 2024 annual report)
8. License more foster homes than there are children in foster care	
a. Increase the bed to child ratio	× Not available (data through SFY 2024 are in the 2024 annual report)
9. Reduce the number of children re-entering out-of-home care within 12 months	
a. Reduce the number of children who re-enter out-of-home care within 12 months	× Not available (data through SFY 2023 are in the 2024 annual report)
10. Increase stability of placements for children in out-of-home care	
a. Decrease the rate of placement moves	× Not available (data through SFY 2023 are in the 2024 annual report)
b. Among children in out-of-home care, increase the rate of placement with relatives	× Not available (data through SFY 2024 are in the 2024 annual report)
c. Decrease the total count of placement exceptions	↑ Improved FY 2024 to 2025 ⁷

⁷ These data come from the Office of the Family and Children’s Ombuds. The reporting year for indicators 10c and 10d is from September 1 to August 31.

Outcomes and performance indicators		Status and years
d. Decrease the number of placement exceptions per child		↑ Improved FY 2024 to 2025
11. Develop strategies to show foster parents and kinship care families that their service and involvement are valued by DCYF		
a-f. Foster parents and kinship care families respond positively on the annual Caregiver Survey	Foster parents	↔ Mixed 2023 to 2024
	Kinship caregivers	↔ Mixed 2023 to 2024
12. Increase family reunification by increasing the number of youth reunified with their family of origin		
a. Increase the percentage of total exits that are reunifications		× Not available (data through SFY 2024 are in the 2024 annual report)
b. Increase the percentage of total exits that are reunifications (by race/ethnicity)		× Not available (data through SFY 2024 are in the 2024 annual report)
13. In collaboration with county juvenile justice programs, improve adolescent outcomes, including reducing multisystem involvement, reducing homelessness, and increasing school graduation rates and successful transitions to adulthood for youth involved in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems		
a.1. Increase four-year graduation rates for youth in child welfare		↔ No change 2022-2023 to 2023-2024
a.2. Increase four-year graduation rates for Juvenile Rehabilitation students enrolled in institutional education settings		↔ No change 2022-2023 to 2023-2024
b.1. Improve employment outcomes for young adults exiting foster care		× Not available (data through 2019 are in the 2022 annual report)
b.2. Increase median income for young adults exiting foster care		× Not available (data through 2019 are in the 2022 annual report)
b.3. Increase the percentage of youth released from Juvenile Rehabilitation who find employment within one year of release		× Not available (data through 2022 are in the 2024 annual report)
14. Reduce future demand for mental health and substance use disorder treatment for youth involved in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems		
a. Increase the average number of Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) individual sessions attended per month (by race/ethnicity)		× Not available (data through SFY 2024 are in the 2024 annual report)
b. Increase the average number of Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) group sessions attended per month (by race/ethnicity)		× Not available (data through SFY 2024)

Outcomes and performance indicators	Status and years
	are in the 2024 annual report)
c. Increase the treatment rate of foster care youth enrolled in Medicaid who have a mental health or substance abuse treatment need	× Not available (data through SFY 2024 are in the 2024 annual report)
15. Increase the number of youth who successfully complete the terms of diversion or alternative sentencing options in collaboration with county juvenile justice programs	
a. Among youth involved with Juvenile Rehabilitation, increase the number participating in disposition alternatives	× Not available (data through SFY 2024 are in the 2024 annual report)
b. Among youth involved with Juvenile Rehabilitation, increase the number of evidence-based program starts	× Not available (data through SFY 2024 are in the 2024 annual report)
c. Among youth involved with Juvenile Rehabilitation, increase the number of successful evidence-based program completions	× Not available (data through SFY 2024 are in the 2024 annual report)
16. Decrease the number of youth released from Juvenile Rehabilitation found guilty of another offense within 18 months	
a. Decrease the number of youth released from Juvenile Rehabilitation found guilty of another offense within 18 months	× Not available (data through SFY 2021 are in the 2024 annual report)
17. Eliminate the discharge of youth from institutional settings into homelessness	
a. Decrease the percentage of youth exiting systems of care who experience homelessness within 12 months of exit	↔ No change 2021 to 2022
18. Eliminate racial and ethnic disproportionality and disparities in system involvement across child and youth outcomes in collaboration with other state agencies	
a. Decrease 30-day rate of room confinement/isolation in Juvenile Rehabilitation (by race/ethnicity)	× Not available (data through SFY 2024 are in the 2024 annual report)
b. Decrease racial/ethnic disparity ratios for community facility placement in Juvenile Rehabilitation	× Not available (data through SFY 2024 are in the 2024 annual report)
c. Decrease racial/ethnic disparity ratios for discretionary parole placement	× Not available (data through SFY 2024 are in the 2024 annual report)



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

Overall outcome

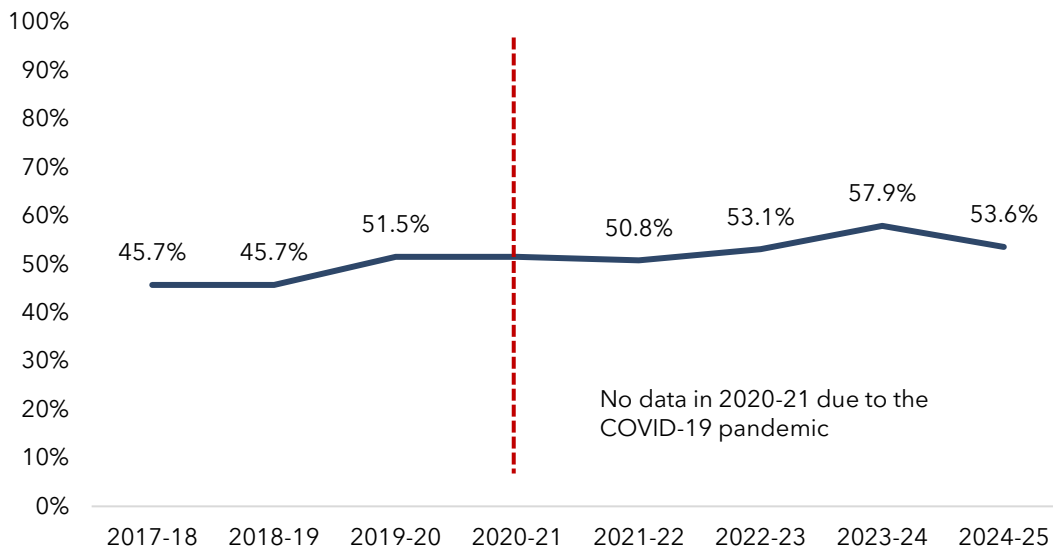
↓ Needs improvement.

Indicator 1a. Students are kindergarten ready in all six areas of development and learning

↓ Needs improvement.

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.

Figure 2. Students kindergarten ready in all six areas of development and learning, by school year, 2017-2025⁸



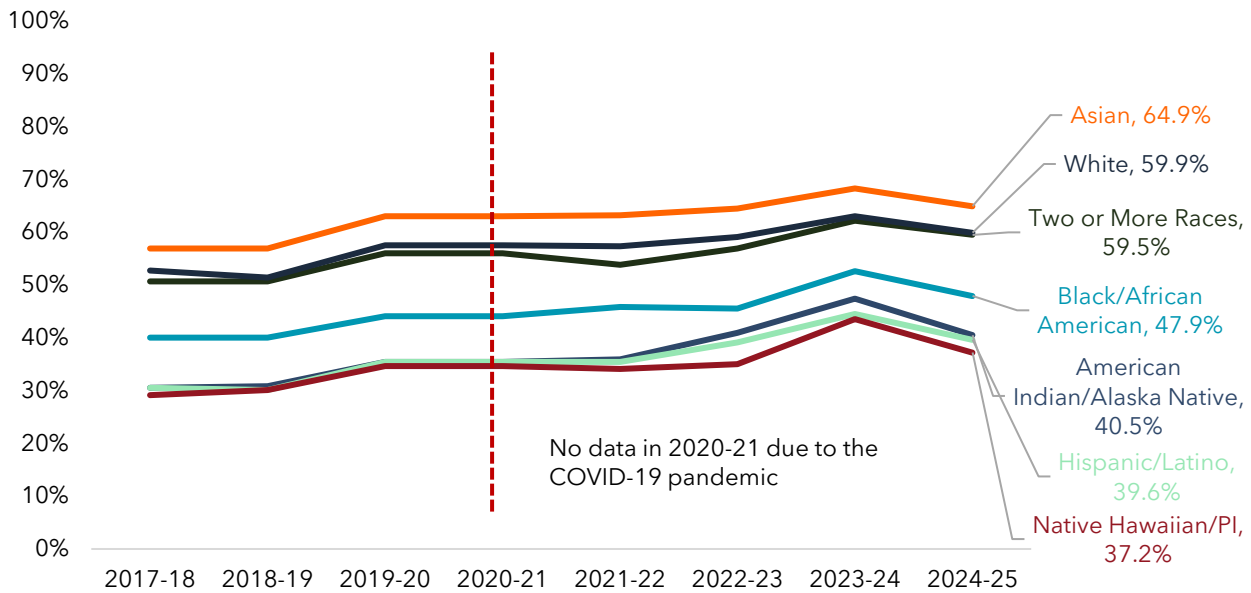
Findings. Between the 2023-2024 and the 2024-2025 school years, the percentage of entering kindergarteners ready in all six WaKIDS areas decreased from 57.9% (the highest rate of kindergarten readiness in the last decade) to 53.6%. However, the overall upward trend in kindergarten readiness since the 2017-2018 school year suggests growth in early childhood development and preparedness for school.

Indicator 1b. Students are kindergarten ready in all six areas of development and learning (by race/ethnicity)

↓ Needs improvement.

⁸ Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (2025). *Report card. Washington Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills (WaKIDS)*. <https://reportcard.ospi.k12.wa.us/ReportCard/ViewSchoolOrDistrict/103300>

Figure 3. Students kindergarten ready in all six domains by race and ethnicity and by school year, 2017-2025⁹



Note: Hispanic/Latino individuals may be of any race. Results for certain racial/ethnic groups should be interpreted with caution due to the small number of children in these groups. For example, only 676 incoming kindergartners were American Indian/Alaska Native, and 1,092 were Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander.

Findings. After an upward trend in recent years, the percentage of entering kindergarteners ready in all six WaKIDS domains decreased for every race and ethnicity between the 2023-2024 and 2024-2025 school years. The greatest decreases were for American Indian/Alaska Native students (6.9%) and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander students (6.3%), though these findings should be interpreted with caution given that those are the two smallest racial/ethnic groups.

The overall trend since the 2017-2018 school year is positive for all racial/ethnic groups. Over this time period, all groups experienced increases in kindergarten readiness, with increases ranging from 7.2% for White students to 9.1% for Hispanic/Latino students and 10.0% for American Indian/Alaska Native students. Despite improvements, disparities persist. Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (37.2%), Hispanic/Latino (39.6%), and American Indian/Alaska Native (40.5%) still have the lowest readiness rates, while Asian (64.9%), White (59.9%) students, and students of two or more races (59.5%) are more likely to be kindergarten ready.

Recommendations

It is vital to sustain and potentially expand educational policies and early childhood programs that support young children’s development across all six areas of development and learning. This includes supporting families who are raising young children and providing equitable access to high-quality preschools and other early childhood education programs.

⁹ Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (2025). *Report card. Washington Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills (WaKIDS)*. <https://reportcard.ospi.k12.wa.us/ReportCard/ViewSchoolOrDistrict/103300>

Targeted interventions should be implemented for students who may be lagging in specific areas, particularly in schools or districts and among racial/ethnic groups for whom kindergarten readiness rates are lower, such as Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, Hispanic/Latino, and American Indian/Alaska Native, and Black/African American students. The lower kindergarten readiness rates among children in these racial/ethnic groups are symptoms of structural racism and inequitable access to opportunity, which must be addressed and eliminated.

The Fair Start for Kids Act directs DCYF to distribute Early Childhood Equity Grants to child care providers throughout the state; these are intended to support inclusive culturally and linguistically specific parent support programs and early learning. In addition, the Act directs DCYF to distribute Complex Needs Funds to support providers serving children with developmental delays, behavioral needs, disabilities, and other unique needs. DCYF should continue monitoring the implementation and effectiveness of these grants and other Fair Start for Kids Acts provisions to assess their impact on kindergarten readiness, particularly among children from racial/ethnic groups that have lower kindergarten readiness rates.

2. Increase the proportion of children in early learning programs that have achieved the level 3 or higher Early Achievers Quality Standard

Overall outcome (Indicator 2a). Increase the proportion of children in early learning programs that have achieved the level 3 or higher Early Achievers Quality Standard

× Data are not available. DCYF data will be publicly available by December 31, 2025.

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

Overall outcome

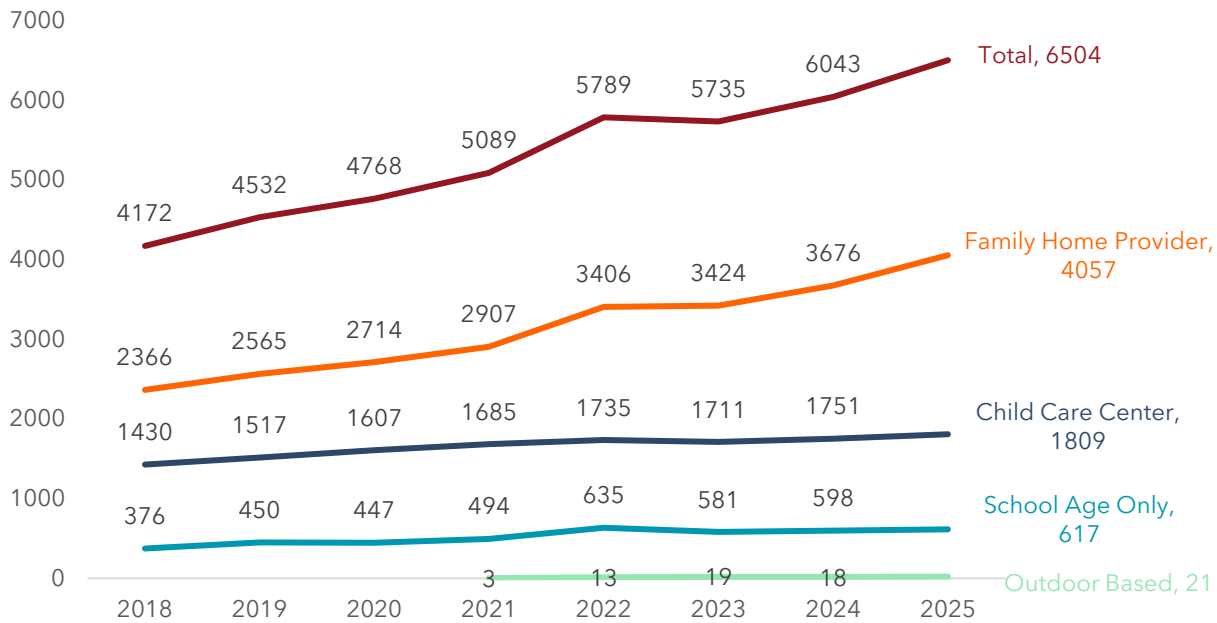
↑ Improved.

Indicator 3a. Increase the number of licensed child care providers

↑ Improved.

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

Figure 4. Number of licensed child care providers by type, SFY 2018-2025¹⁰



Findings. The number of licensed child care providers increased by 461 between SFY 2024 and 2025 (from 6,043 to 6,504). This was primarily due to an increase in the number of licensed family home providers, which increased by 381 (from 3,676 to 4,057). Between SFY 2024 and 2025, the number of child care centers increased by 58 providers, the number of school age only programs increased by 19 providers, and the number of outdoor-based programs increased by three providers. This represents an increase of 2,332 providers between SFY 2018 and SFY 2025, most of which (1,691) were among family home providers.

Indicator 3b. Increase the capacity of licensed child care providers

↑ Improved.

Figure 5. Licensed capacity of child care providers, by type, SFY 2018-2025

Type	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Child Care Center	108,526	113,794	119,790	124,052	126,706	126,541	130,004	134,297
Family Home Provider	24,612	26,659	28,175	29,870	33,727	33,397	35,686	38,839
School Age Only	23,953	28,346	28,666	30,892	37,550	34,194	35,432	36,087

¹⁰ Washington State Department of Children, Youth, and Families. (2025, July 1). *Agency performance data*. <https://www.dcyf.wa.gov/practice/oiaa/agency-performance/early-start-act>



Type	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Outdoor Based	0	0	0	48	294	358	362	499
Total	157,091	168,799	176,631	184,862	198,277	194,490	201,484	209,722

Findings. As the number of licensed child care providers has increased, the statewide capacity has also increased, from capacity for 157,091 children in SFY 2018 to capacity for 209,722 in 2025. 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; it is not a measure of the number of children a provider intends to serve.

Recommendations

A 2023 evaluation of the Fair Starts for Kids Act found that Child Care Stabilization Grants authorized through the Act have been successful in increasing the supply of child care providers, which aligns with the findings in this report.¹¹ In addition, business supports provided by Child Care Aware of Washington (including trainings, scholarships, and the Business Edge provider portal) are benefiting providers. DCYF should build on the continued success in increasing the number of licensed child care providers and their capacity while continuing to examine and address variations by region (including child care deserts) and provider type. This should be done with an intentional focus on ensuring that early learning programs are culturally responsive and that educators of color are recruited, trained, retained, and fairly compensated.

4. Prevent child abuse and neglect

Overall outcome

× Data are not available.

Indicator 4a. Decrease the number of screened-in CPS intakes

× Data are not available. DCYF data require a unique data request and are not available in time for this report.

Indicator 4b. Decrease the number 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 within 12 months

× Data are not available. DCYF data require a unique data request and are not available in time for this report.

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

Overall outcome

× Data are not available.

Indicator 5a. Decrease the number of children entering out-of-home care

× Data are not available. DCYF data will be publicly available by December 31, 2025.

¹¹ Washington State Department of Children, Youth, and Families. (2023). *Family Support and Kinship Assessment (FSKA) evaluation report*. <https://www.dcyf.wa.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/reports/FSKA-EvalReport-2023.pdf>



Indicator 5b. Decrease the number of children in out-of-home care

× Data are not available. DCYF data will be publicly available by December 31, 2025.

Indicator 5c. Decrease the number of children in out-of-home care (by race/ethnicity)

× Data are not available. DCYF data will be publicly available by December 31, 2025.

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

Overall outcome

× Data are not available.

Indicator 6a. Decrease the median length of stay in out-of-home care

× Data are not available. DCYF data will be publicly available by December 31, 2025.

Indicator 6b. Decrease the number of days children spend in out-of-home care per calendar year of entry

× Data are not available. DCYF data require a unique data request and are not available in time for this report.

7. Decrease the rate of victimization of children in out-of-home care

Overall outcome (Indicator 7a). Decrease the rate of victimization of children in out-of-home care

× Data are not available. DCYF data will be publicly available by December 31, 2025.

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

Overall outcome (Indicator 8a). Increase the bed to child ratio

× Data are not available. DCYF data require a unique data request and are not available in time for this report.

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

Overall outcome (Indicator 9a). Reduce the number of children who re-enter out-of-home care within 12 months

× Data are not available. DCYF data will be publicly available by December 31, 2025.



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

Overall outcome

× Data are not available.

Indicator 10a. Decrease the rate of placement moves

× Data are not available. DCYF data require a unique data request and are not available in time for this report.

Indicator 10b. Among children in out-of-home care, increase the rate of placement with relatives

× Data are not available. DCYF data will be publicly available by December 31, 2025.

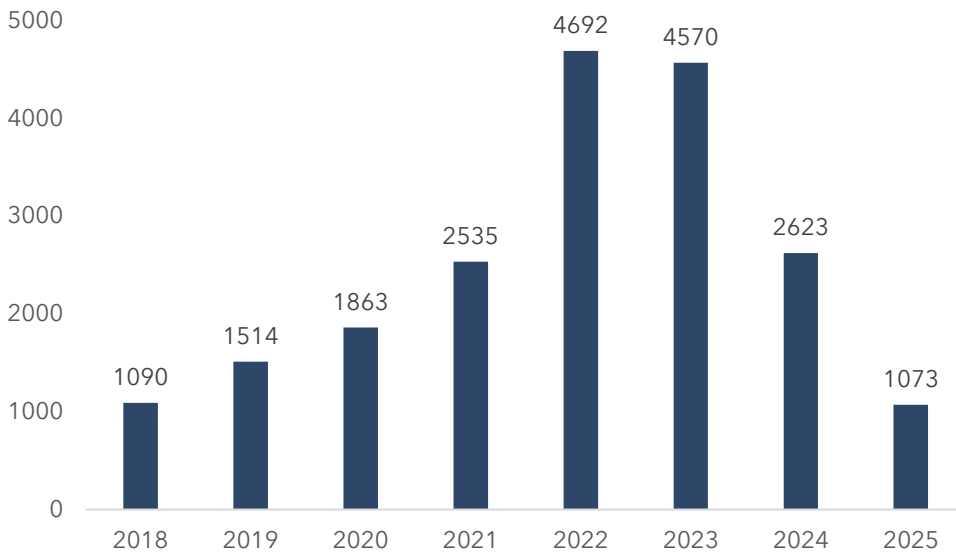
Indicator 10c. Decrease the total count of placement exceptions

↑ Improved.

Background. Figure 6 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, leased facilities operated by DCYF, and DCYF offices, 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.¹²

¹² Office of the Family and Children's Ombuds. (2024). *Annual report 2024*. https://ofco.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2024-10/2024_OFCO_Annual_Report.pdf

Figure 6. Total count of placement exceptions (individual night stays per year, September 1-August 31)¹³



Findings. After significantly reducing the number of placement exceptions from 2023 to 2024 (from 4,570 to 2,623), DCYF further reduced the number of placement exceptions to 1,073 in 2025. Most placement exceptions (88%) occurred in leased facilities, and 10% occurred in hotels. Smaller proportions occurred in night-to-night licensed foster homes (2%) and DCYF offices (less than 1%).

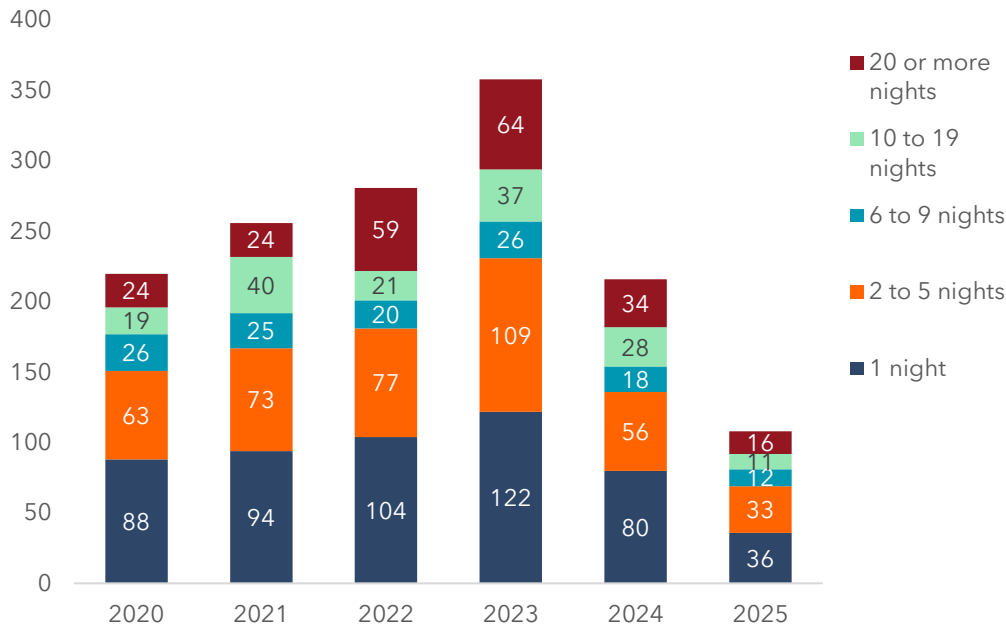
Indicator 10d. Decrease the number of placement exceptions per child

↑ Improved.

Findings. The number of children who experienced at least one placement exception decreased 50%, from 216 in 2024 to 108 in 2025. Among children who experienced at least one placement exception, the number of nights spent in a placement exception decreased between 2024 and 2025. For example, 34 children experienced 20 or more nights of placement exceptions in 2024, and 16 children experienced 20 or more nights of placement exceptions in 2025. This decrease builds on the previous decrease from 2023, when 64 children experienced 20 or more nights of placement exceptions.

¹³ Office of the Family and Children’s Ombuds. (2025, August). *Placement exceptions dashboard*. https://ofco.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2025-10/Placement_Exceptions_Dashboard_August_2025.pdf

Figure 7. Placement exceptions per child (September 1-August 31)¹⁴



Recommendations

The dramatic decline in placement exceptions and the number of placement exceptions per child from 2024 to 2025, which build on significant decreases between 2023 and 2024, suggests that DCYF has increased the availability of appropriate placements and potentially utilized more effective case management strategies. DCYF should build on the success of the 59% reduction in placement exceptions between 2024 and 2025 by expanding the availability of appropriate, stable, permanent, and long-term placements, while continuing to reduce reliance on leased facilities and night-to-night licensed foster homes.

¹⁴ Office of the Family and Children’s Ombuds. (2025, August). *Placement exceptions dashboard*. https://ofco.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2025-10/Placement_Exceptions_Dashboard_August_2025.pdf



11. Develop strategies to show foster parents and kinship care families that their service and involvement are valued by DCYF

Overall outcome

↕ Mixed.

Background. The “2024 Caregiver Survey” was conducted between September 2023 and September 2024. DSHS surveyed 1,342 caregivers (458 foster and 884 kinship) who had a child in care within six months of the sampling dates (August and November 2023; February and May 2024). 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.¹⁵ Specific items were selected from the survey to allow for comparisons with data from previous annual reports. Response rates are provided below for reference. Because all data reported for this outcome come from one survey, the six indicators below are counted as one indicator in Figure 1 above.

Figure 8. 2024 Caregiver Survey response rates¹⁶

Year	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Response rate	89%	86%	83%	85%	86%	92%	81%

Findings. Overall, survey response rates are high, though the response rate dipped in 2024, from a high of 92% in 2023 to 81% in 2024. This is the lowest response rate since 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic may have affected the response rate. Note that the response rate for 2018 is for foster parents only.

Indicator 11a. Foster parents and kinship care families report that they are treated like part of the team

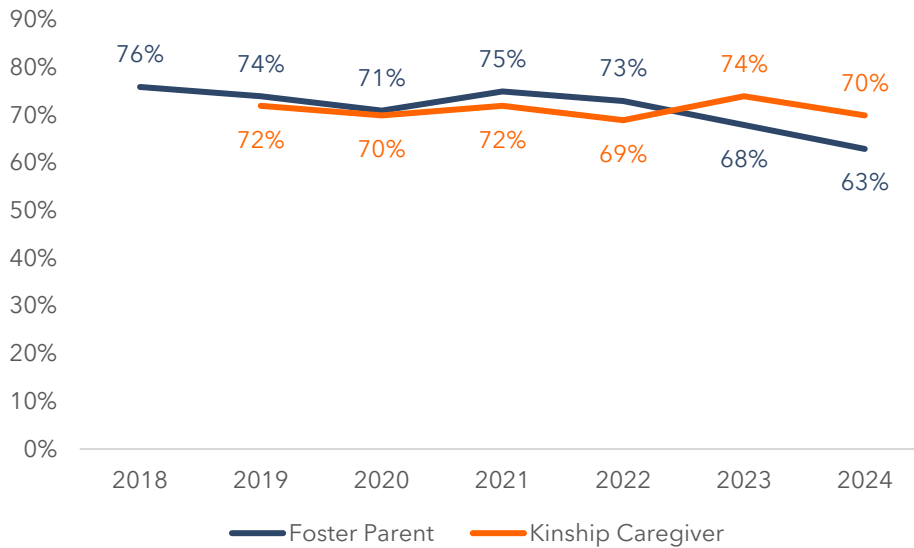
Foster parents: ↓ Needs improvement.

Kinship caregivers: ↓ Needs improvement.

¹⁵ Washington State Department of Social and Health Services, Research and Data Analysis Division. (n.d.). *Research report 7.127*. <https://www.dshs.wa.gov/sites/default/files/rda/reports/research-7-127.pdf>

¹⁶ Washington State Department of Social and Health Services, Research and Data Analysis Division. (n.d.). *Research report 7.127*. <https://www.dshs.wa.gov/sites/default/files/rda/reports/research-7-127.pdf>

Figure 9. Are you treated like a part of the team?¹⁷



Findings. Both foster parents and kinship caregivers reported a decline in feeling that they are treated like part of a team between 2023 and 2024. Overall, foster parents reported a decline between 2018 (76%) and 2024 (63%). 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).

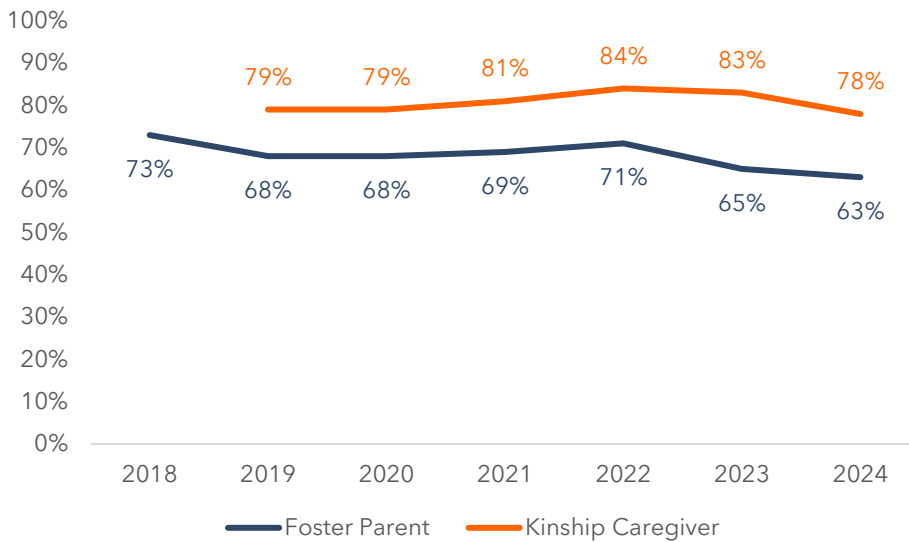
Indicator 11b. Foster parents and kinship care families report that they get adequate information

Foster parents: ↔ No change.

Kinship caregivers: ↓ Needs improvement.

¹⁷ Washington State Department of Social and Health Services, Research and Data Analysis Division. (n.d.). *Research report 7.127*. <https://www.dshs.wa.gov/sites/default/files/rda/reports/research-7-127.pdf>

Figure 10. Do you get adequate information about the needs of the children placed with you, such as medical, behavioral, development and educational needs?¹⁸



Findings. Foster parents reported a negligible decline in receiving adequate information between 2023 and 2024, from 65% to 63%. Overall, the percentage of foster parents reporting receiving adequate information dropped from 73% in 2018 to 63% in 2024. More kinship caregivers have reported receiving adequate information compared to foster parents every year they have been asked this question, and rates have remained steady across the years (ranging between 78% and 84%). Kinship caregivers reported a slight decline in receiving adequate information between 2023 (83%) and 2024 (78%).

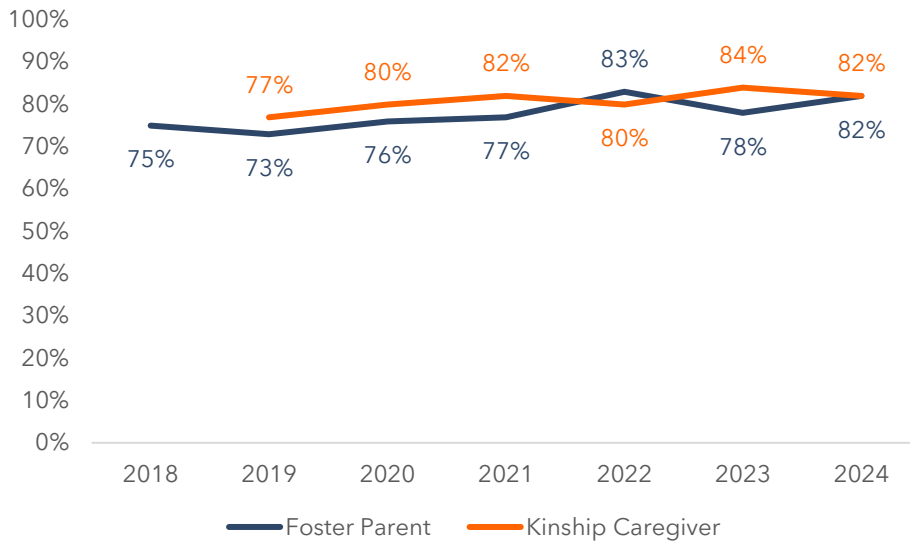
Indicator 11c. Foster parents and kinship care families report that they are included in meetings about the children in their care

Foster parents: ↑ Improved.

Kinship caregivers: ↔ No change.

¹⁸ Washington State Department of Social and Health Services, Research and Data Analysis Division. (n.d.). *Research report 7.127*. <https://www.dshs.wa.gov/sites/default/files/rda/reports/research-7-127.pdf>

Figure 11. Are you included in meetings about the child in your care?¹⁹



Findings. Foster parents’ reporting of feeling included in meetings about the child(ren) in their care increased steadily from 75% in 2018 to a peak of 83% in 2022, remaining relatively high at 82% in 2024. Similarly, kinship caregivers’ reporting of feeling included in meetings has also risen over the years, starting at 77% in 2019 and peaking at 84% in 2023, with a very small decline to 82% in 2024.

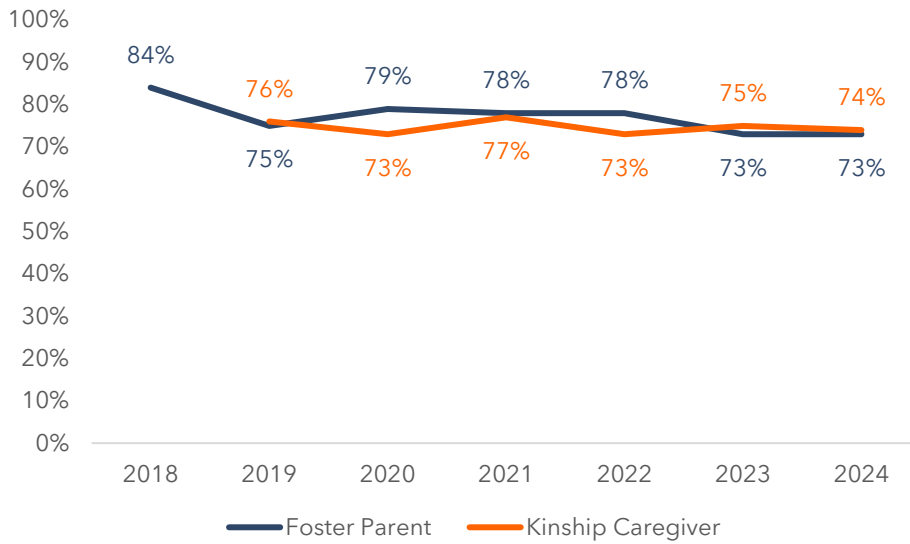
Indicator 11d. Foster parents and kinship care families report that they can get help when they ask for it

Foster parents: ↔ No change.

Kinship caregivers: ↔ No change.

¹⁹ Washington State Department of Social and Health Services, Research and Data Analysis Division. (n.d.). *Research report 7.127*. <https://www.dshs.wa.gov/sites/default/files/rda/reports/research-7-127.pdf>

Figure 12. Can you get help when you ask for it?²⁰



Findings. Overall, foster parents have reported a decrease in their ability to get help when they ask for it between 2018 (84%) and 2024 (73%). Between 2023 and 2024, foster parents reported no change in their ability to get help when they ask for it (73%). Kinship caregivers have remained steady in their responses over the years (between 73% and 77%), including between 2023 (75%) and 2024 (74%).

Indicator 11e. Foster parents and kinship care families report positive interactions with licensing staff

Foster parents: ↓ Needs improvement.
 Kinship caregivers: ↔ No change.

²⁰ Washington State Department of Social and Health Services, Research and Data Analysis Division. (n.d.). *Research report 7.127*. <https://www.dshs.wa.gov/sites/default/files/rda/reports/research-7-127.pdf>

Figure 13. Did licensing staff treat you with respect?²¹

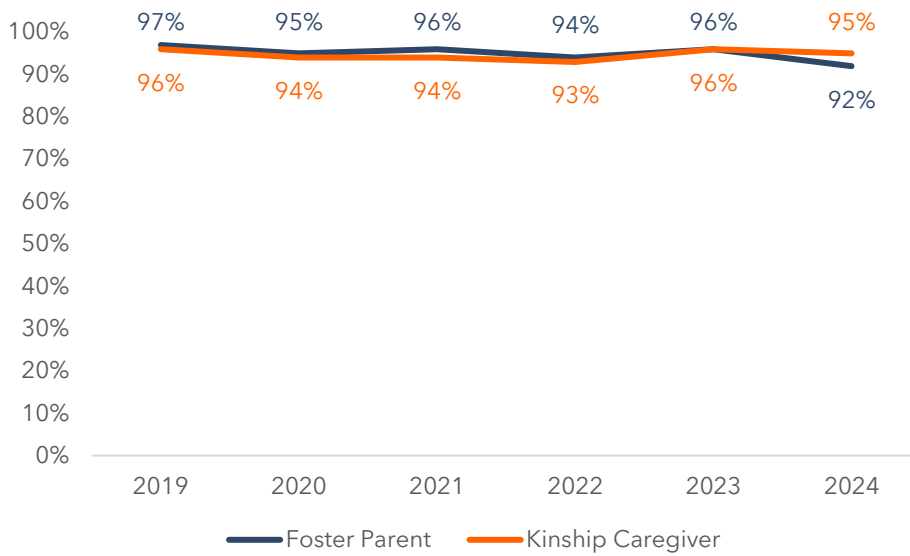
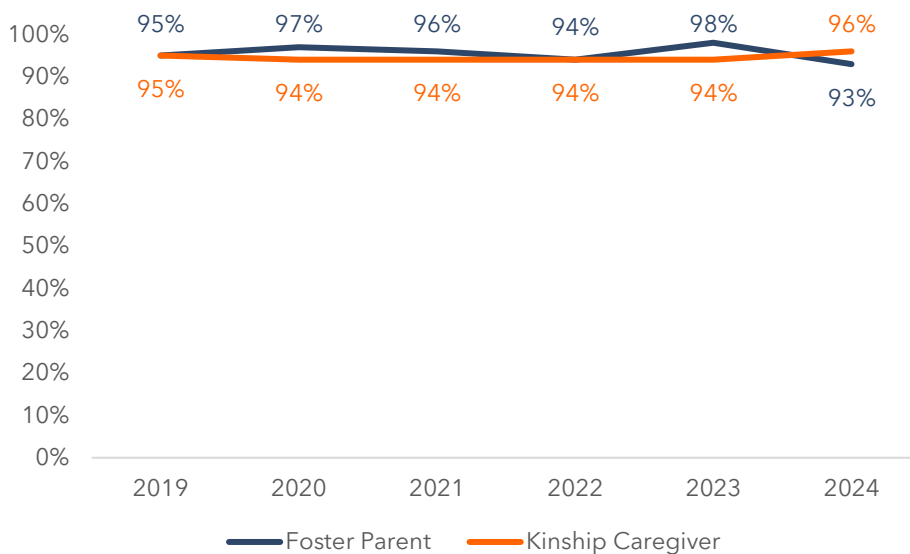


Figure 14. Were licensing or home study staff knowledgeable about the process?²²



Findings.

Ratings of respect. Foster parents and kinship caregivers’ ratings of respect during interactions with licensing staff are consistently very high (92% or higher for both groups across all years). Foster parents

²¹ Washington State Department of Social and Health Services, Research and Data Analysis Division. (n.d.). *Research report 7.127*. <https://www.dshs.wa.gov/sites/default/files/rda/reports/research-7-127.pdf>

²² Washington State Department of Social and Health Services, Research and Data Analysis Division. (n.d.). *Research report 7.127*. <https://www.dshs.wa.gov/sites/default/files/rda/reports/research-7-127.pdf>



reported a slight decrease in this area between 2023 and 2024, from 96% to 92%. Kinship caregivers remained steady (from 96% in 2023 to 95% in 2024).

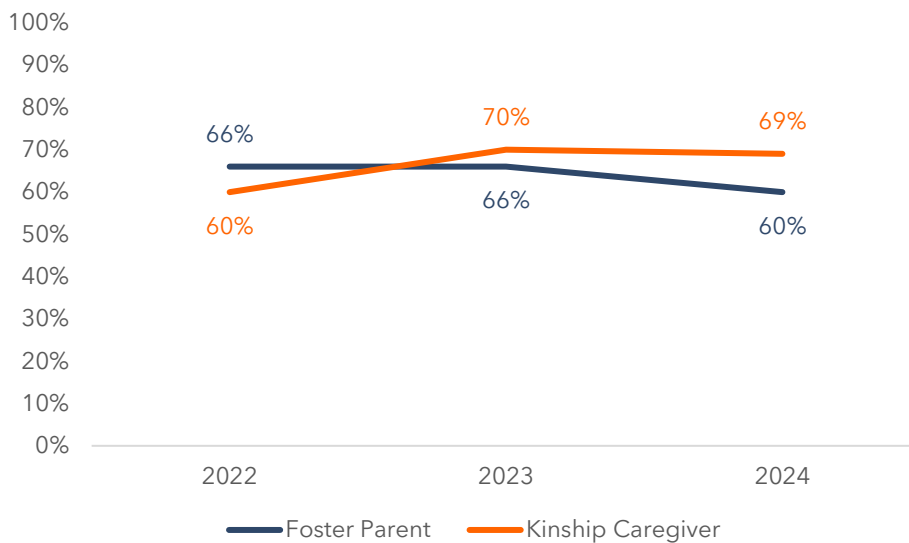
Ratings of staff knowledge. Foster parents and kinship caregivers’ ratings of licensing and home study staff knowledge was very high and stable (93% or higher for both groups across all years). Foster parents reported a decrease in this area between 2023 and 2024, from 95% to 93%, while kinship caregivers reported a slight increase (from 94% in 2023 to 96% in 2024).

Indicator 11f. Foster parents and kinship care families report feeling personally supported by DCYF staff

Foster parents: ↓ Needs improvement.

Kinship caregivers: ↔ No change.

Figure 15. Do you feel personally supported by DCYF staff?²³



Findings. Foster parents’ feelings of being personally supported by DCYF staff fell from 66% in 2023 to 60% in 2024. Kinship caregivers reported an increase between 2022 (60%) and 2023 (70%) and remained steady in 2024 (69%).

Recommendations

Satisfaction across most areas remained relatively high in 2024. Overall, kinship caregivers reported a more positive experience compared to foster parents. The Board would like to emphasize a recommendation from previous Annual Reports: 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.

²³ Washington State Department of Social and Health Services, Research and Data Analysis Division. (n.d.). *Research report 7.126*. <https://www.dshs.wa.gov/sites/default/files/rda/reports/research-7-126.pdf>



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

Overall outcome

× Data are not available.

Indicator 12a. Increase the percentage of total exits that are reunifications

× Data are not available. DCYF data require a unique data request and are not available in time for this report.

Indicator 12b. Increase the percentage of total exits that are reunifications (by race/ethnicity)

× Data are not available. DCYF data require a unique data request and are not available in time for this report.

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

Overall outcome:

× Data are not available.

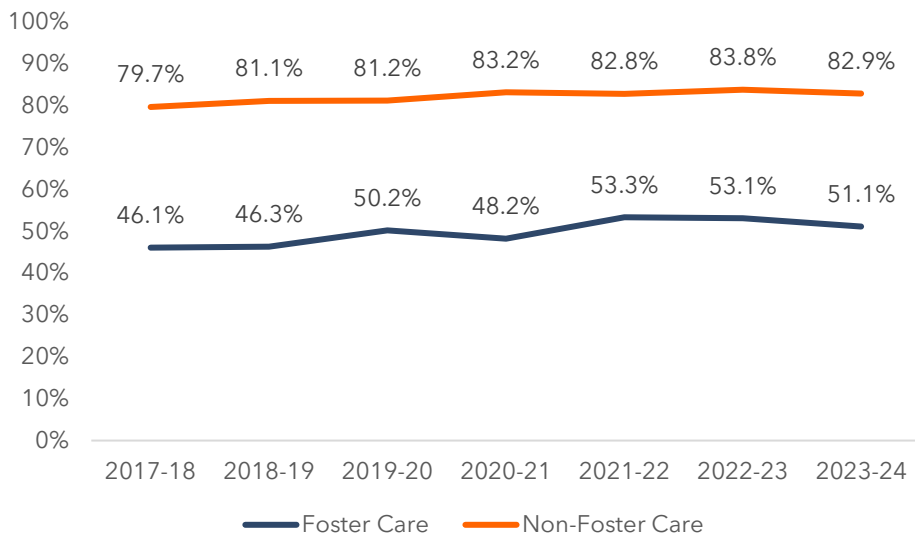
Indicator 13a.1. Increase four-year graduation rates for youth in child welfare

↔ No change.

Background. Research findings indicate that youth in foster care experience poorer educational outcomes than youth who do not experience foster care.²⁴

²⁴ Courtney, M. E., et al. (2018). *Midwest evaluation of the adult functioning of former foster youth: Outcomes at age 26*. Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago. <https://www.chapinhall.org/wp-content/uploads/Midwest-Eval-Outcomes-at-Age-26.pdf>

Figure 16. Four-year graduation rates for youth in child welfare, 2017-2018 to 2023-2024²⁵



Findings. Graduation rates among youth in foster care increased from 46.1% in 2017-2018 to a peak of 53.3% in 2021-2022 where they remained stable through 2022-2023 before declining somewhat to 51.1% in 2023-2024. For youth who were not in foster care, graduation rates were consistently higher, rising from 79.7% in 2017-2018 to 83.8% in 2022-2023 before falling slightly to 82.9% in 2023-2024.

Indicator 13a.2. Increase four-year graduation rates for Juvenile Rehabilitation students enrolled in institutional education settings

↔ No change.

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.²⁶ 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 Juvenile Rehabilitation section. These facilities provide 24-hour-a-day diagnosis, confinement, and rehabilitation of juveniles committed by the courts. State-operated community facilities are also operated by the Juvenile Rehabilitation section of DCYF.²⁷ These facilities provide 24-hour services to youth referred for services through the juvenile justice system.

²⁵ Washington State Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction. (2024). *Report card graduation data 2023–24*. https://data.wa.gov/education/Report-Card-Graduation-2023-24/76iv-8ed4/about_data

²⁶ Revised Code of Washington (RCW) 28A.150.200. *Basic education act of 1977*. <https://app.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=28A.150.200>

²⁷ Community facilities were previously referred to as group homes.

Figure 17. Four-year graduation rates for Juvenile Rehabilitation students enrolled in institutional education at Echo Glen²⁸ and Green Hill²⁹, 2021-2022 to 2023-2024

Institution	Status	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024
Echo Glen Children’s Center	Graduating	<30%	<25%	N<10
	Continuing	<30%	<25%	N<10
	Dropout	70%	57%	N<10
Green Hill School	Graduating	14%	9%	11%
	Continuing	55%	57%	58%
	Dropout	31%	34%	32%

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

Findings.

Echo Glen Children’s Center. It is not possible to report the graduation rates for students at Echo Glen Children’s Center. Data are suppressed due to small sample sizes.

Green Hill School. Green Hill School had 103 12th graders enrolled at the beginning of the 2023-2024 school year (86 in 2022-2023, 80 in 2021-2022). The graduation rate dropped from 14% in 2021-2022 to 9% in 2022-2023 before increasing slightly to 11% in 2023-2024. The continuation rate stayed steady at 57% in 2022-2023 and 58% in 2023-2024, and the dropout rate stayed steady, too (from 34% to 32%).

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.

Students entering institutional educational programs have a wide range of credit histories, which influence the likelihood of graduation. Green Hill School demonstrates high dropout rates and low graduation outcomes, suggesting a need for more effective interventions and supports for students in these facilities. Data should be interpreted with caution because (1) sample sizes are relatively small and (2) the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction includes GED certificate completions as “dropouts” in their school report card data dashboard.

Indicator 13b.1. Improve employment outcomes for young adults exiting foster care

× Data are not available. This information is not collected by DCYF.

Indicator 13b.2. Increase median income for young adults exiting foster care

× Data are not available. This information is not collected by DCYF.

²⁸ Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction. (n.d.). *Report card: Green Hill School.*
<https://reportcard.ospi.k12.wa.us/ReportCard/ViewSchoolOrDistrict/101466>

²⁹ Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction. (n.d.). *Report card: Echo Glen Children’s Center.*
<https://reportcard.ospi.k12.wa.us/ReportCard/ViewSchoolOrDistrict/101855>



Indicator 13b.3. Increase the percentage of youth released from Juvenile Rehabilitation who find employment within one year of release

× Data are not available. DCYF data will be publicly available by December 31, 2025.

Recommendations

Students in foster care and in institutional educational programs continue to graduate from high school at significantly lower rates than their peers in the general population, putting them at risk for poorer outcomes in adulthood. To increase their likelihood of graduating from high school, youth in foster care should be supported in maintaining their school placements even if their foster care placements change. Project Education Impact (PEI; part of Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill 6032) is intended to support students in foster care and students experiencing homelessness in achieving educational equity with their peers in the general population by 2027.³⁰ Efforts should be revitalized to provide specific educational supports to these vulnerable students.

Improving outcomes for students in foster care and in institutional educational programs requires effective communication and collaboration between DCYF and the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI). OSPI, DCYF, and local institutional education providers should collaborate to implement the recommendations put forth in the 2022 report, *Improving Institutional Education Outcomes: Final Report*.³¹

In addition, House Bill 1827, enacted into law in July 2025, requires OSPI to develop a timeline and plan for assuming responsibility for the “effective delivery and administration of basic education services to justice-involved students and improving their educational outcomes” by September 2028. This plan should be informed by best practices in the field as well as by input from students and their families.

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

Overall outcome

× Data are not available. DCYF data will be publicly available by December 31, 2025.

Indicator 14a. Increase the average number of Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) individual sessions attended per month (by race/ethnicity)

× Data are not available. DCYF data will be publicly available by December 31, 2025.

³⁰ Washington State Department of Children, Youth, and Families. (2019). *Foster youth and homelessness education report*. <https://www.dcyf.wa.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/reports/FosterHomelessEducation.pdf>

³¹ Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction. (2023, August). *Improving institutional education outcomes: Final report*. <https://ospi.k12.wa.us/sites/default/files/2023-08/12-22-improving-institutional-education-outcomes-final-report.pdf>



Indicator 14b. Increase the average number of Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) group sessions attended per month (by race/ethnicity)

× Data are not available. DCYF data will be publicly available by December 31, 2025.

Indicator 14c. Increase the treatment rate of foster care youth enrolled in Medicaid who have a mental health or substance abuse treatment need

× Data are not available. This information is not collected by DCYF.

15. Increase the number of youth who successfully complete the terms of diversion or alternative sentencing options in collaboration with county juvenile justice programs

Overall outcome

× Data are not available.

Indicator 15a. Among youth involved with Juvenile Rehabilitation, increase the number participating in disposition alternatives

× Data are not available. This information is not collected by DCYF.

Indicator 15b. Among youth involved with Juvenile Rehabilitation, increase the number of evidence-based program starts

× Data are not available. This information is not collected by DCYF.

Indicator 15c. Among youth involved with Juvenile Rehabilitation, increase the number of successful evidence-based program completions

× Data are not available. This information is not collected by DCYF.

16. Decrease the number of youth released from Juvenile Rehabilitation found guilty of another offense within 18 months

Overall outcome (Indicator 16a). Decrease the number of youth released from Juvenile Rehabilitation found guilty of another offense within 18 months

× Data are not available. DCYF data will be publicly available by December 31, 2025.

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

Overall outcome (Indicator 17a). Decrease the percentage of youth exiting systems of care who experience homelessness within 12 months of exit

↔ No change.

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 (the most recent year for which data are available), 13% ($n=33$) of youth and young adults entering a Juvenile Rehabilitation facility had been homeless in the year prior to their entry.³²

Figure 18. Percentage of youth exiting systems of care who experience homelessness within 12 months of exit, 2017 to 2022³³

System	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Residential Behavioral Health	18%	16%	15%	14%	14%	14%
Foster Care	23%	22%	19%	19%	12%	13%
Juvenile Rehabilitation	25%	32%	29%	25%	23%	25%
Any System of Care	19%	19%	18%	16%	15%	15%

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

Findings. The percentage of youth experiencing homelessness within 12 months of exit from any system of care (residential behavioral health, foster care, or juvenile rehabilitation) remained relatively steady between 2021 and 2022 (the most recent year for which data are available).

Across all systems, the percentage of youth experiencing homelessness decreased from 19% in 2017 to 15% in 2022. Decreases in homelessness have also occurred within two of those systems (residential behavioral health and foster care), though youth exiting Juvenile Rehabilitation consistently experience the highest rates of homelessness. In 2022, 11% ($n=72$) of the 643 youth and young adults exiting a Juvenile Rehabilitation facility experienced homelessness within three months of their exit, and 25% ($n=159$) experienced homelessness within 12 months of exit.

Recommendations

All youth exiting systems of care should be provided with resources and supports to address housing instability. House Bill 1905, passed in 2022, requires state agencies to provide support to youth and young adults exiting systems of care through the Youth and Young Adult Housing Response Team so that they do not experience homelessness.³⁴ The state should review and carefully consider implementing the recommendations in the Youth and Young Adult Housing Response Team’s annual reports (such as investing in strong data infrastructure, providing flexible funding, and increasing the availability of in-home behavioral health supports).³⁵

³² Washington State Department of Children, Youth, and Families. (2022). *Medicaid behavioral health in juvenile rehabilitation facilities*. <https://www.dcyf.wa.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/Medicaid-BehavioralHealth-JRFacilities-%202022.pdf>

³³ Washington State Department of Social and Health Services, Research and Data Analysis Division. (2022). *Behavioral health trends among youth in residential care (Report 11.254)*. <https://www.dshs.wa.gov/sites/default/files/rda/reports/research-11-254.pdf>

³⁴ Washington State Legislature. (2017). *Senate Bill 6560 summary*. <https://app.leg.wa.gov/bills/summary?BillNumber=6560&Initiative=false&Year=2017>

³⁵ Washington State Department of Children, Youth, and Families. (n.d.). *Young Adult Housing and Homelessness Prevention (YYA HRT) reports*. <https://dcyf.wa.gov/services/housing-homelessness-prevention/yahrt/reports>

In particular, DCYF should continue to prioritize addressing housing instability for youth exiting juvenile rehabilitation facilities, 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.

In addition, DCYF should 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.

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

× Data are not available.

Indicator 18a. Decrease 30-day rate of room confinement/isolation in Juvenile Rehabilitation (by race/ethnicity)

× Data are not available. DCYF data will be publicly available by December 31, 2025.

Indicator 18b. Decrease racial/ethnic disparity ratios for community facility placement in Juvenile Rehabilitation

× Data are not available. DCYF data will be publicly available by December 31, 2025.

Indicator 18c. Decrease racial/ethnic disparity ratios for discretionary parole placement

× Data are not available. DCYF data will be publicly available by December 31, 2025.

Conclusion

Data for many indicators were not available in time for this report, so it is difficult to gauge DCYF's overall performance across outcomes included in this report. Outcomes for which data were available demonstrate both successes and areas for improvement. One area in which DCYF has been experiencing continued success is in increasing the number of licensed childcare providers and, in turn, increasing the capacity of licensed childcare providers.

In 2026, the DCYF Oversight Board plans to significantly change the reporting process and structure of the Annual Report. This is expected to include more focused and impactful reports on key topics essential to the agency's success.

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.



Appendix B: 2025 DCYF Oversight Board Membership

Name and Affiliation	Board Role
Sharonda Amamilo , Thurston County Superior Court Judge	Judicial representative presiding over child welfare court proceedings or other children's matters
Anna Armstrong , Director of Education, Kalispel Tribe	Eastern Washington Tribal Representative
Steve Bergquist , House of Representatives	Legislator
Katie Biron , Fostering Connections	Foster parent representative
Bobbe Bridge , Center for Children & Youth Justice	Juvenile rehabilitation and justice subject matter expert
Leonard Christian , Senate	Legislator
Tom Dent , House of Representatives	Legislator
Ben de Haan, PhD , University of Washington School of Social Work	Child welfare subject matter expert
Marian Harris, PhD , 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
Pamela Javier , Co-Design Consultant and Lived Expert	Current or former foster youth under 25
Danielle Johnson , Department of Children, Youth, and Families	Child welfare caseworker representative
Ruth Kagi , State Representative (retired)	Early learning subject matter expert
Diane Liebe, MD , Yakima Valley Farm Workers Clinic/Children's Village (Co-chair)	Physician with experience working with youth
Lois Martin , Community Day Center for Children	Early childhood program practitioner representative
Tonia McClanahan , Office of Public Defense	Parent Group Stakeholder Representative
Mary Sprute Garland , Office of the Governor	Governor's Office representative (non-voting)
Claire Wilson , Senate (Co-chair)	Legislator
Stacy Williams, JD , Cowlitz and Clark County Child Advocates	Western Washington Tribal Representative
Shelly Willis , Family Education & Support Services	Organization Advocating for the Best Interest of the Child Representative



Appendix C: Summary of DCYF Presentations to the DCYF Oversight Board in 2025

DCYF made 13 presentations to the full Board at six meetings between January and September 2025. Dates and topics are summarized below.

January 17, 2025, DCYF Oversight Board Meeting

DCYF 2024 Selected Outcome Review & DCYF 2025 Focused Priorities Overview [Draft] | Jenny Heddin, Deputy Secretary - Chief of Staff

Jenny Heddin outlined outcomes and goals focusing on equity, intention, and capacity with equity being a throughline in all the outcomes.

DCYF Legislative Session Preview and Impact of the Budget Freeze | Allison Krutsinger, Director of Public Affairs

Allison Krutsinger provided an update on the many changes facing DCYF from leadership transitions within the agency and the Office of the Governor as well as the current state spending freeze. Krutsinger shared that there are three freezes impacting the agency (travel, hiring, and goods & services) along with having to submit a proposal for cutting a portion of DCYF's budget. Further, all DCYF advisory council meetings were directed to become virtual for 2025. Additionally, all DCYF Advisory Council meetings were directed to move to a virtual format for 2025.

2025 Vision and Q&A | Secretary Tana Senn

Secretary Tana Senn spoke to the board about her plan and vision for new role as Secretary of DCYF. The three overarching priorities she identified for her first year at DCYF were communication, support, and service. The Secretary also expressed her interest in strengthening collaboration with the DCYF Oversight Board, particularly around data sharing and alignment in analysis. She emphasized the importance of ensuring the board has access to necessary data and expressed enthusiasm about the board's current areas of focus. Secretary Senn is prioritizing a renewed focus on culture change, emphasizing staff support, teamwork, and culturally relevant services. Her goals include fostering stability after years of significant change (e.g., during the pandemic), improving communication around new legislation, and ensuring staff are supported and trained. In the first 90 days, she will be engaging with staff to better understand their work and is committed to visiting local sites to build community connections.

Communication

- Example, only 16% of eligible families are accessing Working Connections Childcare. DCYF needs to do a better job communicating these opportunities and similar opportunities to families eligible for services.



- Internal communications need to improve as well, including sharing goals, new laws, and trainings, especially through this leadership change.

Support

- Social workers need support and to feel supported, for example childcare workers and employees in Juvenile Rehabilitation facilities. All those staff do such critical and taxing work. If affected employees and their families are not feeling supported, that is a miss for DCYF.

Service

- Having a service mindset, the agency is focused on public service, and we now need to bring in a customer service aspect as well.
 - Caregivers and providers have expressed challenges in gaining licenses and families in need of services have found the application process confusing, DCYF needs to make these more accessible.

February 21, 2025, DCYF Oversight Board Meeting

Federal Grant Pause | Jenny Heddin, Deputy Secretary - Chief of Staff, DCYF

On January 28, the federal government temporarily halted access to certain federal funds pending review of how states are using them and whether they align with the current administration's priorities. Deputy Secretary Jenny Heddin provided an update on how this pause is affecting DCYF.

- DCYF, along with the Washington State Attorney General's Office and other agencies, joined a multistate lawsuit challenging the pause. As a result, access to federal funds has temporarily resumed, though the underlying federal directive remains unchanged.
- Programs were required to remove references to health and human services and add disclaimers clarifying that program activities do not represent federal positions.
- Key datasets traditionally available to DCYF have been withdrawn, prompting the agency to explore alternative data sources.
- DCYF is also a declarant in the lawsuit challenging the federal Birthright Citizenship Executive Order.

Note. The situation remains fluid and subject to change.

2024 DCYF Staff Engagement Survey Results: Child Welfare Worker Well-Being | Frank Ordway, Deputy Secretary of Operations, Dorene Perez, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Child Welfare, & Richard Gobble, HR Strategy & Planning Manager

DCYF presented findings from the [2024 Washington State Employee Engagement Survey](#), specifically highlighting results for Child Welfare Workers. As the Oversight Board has identified staff well-being as a 2025 priority, these results will serve as a baseline for monitoring progress. DCYF also outlined current initiatives aimed at improving employee safety and well-being.

Key Takeaways

- While DCYF can disaggregate data by region and office, it cannot yet isolate responses specifically from case-carrying staff, though most Child Welfare Workers fall into this category.
- Supervisor-specific data is available and will be shared separately.



- Survey item on communication, “I receive the information and communication I need to do my job effectively” showed notably lower response rate; DCYF noted that open-ended follow-up would be needed to understand why.
- Recent changes to survey questions limit trend comparisons over time, but future consistency is expected.
- Demographic data, including race and ethnicity, is collected and will be shared.
- Staff turnover has decreased significantly, from 26.9% in 2021 to 16.8% in 2024.

March 20, 2025, DCYF Oversight Board Meeting

Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) Update and Discussion | Dr. Vickie Ybarra, Assistant Secretary, Partnership, Prevention, and Services

FFPSA, introduced in 2018, is a Title IV-E funding source aimed at supporting prevention efforts to avoid entry or re-entry into foster care. To access these funds, states must have a federally approved prevention plan, use evidence-based or culturally responsive Tribal practices (where agreements exist), and meet federal reporting requirements. Notably, a Comprehensive Child Welfare Information System (CCWIS) is *not* required to collect data for FFPSA claims. Washington was among the first states to receive federal approval for its prevention plan.

Key Takeaways

- **Federal Funding Access.** DCYF cannot fully draw down FFPSA funds until CCWIS is operational, expected around 2029. As a mitigation strategy, DCYF is exploring what can be done with its current system, FamLink, and evaluating small, modular improvements.
- **Modular CCWIS Approach.** DCYF confirmed its planned CCWIS system is modular, aligning with national trends to expedite implementation. Some states have completed modular builds in under three years.
- **Comparing to Other States.** Other states like Kentucky are currently accessing FFPSA funds. DCYF is researching models from states like Illinois, which use alternate funding configurations but are not currently claiming FFPSA.
- **Medical Partnerships.** DCYF is already partnering with medical providers and law enforcement to support families at early points of contact.
- **Funding Projections.** Initial estimates for FFPSA reimbursement were \$11 million annually, but actual returns may be lower due to existing federal funding overlaps and state match requirements. DCYF is exploring community-based pathways for expansion, though this requires additional state funding.
- **Tribal Access.** No Washington State tribes have submitted their own FFPSA prevention plans to date and therefore are not yet drawing down these funds.

Reducing Racial and Ethnic Disproportionality and Disparities in System Involvement Across Child and Youth Outcomes | Jenny Heddin, DCYF Deputy Secretary - Chief of Staff and Dr. Vickie Ybarra, Assistant Secretary, Partnership, Prevention, and Services

In its 2024 Annual Report to the Governor’s Office and Legislature, the DCYF Oversight Board reported mixed results for the outcome area: “Reducing Racial and Ethnic Disproportionality and Disparities in System Involvement Across Child and Youth Programs.” This means that while improvements were achieved in some areas, disparities persist in others. In their presentation, DCYF



reaffirmed their commitment to eliminating racial disproportionalities by (a) addressing root causes, (b) implementing evidence-based, culturally responsive interventions, and (c) applying solutions across Early Learning, Child Welfare, and Juvenile Rehabilitation systems. These efforts support DCYF's broader goal of creating a more inclusive, equitable, and effective system for children, youth, and families in Washington State.

Early Learning

Questions and Answers

- Washington ranks high in the *quality* of its ECEAP (Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program) services but ranks 44th nationally in the number of children served, limiting statewide impact.
- Concerns were raised about the overrepresentation of Black children in ECEAP and their low performance on WaKIDS assessments, despite being in a high-quality program.
- DCYF Response: Children in ECEAP *are* showing improved kindergarten readiness—but the small number of children served limits broader impact.

Key Strategies

- Delivering culturally and linguistically responsive services
- Supporting a diverse early learning workforce
- Making targeted investments in communities of color

Child Welfare

Key Context

Poverty remains the **strongest predictor** of child welfare system involvement. DCYF is continuing its work to clearly distinguish **poverty from neglect** and reduce systemic bias.

Strategies by Area

Practice Improvements

- Updating mandatory reporter training to address bias
- Revising assessment tools for cultural relevance

Contracted Services

- Piloting culturally specific prevention services in communities with high placement rates for Native and Black children
- Increasing monitoring for cultural responsiveness in service contracts
- Expanding access to concrete supports and increasing staff awareness of poverty's role in disproportionality
- Improving service matching by enhancing the statewide directory with language and cultural information
- Boosting service access and targeting community-based prevention efforts for high-need populations

Placements

- Prioritizing kin-first placements for children of color
- Recruiting diverse caregivers to reflect children's cultural backgrounds
- Partnering with Tribes on child-placing agency contracts and new caregiver support initiatives



Juvenile Rehabilitation (JR)

Current Disparities

- Black youth face the highest arrest and adjudication rates
- Youth of color make up 66% of those in JR
- Black youth in Community Facilities are more likely to be returned to institutions than youth from other groups

Strategies to Address Disparities

- Implementing a Behavior Management System grounded in restorative and procedural justice
- Using Multi-Disciplinary Teams for individualized, fair placement decisions
- Applying a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) to identify and address systemic inequities
- Expanding culturally relevant programming across JR facilities

Post-Care Services

- All youth exiting JR are now offered voluntary post-care services
- DCYF will follow up with additional data on participation rates and impact, especially in areas like substance use treatment
- Additional questions are being explored about who accesses voluntary services, and how eligibility and outreach can be improved

Federal Updates | Jenny Heddin, DCYF Deputy Secretary - Chief of Staff

Questions/Takeaways

- A continuing resolution was passed and will remain in effect for a full year, avoiding major funding cuts to DCYF.
- DCYF operations and funding remain stable for now, though there are concerns about potential federal-level layoffs.
- Questions were raised about disproportionality among LGBTQ youth in the system.
- Federal directives have led to the removal of certain language related to federal programs from the DCYF website, and additional questions about DEI-related work are anticipated.

May 15, 2025, DCYF Oversight Board Meeting

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 practices, school stability, and teacher effectiveness. Ongoing efforts by DCYF were also highlighted.



Summary of Questions and Answers

- **Discipline Definitions.** DCYF uses definitions for terms like “defiance” and “inappropriate language” and is working toward consistent language across JR. “Personal Time Outs” in JR, are a form of individualized support allowing youth to step away when upset, process the situation with staff, and access additional resources if needed.
- **Discipline Trends.** DCYF could not speak to trends in JR discipline data, as internal tracking only began 16 months ago. Previously, data came solely from school districts. However, DCYF noted an increase in exclusionary discipline in foster care settings.
- **Mental Health and Attendance.** DCYF has not intentionally examined how mental health or behavioral diagnoses impact attendance. Addressing this could support better access to IEPs and needed services for young people.

July 17, 2025, DCYF Oversight Board Meeting

Access to Substance Use Disorder Treatment | Sarah Veele, PhD, Director, DCYF Office of Innovation, Alignment & Accountability, Michelle Balcom, MSW, Early Learning Program Manager, Jimmy Vallembois, Substance Use Disorder Program Manager, and Kym Ahrens, MD, Juvenile Rehabilitation Medical Director

Dr. Sarah Veele and her DCYF colleagues provided an update on opioid use disorder, opioid treatment, and prevention access for (a) caregivers on the pregnancy support pathway, (b) caregivers who are involved in child welfare, and (c) youth and young adults in Juvenile Rehabilitation. The presentation highlighted the continuum of care from prevention to treatment, recovery, and maintenance. This expert panel also presented about the services and supports offered by DCYF and community partners, as well as successes, challenges, and progress the agency and multiple systems such as the Department of Health, Healthcare Authority, WA State Hospital Association, and other external community partners and families are experiencing.

Summary of Questions and Answers

Medicaid and Federal Policy Impacts

- Medicaid remains essential for accessing SUD treatment.
- The recently passed federal bill (“One Big Beautiful Bill”) may not change Medicaid eligibility for youth directly but introduces new requirements, such as:
 - Work or job-seeking requirements
 - Reapplication every six months instead of annually
- A 90-day exemption exists post-release from incarceration to meet these requirements.
- Washington’s [Section 1115 Waiver](#) (covering Department of Corrections and now Juvenile Rehabilitation) remains intact, but access beyond the 90-day exemption may still be impacted.
- DCYF is actively reviewing the bill’s implications through internal teams, including prevention partnerships.

Family Engagement and Voluntary Services

- The Plan of Safe Care (POSC) is mandatory but designed to be family-centered.



- Community-Based Pathways and the Pregnancy SUD Pilot are voluntary. DCYF emphasizes positive engagement, even if families initially decline services, to build trust and open doors for future support.

Parenting Support and Early Relational Health

- DCYF is working with National Intensive Care Unit (NICU) staff to expand their focus from just the infant to the entire family, integrating discussions about parenting and relationship-building.
- Community-Based Pathways include access to parenting classes, playgroups, peer support, and resources like Head Start, Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP), and licensed childcare, all embedded in safe care plans.

Childcare Access

- Families in POSC or Community-Based Pathways receive childcare during active case involvement.
- Transition to Working Connections Child Care (WCCC) is supported by programs like Help Me Grow, which assist families in accessing additional supports like WIC and paid family leave.

Legislative Funding Concerns

- There is concern that birth-to-age-3 ECEAP was underfunded, and that [SB 6109](#), aimed at addressing the state's fentanyl response, did not receive the full funding needed to support children and families impacted by substance use.

DCYF Briefing: 2025 Quarter 1 - Increase in Critical Incidents and Response | Vickie Ybarra, PhD, Assistant Secretary, Partnership, Prevention, and Services and Dorene Perez, Deputy Secretary of Child Welfare

This presentation by Dr. Vickie Ybarra and Dorene Perez focused on the increase in critical incidents during Quarter 1 2025 (Q1 2025). They provided updates on the resources available to families as part of prevention efforts. Their presentation was a follow-up to Patrick Dowd's presentation and described how Office of Family and Children's Ombuds (OFCO) and DCYF use different criteria for inclusion of critical incidents in their analysis.

Key Data Points

- Critical incidents in Q1 2025: 22
- Critical incidents in Q1 2024: 9
- Increase: Over 2x year-over-year
- Opioid-related incidents: 68%
- Non-opioid-related incidents: 32%
- Majority of incidents: Involve children under age 3

Differences in Inclusion Criteria

- OFCO examines and responds to child fatalities differently than DCYF.
- OFCO examines child fatalities reported to their office, including those not directly caused by maltreatment, if there are concerns about child welfare or systemic issues.
- DCYF is limited by statute ([RCW 74.13.640](#)) to reviewing only those child fatalities and near fatalities that are maltreatment-related *and* where there was prior DCYF involvement within the 12



months preceding the incident. For example, DCYF would not review a case if the family had no child welfare history in the past year, even if a critical incident occurred.

Family Risk Profile

- Most impacted families are experiencing:
 - High treatment needs
 - Adult and child mental health challenges
 - Housing and economic instability
 - Children with special needs

DCYF Response Efforts

- Safe Child Consults required for every case involving opioid use and a child under age 3
- Frontline Input gathered via sessions with Healthcare Providers Service Organization
- Geographic Hotspots identified to better coordinate local services and supports
- Enhanced Training for case workers in neglect and medically complex cases

Clarification on Case Types

- Most critical incidents involve high-risk families not currently under active DCYF supervision at the time of the incident.
- DCYF is legally unable to remain involved with families who refuse voluntary services after a case has been closed, and no active safety risk is identified.

Broader Context and Prevention Needs

- These cases represent the “tip of the iceberg” in terms of morbidity related to child maltreatment.
- Greater emphasis on preventative approaches (e.g., Family First Prevention Services Act) is needed.
- DCYF acknowledged growing community needs, especially as economic stress increases and key support programs (e.g., Medicaid, SNAP) face funding reductions.

September 22, 2025, DCYF Oversight Board Meeting

Access to Housing and Homelessness Services | Sarah Veele, PhD, Director, DCYF Office of Innovation, Alignment & Accountability; Jess Mayrer, Program Manager, DCYF; Shannon M. Quinn, MSW, Youth and Young Adult Housing Response Team Manager, DCYF

Dr. Sarah Veele and her DCYF colleagues provided an update on children, youth, and family access to housing and homelessness services, emphasizing the importance of this work given the rise in adult homelessness and persistent racial disparities in Washington. Dr. Veele also reminded the Board that “Create Successful Transitions into Adulthood for Youth and Young Adults in Our Care” is part of the [DCYF Strategic and Racial Equity Plan](#) for Addressing Youth Homelessness. DCYF is using a multi-agency partnership to address this issue including the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS), the Health Care Authority (HCA), and the Department of Commerce in multiple initiatives outlined below.

Takeaways

- Washington State Youth Homelessness Prevention Continuum:
 - **Universal:** Education for larger population of the state, youth, and families.
 - **Primary:** Supporting youth and families prior to system involvement to reduce risk of housing instability for youth.
 - **Early Secondary:** Early system (CPS or Juvenile or Criminal Justice) interaction that does not lead to out-of-home placement or incarceration
 - **Later Secondary:** Preventing deeper system involvement and housing instability.
 - **Tertiary:** Preventing housing instability for those exiting the system. Ensuring those who are experiencing homelessness move quickly into safe and stable housing and receive appropriate support.
- Child Welfare Housing Program (CWHP)
 - Partnerships enable DCYF to collaborate with public housing authorities (PHAs) and service providers to provide rental assistance and supportive housing services (financial assistance, case management, and logistical support) to families and young adults.
 - **Family Unification Program (FUP)** PHAs provide housing vouchers to families where lack of housing is a primary barrier to reunification.
 - **Foster Youth to Independence (FYI)** PHAs provide housing vouchers to young adults (18-24) who are leaving foster care, homeless, or at-risk of homelessness.
- DCYF’s [Youth and Young Adult Housing Response Team](#) (YYAHRT) was created by both [SB 6560](#) and [HB 1905](#) and serves ages youth ages 12 through 24, who are exiting a system of care ([RCW 43.330.720](#)) and experiencing or at risk for homelessness.
- YYAHRT provides Multisystem Coordination with Subject Matter Experts, Diversion and Referral, Resource Navigation, Youth Centered Meetings, System Level Advocacy, Recommendations for System Changes and does not provide Housing, Financial Assistance, Placement Coordination, Emergency Services.

Summary of Questions and Answers

- Is the data related to homelessness that you showed inclusive of data from the Office of Homeless Youth since it does not sit inside of DCYF? Also, what kind of cross agency work is being done and is any of that work part of the new [1115 Waiver](#) which includes juveniles?
 - The Office of Homeless Youth has led much of this work, and we’re using their data in this presentation.
 - These efforts extend well beyond DCYF, involving other agencies, nonprofits, and partners, this work cannot be done by DCYF alone.
 - The connection to the 1115 Waiver is unclear at this time, but can follow up with an answer
- Do the numbers shown for the “Youth and Young Adults 12 months after Exiting DCYF Systems” slide include youth that have accessed the extended foster care and independent living skills services as well?
 - Yes, that is included within these numbers.
- What’s driving the lack of housing options for minors (e.g., funding challenges, limited capacity, or program closures)? How has the landscape changed, and are we seeing more pregnant and parenting youth?
 - We’re seeing significant strain in housing options for minors. While some programs have closed, such as the Spokane Crisis Residential Center (CRC), others have opened, like the

youth shelter in Longview. It's unclear whether there's been a net loss in capacity, but existing CRCs and HOPE Centers are consistently full. Finding an available bed often requires contacting multiple facilities, and with shelter stays limited to 90 days, many young people are forced to "shelter hop."

- I'm very interested in data on pregnant and parenting teens, as many youth at Echo Glen and Green Hill are parents. An increase in these numbers would be concerning given the existing lack of services and support.
 - DCYF is happy to follow up with any data about this.
- How challenging is it for DCYF to support youth with intellectual or developmental disabilities (IDD) who are also in the system? Finding placements for this population can be difficult; how does that intersect with homelessness?
 - This is definitely a challenging population to serve, but we also have a dedicated agency and resources specifically for them. The biggest issue isn't the lack of services, it's the timing. The resources youth with IDD need often aren't available right when they're needed.
 - For example, when a young person with a disability is being released from detention, DCYF works with the Developmental Disabilities Council (DDC) to identify supports for those under 18. If their needs are significant, we look into residential out-of-home services, but those placements aren't always immediately available. We can't reserve a bed weeks in advance. Our DDC partners are excellent at expediting assessments when needed, but even then, the process can take time.
 - For young adults over 18, the main challenge is when they decline services because they want to live independently. We work with them to explain what resources exist, like housing support or benefits, and how they can help supplement their income. Adult family homes, supported living, and assisted living facilities are often great options, as they're designed to support this population.
 - Another recurring challenge is obtaining evaluations when we suspect an IDD diagnosis. Some conditions require diagnosis by an MD, while others must be confirmed by a psychologist, which can add delays.
- What challenges and barriers do 16- or 17-year-olds face when aging out of foster care and trying to avoid homelessness? Do improvements need to come from system-level changes or new statutes?
 - Thanks to recent statute changes, 16- and 17-year-olds can now self-consent to enter a shelter, which provides short-term stability and helps DCYF support them. However, there are still key areas where parental or guardian consent is required, such as enrolling in Job Corps or obtaining certain medical procedures like wisdom tooth removal. This can leave young people stuck in temporary shelter instead of accessing more stable options.
 - Even when a youth is working and doing well in school, they often face barriers as landlords are typically unwilling to rent to minors.
 - These situations highlight the need to find additional ways to empower young people to meet their basic needs when they don't have an available parent or caregiver advocating for them.

Family Separation Rapid Response Team Update | Lillian Ferraz, Family Separation Rapid Response Team, DCYF

Lillian Ferraz provided an update on the Family Separation Rapid Response Team (FSRRT), which works to improve policies and practices statewide to protect children whose parents or guardians are



detained or deported due to their immigration status. The Team does not share information with federal immigration enforcement. It also does not respond directly to individual instances of family separation.

Resources Provided

- [Resources for Families Impacted by Immigration-Related Concerns | Washington State Department of Children, Youth, and Families](#)
- [In Case of Family Separation: Placement Process Flow Chart | Washington State Department of Children, Youth, and Families](#)

Takeaways

- [Executive Order 25-04](#) was signed by Governor Ferguson on January 27, 2025, and created the Family Separation Rapid Response Team (FSRRT).
- Team members include state agencies, subject matter experts, and policy experts. There are approximately 25-35 people at each meeting.
- Some of the Community Partner Organizations that have been critical in these conversations about immigration law, state law, and federal law include the Northwest Immigration Rights Project, Legal Council for Youth and Children, and the Washington Immigrant Solidarity Network.
- In its first six months, the FSRRT has:
 - Delivered presentations and coordinated policy efforts with partner agencies and community-based organizations every three weeks.
 - Published two reports ([available on website](#)).
 - Developed two informational flyers.
 - Completed policy analyses and provided recommendations.
- Looking ahead, leadership has an important opportunity to strengthen collaboration between community partners and the state, ensuring better coordination across systems.