



Family Separation Response Task Force Meeting #4

April 16, 2025 | 3:30 to 5:30 p.m. | HYBRID
1500 Jefferson St., Olympia, WA

MEETING MINUTES

Introductions and Task Force Updates

- Secretary Tana Senn invited participants to introduce themselves and introduced the Task Force to Lillian Ferraz, the new Task Force Administrator as of March 26, 2025.
- The First report to the Governor is due April 30. The full report will be translated into Spanish, Vietnamese, Korean, and Somali.
- Lillian is working on a one-pager that will accompany the report and will be distributed widely. This report will be in X languages. If Task Force members feel that other languages should be included, they are encouraged to follow up with Lillian.
- DCYF will be meeting with advocates around Special Immigrant Juvenile Visas and will follow up with the Task Force on any decisions that come out of that meeting.
- Moving forward, the Task Force will host monthly meetings with Community partners in the room to discuss concerns and needs for the government to address. These meetings have already influenced the work of the Task Force.
- The Task Force webpage will be updated in conjunction with the report deadline. This update includes an update to the FAQ section.
- At the May 6 Task Force meeting, the Task Force will continue the process mapping work that was started at the March 25 Task Force meeting. If Task Force members are interested in policy work, they are encouraged to follow up with Lillian.
- Lillian is working with community partners on developing a community tool kit to be posted to the Task Force web page with the resources for Immigrant families. Part of this tool kit will include an infographic on DCYF.

Organization Introduction- Washington Immigrant Solidarity Network (WAISN)

Overview

- The WAISN representative shared WAISN's Mission and Vision- Protect and advance the power of immigrant and refugee families through a multiracial, multilingual, and multi-faith coalition. [WAISN's] organizing strategy educates and mobilizes statewide to uphold and defend the rights and dignity of all immigrants and refugees, centering the voices of impacted communities.
- Formed in response to Trump administration threats, WAISN is the largest Immigrant-led coalition in Washington
- Washington is home to over 943,000 immigrants and rates 8th amongst states for the most refugee arrivals

Deportation Defense Hotline



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- WAISN is most known for their Deportation Defense Hotline, the only statewide hotline for Immigrants and Refugees in Washington state.
- The Hotline's phone number is 844-724-3737 and it is open Monday-Friday 6:00AM-6:00PM with the option to leave a voicemail outside of working hours.
- With a focus on undocumented immigrants, the Hotline serves all races, ethnicities, genders, sexual orientations, and cultures.
- The Hotline provides Know Your Rights information, as well as referrals for over 29 categories including: housing, utilities, healthcare, legal aid, and tax help, for example.
- All Hotline operators speak English and Spanish, and WAISN has an interpretation line with serves in 300+ languages.

Rapid Response Network

- WAISN's Rapid Response Network is a volunteer-run network providing documenting ICE activity and providing support for families.
- The Rapid Response Teams document ICE activity, support community members, remind community members of their rights, and make sure ICE officers are following the law. The Response Team is a way for WAISN to get accurate information on what is going on and report those facts back to the community.
- The Network is currently active in 12 counties: Benton, Chelan, Douglas, Franklin, Grays Harbor, King, Kitsap, Kittitas, Skagit, Snohomish, Spokane, and Yakima. WAISN is working on training more teams across the state.

Resource Finder

- Launched in March of 2020, the Resource Finder, housed on WAISN's website, includes more than 1,350 resources in all WA state counties. These resources include statewide and national resources.
- Resources are vetted for accessibility, LGBTQIA inclusion, and clarity around ID requirements.
- Anyone can report issues or additional information on a resource, and there are live links for suggestions and corrections.
- WAISN updates the source finder every 6 months to see if data is still accurate.

Accompaniment Program

- The Accompaniment Program supports individuals attending immigration court hearings, ICE check-ins, USCIS appointments, and State Courthouse hearings.
- Volunteers support community members, providing emotional support, guidance, and sometimes transportation.
- Individuals can call the Hotline and get linked with a volunteer from the Accompaniment Program.

Immigrant Rights and Advocacy Day

- More than 500 advocates and elected officials gathered in Olympia with WAISN to demand that the WA Legislature fund unemployment insurance and healthcare for immigrants.

Organization Introduction-Amara, Fahren Johnson, Chief Executive Officer*Overview*

- Originally an orphanage, Amara has been supporting children, adults, and families impacted by the child welfare system in the Puget Sound region since 1921.
- The organization is highly focused on prevention, and how to make sure family reunification, when safe, happens. That work is partly done through kinship wraparound services, and advocacy around changing child welfare policies.
- Amara has 29 acres of land in Pierce County where they provide activities for families who are looking to reunify. This includes gardening, and animal therapy.
- At Amara's Seattle space, they provide expanded learning opportunities for foster youth, outside of school time, as well as a Teen Drop-in center. These learning opportunities are available to all youth, with a focus on access for Foster youth.
- 30% of Amara's staff are Social Workers, many staff also have lived experience in Child Welfare. Their goal is to center young people, and make sure they have what they need to thrive.
- Amara partners closely with DCYF and the Department of Commerce. They launched a Family and Community Connections Program with wraparound supports for caregivers, not just foster families.
- Though reunification is a priority for Amara, they also provide post adoption services and support as well.
- Fahren would like to partner with other organizations and agencies and has a goal of providing behavioral health supports. Amara would like to catch the gap between foster care and houselessness.

Federal Administration Impacts

- Amara served over 3000 families in Pierce County last year, this year they have served 500 families so far. 60% of these families are Spanish-speaking.
- Families receive concrete goods from Amara, including food, diapers, and clothing. Since President Trump's inauguration, Amara has seen a huge dip in Spanish-speaking families coming to Amara for concrete good and services.
- ICE has been seen around Amara's campus, but Amara has not allowed ICE on campus. Families are scared to come to Amara as ICE activity has increased, but families are still in need of concrete goods and services.
- As partner organizations are hit with funding cuts, Amara and the families they serve are impacted by loss of services. Diapers and wipes are examples of goods that are no longer covered by grant funding.
- Amara is trying as hard as possible to not disrupt resources for families who are coming to Amara for help, this includes looking into how to distribute resources to families who cannot make it to Amara due to safety concerns.
- Amara is able to assist in finding kin in other countries, and is often contacted by kin directly.

Organization Introduction-Northwest Immigrant Rights Project

- NWIRP provides direct legal services, legislative and non-legislative advocacy, and community education to promote justice and defend and advance the rights of immigrants.
- NWIRP provides comprehensive immigration legal services for low-income people in WA state (200% of the federal poverty line), all services are free.
- NWIRP has done impact litigation where they helped large groups of clients impacted by laws and policies, for example, NWIRP was able to affirm access for youth 18-21 to Special Immigration Juvenile Visas.
- NWIRP has four offices in Seattle, Granger, Wenatchee, and Tacoma.

Challenges faced by Immigrant Youth and Children

- Legal Defense in the US is not guaranteed for immigration cases, like it is for criminal cases. Though clients are much more likely to win cases if they have an attorney, nationally only 30% of immigrants have attorneys in removal cases.
- Limited funding that was available for unaccompanied children and youth, has now been cut. Over 350 unaccompanied migrant children are now without representation.
- Though NWIRP is continue to provide services to youth, 21% of their funding is Federal funding that has now been cut.
- Nationally there has also been an increased focus on immigrant children and youth, who have been targeted by Homeland Security. Investigators have conducted “wellness checks” to check the legal status of kin caring for unaccompanied children, under the guise of protecting children from trafficking.
- Youth in DCYF care without lawful status have less ability to access employment opportunities as they age out of foster care and have less access to services.
- Foster youth may have a lack of knowledge or access to their immigration history and status, as well as lack of stability and safety due to immigration status.

Recent Developments in Immigration Policy

- Sensitive locations or protected areas like schools, hospitals, and institutions of worship are now able to be targeted by DHS as a previous memorandum protecting those locations was rescinded by the new federal administration.
- DHS now has the authority to detain immigrants for expedited removal if they have not been continuously present in the U.S. for two years.
- Certain noncitizens accused of an expanded list of crimes, even if not convicted, may be forced into mandatory detention with no opportunity for bond.

Questions for the Task Force:

- What is the department's plan to ensure consistent training on identifying and screening for immigration status?
-Currently there is no consistent system and youth may or may not receive immigration assistance only if their social worker, foster parent and dependency attorney reaches out to an immigration attorney and that attorney has capacity.



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- How can the Task Force ensure detained parents are able to participate in the dependency process?
- How can the Task Force assist with reunification if the child requests to be reunited with a deported parent?
- What does the Task Force envision its role to be if family separation results in a child/youth being redetained in ORR custody (e.g. sponsor is detained and youth returned to ORR custody)? Plans for alternatives to detention, such as placement with other family members or foster care before the child/youth is detained?
- DCYF will likely turn questions from NWIRP into FAQs on the website and ensure answers are accurate and easily digestible.

Organization Introduction-Kids in Need of Defense (KIND)

- KIND started with roots in WA, Microsoft funding for program for pro bono representation for youth at NW Detention Center, now a national and global organization that serves unaccompanied and migrant children
- Served federal custody ORR in WA, contracted to serve as well as unaccompanied children in Federal ORR custody and released to caregivers in WA. Close to 70% of org is funded by Federal funding so now all but 4 offices (of 15) are set to close. Seattle field office will be closing as of now, pending legal decision.
- In collaboration with NWIRP and KIND through Task Force have partnered with DCYF to look into screening and representation of unaccompanied children
- About 400 pending cases of legal representation of children and youth in WA- some direct representation and some community partners. Trying to find substitute counsel for children with active cases.
- Detail in slides on definition of unaccompanied minors
- KIND is actively monitoring the situation on “welfare checks” being conducted by ICE on unaccompanied children placed in custody

Refugee and Immigrant Connections Spokane – Luis Castillo

- Nonprofit established in 2011- broader immigrant community, not just refugees. Served over 800 individuals of at least 30 nationalities in the last year.
- Actively building a team to address families experiencing separations.
- Emergency supports in times of crisis.
- Growing Connections- families with children ages 0-5 regardless of status.
- Kids Connect- youth driven program for leadership development and academic success- 5 different neighborhoods and all youth and families identify self as immigrants or refugees- regardless of status.
- Task Force Question: What else can we do beyond preparing families for separation? One focus we need to have is prevention- but can we actively work with cities and state to push back against ICE and create a safer place?
- Q: What demographic is being targeted? A: We see uptake in Muslim and Hispanic families. Target in Spokane is also Hispanic and Latino community 10-20% Slavic individuals targeted as well.

Legal Counsel for Youth and Children

- Mission to protect interest and safety of youth. Represents young people in Dependency cases, juvenile court accused of crimes, family safety planning and SIJ visas, youth homelessness in civil legal aid matters.
- In 2024 served 800 young people in WA state in 7 counties. 69% youth of color, 28% LGBTQ youth. Have attorneys in 7 physical counties, other counties are served by virtual legal services. Youth access to counsel- LCYC attorneys are included in the attorneys on the other line across the state. Some of LCYC in community already, work with KIND and NWIRP to support youth looking for Special Immigrant Juvenile Classification.

Questions to be answered:

- Biggest question- what is the role of the agency and authority that the agency has to prevent unnecessary entry into foster care system?
- Can DCYF honor power of attorney, if that does not exist how can they help identify a third party for placement, and what is their role connecting families with community resources?
- Question of how are agencies talking to each other? Need front facing agencies to talk to each other, can't just be DCYF.
- At capacity in organizations- know money is tight but curious about how to get resources knowing it is an urgent need? Who owns this work?
- Become clear that agencies need to develop internal immigration expertise to understand the ways that immigration impacts all parts of the agency- a lot of questions that involve around intersectionality and need in-house expertise.
- Going to outside organizations for expertise is not sustainable when they do not have the resources for it.
- We know expertise around agencies and welfare systems, know there were children who were eligible for SIJ in child welfare and court systems who did not get visas. Without expertise this will continue to happen. Turn back to DCYF- is that already a responsibility from DCYF and how to use current resources to address that issue?

Discussion

- Office of Civil Legal Aid- trying to address and think as creatively as possible in how interact with kids who also need immigration support
- Commissions are experts in doing that work as they are minimally funded but open book and good networks.
- Feeds a lot of future session topics- need to have rich conversation when have presentations and have continued conversations and time for dialogue and brainstorming.
- Invite presenters to continue to engage with work of the Task Force and if other organizations should be included please let Task Force know
- Excited for ongoing sharing and rich resources.