



Parent Advisory Group (PAG)

Meeting Minutes

December 7, 2022 - 7:00 to 8:30 p.m.
Virtual Meeting

Welcome, Virtual Meeting Protocols and Introductions

DCYF Community Engagement Manager, Emily Morgan, welcomed attendees and initiated introductions. Members introduced themselves and shared their personal updates and successes.

Community Engagement (CE) Team Transition

Members reflected on the recent staffing changes with the CE team and the future of PAG.

Discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What happened to shrink the team? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ We had two members go on maternity leave and two members were laid off due to the Governor’s vaccine requirements. • What is the structure of the current CE team? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Erin Kerrigan is the Interim Deputy Director. Emily and Eric and the CE Managers, Chelsea (on maternity leave) is the CE Operations Manager, and Jessica is the CE Specialist. • This whole group seems to be shrinking. During the time I’ve been a part of this group, I’ve only met people in person once or twice. Is there ever going to be a time again when we will meet in person again? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ We definitely do have plans to resume at least one in-person meeting each year. We are hoping that the July 2023 meeting will be in person which would coincide with recruitment. We hear in-person meetings are when the connections happen. • Is this group a two-year commitment? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ It is a two-year commitment, but we are very open to people applying again. We definitely encourage people who are engaged to continue participating. • What is the purpose of this group? Are we changing policies or advising? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The goal of this group is to advise DCYF on different initiatives, policies, or any specific things that you want to bring to the agency. ○ We really want parents at the table and for changes you request to happen, and if change doesn’t happen, to keep the communication open. ○ The feedback and discussion of this group also feed into other committees like the Early Learning Advisory Council (ELAC) and the Provider Supports Subcommittee. A lot of those topics work in unison. ○ We really want to find the topics important to parents and have your feedback influence policies. • What’s the cutoff to participate in PAG? Am I aging out of this group? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Since we are now DCYF, the aging out is much later. Parents of children ages 17 and younger are welcome to attend. • This PAG group has morphed. In general, we are still trying to get our bearings. I have seen our feedback make a difference in how policy has moved forward. We do make a difference.
Next Steps/Follow Up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please reach out to the Community Engagement Team (dcyf.communityengagement@dcyf.wa.gov) with any follow-up questions.



Members discussed the topics they would like to focus on in 2023.

Discussion	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• I would love to hear about Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) maternal health. We talk about the risk factors of BIPOC people giving birth versus white mothers and it's alarming. Even though there is data on this issue, I don't hear the correlation between what the state and federal governments are doing to address this issue.• Having conversations about children's mental health is an important topic. Social-emotional learning needs to be expanded into adolescents. Where are we putting in supports for kids that are struggling post-pandemic? Substance abuse is also higher, and you hear of youth using common chemicals in the home. It's harder to find supports for older children.• DCYF could make a difference in the school-to-prison pipeline. We have a responsibility to make preventable measures. Even when children go into juvenile rehabilitation, how do we stop recidivism?<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ There's also a preschool-to-prison problem. Thank you for elevating that.• There needs to be a discussion about when kids are with foster parents for 4-6 years and then returned to the bio parents. They can develop Reactive Attachment Disorder. The back and forth is really hard on kids. We need to make decisions sooner, kids are being damaged.• We need to look at the whole child welfare shift and keeping kids with family members. Kinship caregivers are being left without any resources. We have pushed as a state that children should be with their family members, but have not supported these family members.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ It's easier for kinship caregivers to not report the parents because there are medical resources and food stamps. Naively we think we are supporting but instead, we are doing harm.• There is also a problem for those with swing shift jobs and no childcare businesses open during those timeframes. We need kids to be safe.• Children need to understand the juvenile rehabilitation system and that there are real-world consequences when you turn 18.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ When we think about the penile system, there isn't a lot of mental health therapy support.<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ I've found you can't get into mental health doctors with Medicaid.<ul style="list-style-type: none">• We definitely want to talk about mental health and the lack of support.• Does anyone have an interest in learning more about the grants available through DCYF?<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ I love hearing about DCYF decision packages and legislative updates.• Could we have the Office of Innovation, Alignment, and Accountability, OIAA, come to a meeting and present on how that office functions, what it is accomplishing and how PAG should be influencing it.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ OIAA is doing really incredible data work and it would be really powerful for them to come to PAG. Parent partnership with OIAA would be terrific.<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ There isn't a lot of accountability in the system.<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The purpose behind OIAA is to make DCYF accountable. I'm hoping by partnering with them we can make change even one little piece at a time.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ We need to have an action plan. What do we want to change and how are we going to do it?• The services being offered are not sufficient for families and children.• Will you share this topic list?<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Yes, we will take all these topics and throw them out to the group to identify what's really important to the group.



	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• There need to be resources or a class on how to help kids that are about to turn into adults regarding medication management and how parents can deal with and guide children with mental health concerns.• What is our homework to do before the next meeting? I want to be prepared. Any reading that we should be doing?<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ We will send some things out with the follow-up email. One of the main things will be reviewing the work plan topic list to help narrow down topics for the 2023 meetings! Also, the resources Jenni is discussing relating to parent ambassadors!
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2023 Meetings, Closing Remarks, and Adjourn

Discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Parent Ambassador Applications are open through January 15, 2023.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ The Parent Ambassador program is a year-long leadership training and centers on grassroots advocacy in the legislative process. Everything is looked at through a racial equity lens and the group is focused on changing policies for families with young children.○ Any caregiver across the state with a child under 9 can apply.• Strengthening Families Washington is currently taking nominations for unsung heroes. Nominations must be submitted by January 3, 2023.• The next meeting is scheduled for January 25, 2023 from 7:00 to 8:30 p.m.
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