

DCYF RESPONSE TO CRP RECOMMENDATIONS FY 2023-2024



Washington State Department of
CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILIES

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Introduction

The Washington State Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) acknowledges the invaluable insights and recommendations presented in the Citizen Review Panels' (CRP) Annual Report for FY 2023-2024. The collaborative efforts of the three CRPs and the CRP Subcommittee play a critical role in enhancing Washington's child welfare system. DCYF is committed to carefully reviewing and considering each recommendation to improve services and outcomes for all children, youth, and families across Washington state.

Budgetary Constraints and Impact on Implementation

As DCYF reviews and addresses the ability to implement the CRP's recommendations, it is important to recognize the current financial landscape of Washington state. Recent projections indicate a significant budget shortfall of approximately \$10 to \$12 billion over the next four years, attributed to declining revenue, rising inflations, and increased costs. In response to these fiscal challenges, Governor Jay Inslee implemented restrictions on spending. These restrictions and guidance indicate a necessity for prudent financial management by all cabinet level agencies, including DCYF.

Given the financial constraints, DCYF anticipates challenges in fully implementing some of the CRP's recommendations. Resource limitations and procedural processes may affect our capacity to expand programs, initiate new projects, or enhance existing services as recommended by the CRPs in their FY 2023-2024 report.

Commitment to Collaboration

Despite these budgetary challenges, DCYF remains committed to the well-being of children, youth, and families. DCYF will continue to explore innovative solutions and collaborate with our community partners. Our continued partnership with the CRPs is essential as we navigate these financial constraints and strive to implement meaningful improvements in Washington state.

DCYF Response to Children, Youth, and Families (CYF) CRP Recommendations

After reviewing the CRP recommendations and DCYF response from FY 2022-2023, the CYF CRP would like to continue the work of the Contracts and Services Subcommittee into FY 2024-2025. The CYF CRP is recommending that DCYF develop the DCYF and CRP Joint Workgroup on DCYF Contracting and Services as referenced in the FY 2022-2023 Response. The workgroup should include the following:

- CRP Members
- DCYF Staff Knowledgeable in Contracting and Service Delivery (Contracted In-Home Services, Professional, Psychological)
- Service Providers

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- Community Partners

DCYF Response to CYF CRP Recommendation:

DCYF agrees that having a strong, robust, culturally responsive service array is necessary to serve families holistically and adequately. Although a Contracting and Services Workgroup was not convened, many efforts have been made to address improvement of the contract service array. Over the past year our teams have undertaken substantial work, some visible publicly, to inventory and expand current services, inclusive of Contracted In-Home Services (CIHS) and Psychological/Professional (Psych/Prof) services. We are able to substantially expand CIHS service slots this past year, and put forward a [Decision Package](#) to continue improvement of CIHS as well as expand Positive Indian Parenting statewide. We still have challenges in the rural/specialized provider space, and we have an Annual Priority for CY 2025 to help us move close to being able to address this (both a Partnership, Prevention, and Services and a Leadership Team priority). We also have worked on expanding services in the Psych/Prof service line, but in the absence of rates increases, we have hit a wall as to expansion efforts. [The REI CRP Recommendation section](#) has a comprehensive list of culturally relevant services.

DCYF is in the final stages of a comprehensive Service Framework Project that identified the following goals:

- Creating a service delivery model that is nimble and responsive to the widespread and evolving needs of children, youth, and families;
- Creating a service delivery model designed and informed by those closest to the work and outcomes;
- Streamlining access to and delivery of services across DCYF divisions in a consistent way statewide;
- Supporting a robust and resilient service provider workforce that is nimble and will meet the changing needs of DCYF and families served;
- Increasing family preservation and safety-focused services necessary at the front end of child welfare cases to adapt to the changing environment; and
- Increasing utilization of contracted services across the spectrum of DCYF involvement.

DCYF contracted with Public Consulting Group to complete a national landscape scan to identify best practices for the delivery of contracted services. Included in this project were comprehensive listening sessions to those closest to the work. Over this past summer, listening sessions were held with 170+ individuals that either received services within the last 2 years (lived experts), individuals that manage/execute contracted services (DCYF staff), those that deliver services (providers), and those that refer to services (DCYF staff and external partners –

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Office of Public Defense, Court Appointed Special Advocate, Administrative Office of the Courts, etc.). Participants with lived experience were recruited from the Parent Advisory Group, Office of Public Defense, Tribal Nations, Citizen Review Panels, contracted service providers, and others. The final recommendations and report will be published publicly along with a recorded presentation going in depth on the recommended changes and listening sessions. The presentation and report are set to be published in April 2025. This will be shared directly with the CRPs at that time.

DCYF supports the CRP's recommendation to convene a Contracting and Services Workgroup. To ensure the group's work is focused and impactful, DCYF proposes collaborating with the CRP to identify a specific area of focus within contracting and service delivery. This approach will help avoid duplicating efforts and build on the progress DCYF has made over the past year in addressing related issues.

The CYF CRP included a recommendation that was originally made by the Prevention, Investigation, and Family Services (PIFS) CRP and included a recommendation to address poverty reduction and child welfare involvement. Rather than duplicating our response, DCYF has addressed this recommendation comprehensively in the [PIFS CRP section](#) of this report. Please refer to that section for detailed discussion on the recommendation and DCYF's response.

DCYF Response to Racial Equity and Impact (REI) CRP Recommendations

The REI CRP recommends that DCYF modify prevention service plans and include services requested by other panels for culturally responsive care. The REI CRP strongly recommends the following specific programs that have achieved scientific ratings from the California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse:

- D.C. Children's Trust Fund (DCCTF) Effective Black Parenting Program (EBPP; Authored by CICC) is a parenting skill-building program created specifically for parents of African American children. It was originally designed as a 15-session program to be used with small groups of parents. A one-day seminar version of the program for large numbers of parents has been created. Scientific Rating 3 – Promising Research Evidence. Child Welfare Relevance – High
- Strong African American Families Program (SAAF) is a culturally tailored, family-centered intervention program designed to build on the strengths of African American families. The over-goal of SAAF is to prevent substance abuse and other risky behavior among youth by strengthening positive interactions, enhancing primary caregivers' efforts to help youth reach positive goals, and preparing youth for their teen years. SAAF provides services directly to children/adolescents experiencing or having the potential to

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experience aggressive behaviors, academic challenges, self-esteem issues, or involvement in risky behaviors. SAFF provides services directly to parents/caregivers and addresses parent/caregiver or preteen or early teen youth experiencing or who have the potential to experience aggressive behaviors, academic challenges, self-esteem issues, or involvement risky behaviors. Weekly 2-hour sessions (ideally for 7 weeks). Scientific Rating 1 – Well-Supported by Research Evidence. Child Welfare Relevance – Medium

- Family Spirit is a culturally tailored home-visiting program designed to promote optimal health and well-being for parents and children. The program is designed for any at-risk young adult mother (under 25 years) who is pregnant (ideally 28 weeks' gestation or sooner) and/or has a child younger than 3 years old and lives in a Native American community; however, can be used with any pregnant woman and/or woman with a child younger than 3 years old, regardless of ethnicity/race. Family Spirit consists of 63 lessons taught from pregnancy to age 3. Scientific Rating 3 – Promising Research Evidence. Child Welfare Relevance – High

The following program is also strongly recommended:

- Familias Unidas is a family-centered intervention that aims to prevent substance use and risky behavior among Hispanic adolescents. Familias Unidas aims to empower parents by increasing their support network, teaching them about protective and risk factors, improving parenting skills, enhancing parent-adolescent communication, and facilitating parental involvement and investment in adolescent's' lives. The program was reviewed in October 2021 by the Title-IV E Prevention Services Clearinghouse and is listed as a Well-Supported Practice because at least two studies with non-overlapping samples conducted in usual care or practice settings achieved a rating of moderate or high on design and execution and demonstrated favorable effects in a target outcome domain.

DCYF Response to REI CRP Recommendation:

DCYF recognizes and fully supports the importance of culturally relevant services in ensuring equitable outcomes for children and families. For more than two years, DCYF has engaged in ongoing discussions with all the Citizen Review Panels, including the Contracts and Services CRP Subcommittee and the REI CRP, fostering meaningful collaboration and dialogue. These meetings and CRP member participation in this work have directly influenced work at DCYF, shaping policies and practices that prioritize cultural responsiveness and addressing disparities in service delivery. DCYF remains committed to continuing this partnership to advance equity and improve outcomes for all communities we service.

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In FY 2022-2024, DCYF engaged in deep system learning and assessments to better understand the needs for prevention in local communities, particularly for Native and Black families who experience disproportionate involvement in the child welfare system. DCYF partnered with the Harvard Government Performance Lab for that deep system learning and produced several joint products which informed contracting for FY 2025. DCYF [posted a Request for Information](#) to better understand from local communities across the state services necessary to serve Black/African American children and families and built a pilot procurement around these learnings.

In the coming year DCYF has the following pilot service contracts that will be implemented for broader statewide learning:

1. Positive Indian Parenting (PIP) will be implemented by the Lummi Nation, the American Indian Community Center and Volunteers of America Western Washington. PIP will serve Whatcom and Spokane counties with in-person classes and telehealth program access will be offered statewide.
2. Positive Indian Parenting/Positive Parenting Program (Triple P) Hybrid will be implemented by the Tulalip Tribes in Snohomish County.
3. The Credible Messengers Program will be offered by the Quinault Indian Nation in Grays Harbor and south Jefferson counties.
4. Pilimakua Family Connections Program will be offered by Hummingbird Indigenous Family Services in King, Pierce, and south Snohomish counties.
5. Family Spirit will be offered by the Patrick Group in King County.
6. Tribal Intensive In-Home Services will be offered by the Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe in Kitsap County.
7. Tlingit Language Lessons/Native Youth Olympics will be offered by the Central Council Tlingit & Haida Indian Tribes. Tlingit Language Lessons will be available statewide through telehealth access and the Native Youth Olympics will serve King County.
8. Healing of the Canoe will be offered by SaltFire Healing of the Canoe Training Center in Kitsap County.
9. Preserving Black Families will be offered by the WA Therapy Fund Foundation and will be available statewide through telehealth services.
10. The Family Comes First Program will be offered by Intercultural Children and Family Services and will serve King and Pierce counties.
11. Reaching Us Services will be offered by the James Matthew Commission Foundation and will serve Thurston and Pierce counties.
12. Family Resiliency Services will be offered by Greater Destiny 253 and will serve Pierce County.

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Further, within the ongoing work to implement and scale culturally specific services for statewide service access, DCYF has requested funding through a [Positive Indian Parenting Decision Package](#) that will be utilized to finance Positive Indian Parenting procurements for Federally Recognized Tribes, Recognized American Indian Organizations and Native Serving Organizations to ensure the statewide implementation of this culturally specific curriculum.

In 2021, DCYF worked with a Native Researcher who produced a [systematic review on tribal child welfare prevention programs](#) in Washington state. This review assessed PIP, Family Spirit, Healing of the Canoe (Canoe Journey), and Family Circle (Talking Circle or Healing Circle) against criteria informed by the Title IV-E Prevention Services Clearinghouse. This review concluded that only one of the four program models evaluated in the report, Family Spirit, had enough evidence available to be rated under the Title IV-E Prevention Clearinghouse. This service is currently being contracted within WA state and DCYF included this EBP in the next 5-year state prevention plan submitted December 2024.

The REI CRP included a recommendation that was originally made by the PIFS CRP and included a recommendation to address poverty reduction and child welfare involvement. Rather than duplicating our response, DCYF has addressed this recommendation comprehensively in the [PIFS CRP section](#) of this report. Please refer to that section for detailed discussion on the recommendation and DCYF's response.

DCYF Response to the Prevention, Investigation, and Family Services (PIFS) CRP Recommendations

Plan of Safe Care (POSC):

- **Problem Statement:** WithinReach WA and Help Me Grow are currently funded through DCYF to provide application support and care coordination to access community services for the Plan of Safe Care at birth. Birthing hospitals received training and resources on the updated mandatory reporting guidance for prenatal substance exposure and WithinReach and Help Me Grow services are now accessible to every region in the state.
 - Because these referrals occur through the POSC portal at birth many potential referrals that could benefit from the services are missed.
- **Recommendation:** Invest in expanding WithinReach and Help Me Grow services and access so that:
 - Prenatal providers can refer mothers/birth parents into services.
 - Mothers/birth parents seeking services, and their families can self-refer into services without needing a gatekeeper for access (case worker, social worker, prenatal provider, CPS etc.).

DCYF Response to PIFS CRP Recommendation:

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Prenatal providers can refer mothers/birth parents into services

Recommendation in Progress

In 2020, DCYF initiated the Prenatal Substance Use Disorder (SUD) Pilot with the goal of reducing the rate of infant removals shortly after birth by connecting substance-using pregnant individuals that come to the attention of DCYF to community care coordinators that offer voluntary prevention services like SUD treatment, home-visiting, and basic needs supports. Braiding philanthropic, federal and state dollars, the pilot launched in three counties in October 2021 and has since expanded to nine counties in partnership with six providers. Now known as the Pregnancy Support Pathways Hub, DCYF plans to expand beyond the current nine counties to a statewide model over the next year. Prenatal providers can currently refer expecting mothers/birth parents with SUD to DCYF Intake who can reroute screened-out individuals to the Pregnancy Support Pathways Hub.

To decouple support from Child Protective Services (CPS) for this population, a small test was conducted in 2024 to assess a referral pathway for pregnant individuals using substances from hospital social workers directly to Help Me Grow Washington, bypassing CPS altogether. A provider toolkit was developed with initial scripting and procedure detailed. In this intentionally small two-week pilot, two social workers successfully sent five referrals to Help Me Grow Washington's Mental & Behavioral Health Team who successfully connected with 100% of referred clients. DCYF is currently seeking funding to build upon this test to increase direct referrals to the Pregnancy Support Pathways Hub. An essential piece of this work is to provide capacity to the Hub to establish connections with the prenatal workforce, including both health (OB-GYNs, midwives, doulas, etc.) and social service providers (emergency room social workers, law enforcement, etc.) where pregnant individuals using substances are encountered. Upon connection, WithinReach (state affiliate of Help Me Grow Washington) would offer technical assistance to prenatal providers to support direct referrals to the Hub.

Mothers/birth parents seeking services, and their families can self-refer into services without needing a gatekeeper for access (case worker, social worker, prenatal provider, CPS etc.).

Recommendation complete, with improvements and associated work planned.

In September 2024, WithinReach (state affiliate of Help Me Grow Washington) launched a [self-referral form](#) (also available in [Spanish](#)) allowing perinatal clients experiencing substance use disorder to refer themselves or a partner to Help Me Grow's Mental & Behavioral Health Team.

If the checkbox is selected for "Are you or your partner pregnant?" or "Have you or your partner given birth within the last 3 months," a new checkbox appears to select interest in "Treatment options and resources for substance and alcohol use disorders." If a client refers themselves or a partner through this form and checks the subsequent box, the referral will be

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put into the Help Me Grow Washington Mental and Behavioral Health team's queue for follow-up and as appropriate, coordination with the Pregnancy Support Pathways Hub.

With the back-end technology required to route referrals to the appropriate team now in place, WithinReach will continue to finesse the cosmetics and iterate upon the language used within the self-referral pathway. DCYF is also interested in engaging key partners around developing a statewide public awareness campaign (example: Colorado's [Tough as a Mother](#)) connecting pregnant and parenting mothers to substance use disorder treatment services and recovery support within their communities. Such a campaign could simultaneously drive families to Help Me Grow's new perinatal substance use self-referral pathway.

Prevention Services and Community-Based Organization (CBO) Funding

- **Problem Statement:** Barriers in accessing sustainable funding for community-based organizations that support service delivery to families at risk of child welfare involvement are many. These barriers are not limited to but do include the following:
 - Complex funding applications that can negatively impact small organizations.
 - Limited eligibility and restrictive criteria associated with some funding streams.
 - Short-term funding that may impact a smaller organization's ability to maintain funding and can interfere with service delivery.
 - Restrictions on spending of funds limit the CBO's ability to provide tailored services to meet the unique needs of families.
 - Addressing barriers associated with funding streams can assure CBOs can effectively support families and work to prevent child welfare involvement.
- **Recommendation:** Prevention funding that is more streamlined and includes improved accessibility and flexibility in funding would empower CBOs to provide sustainable high quality prevention services to families in crisis, reducing the need for more intensive child welfare interventions.

DCYF Response to PIFS CRP Recommendation:

DCYF is interested in reducing unnecessary application and contract complexity that may be negatively impacting smaller community-based organizations preventing DCYF from maintaining an adequate array of prevention services. DCYF's Partnership, Prevention, and Services division is undertaking the following activities to address this need:

- **Culturally Specific Contracts.** In FY 2022-2024, DCYF engaged in deep system learning and assessments to better understand the needs for prevention in local communities, particularly for Native and Black families who experience disproportionate involvement in the child welfare system. DCYF partnered with the Harvard Government Performance Lab for that deep system learning and produced several joint products which informed contracting for FY 2025. In CY 2024, PPS program staff have worked to implement

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culturally specific contracts using a more community-responsive and flexible model to procure and contract. This has resulted in contracts with tribes and community-based organizations serving Native and Black families in high-need communities. We anticipate that in CY 2025 we will have documented learnings from those experiences sufficient to bring specific systems recommendations to the DCYF Accountability Group for Quality and Availability of Services. Systems recommendations approved by the Accountability Group would then go to DCYF Executive Leadership Table for review and approval.

- Community Pathways under Family First. DCYF has been establishing the infrastructure and supports to implement Community Pathways in WA state that will serve families with prevention identifiers more upstream to prevent child welfare system involvement. DCYF submitted two decision packages (DP) for the 25-27 Biennium Legislative Session that expand upon these pathways. The [Community Pathways DP](#) will expand the Plan of Safe Care supports to substance exposed infants as well as pregnant people who use substances. In addition, DCYF requested a new pathway with Family Resource Centers which are considered community-based organizations to ensure trusted place-based opportunities in local communities with the highest need. The [Community-Based Family Reconciliation Services \(FRS\) DP](#) focuses on achieving reconciliation between the parent/caregiver(s) and child(ren)/youth when conflicts or crises arise to minimize involvement with the child welfare and juvenile rehabilitation systems. Every community pathway has been designed to include concrete and economic supports as a prevention strategy.

Poverty Reduction and Child Welfare Involvement:

- Problem Statement: Poverty is a significant contributor to child welfare involvement in the United States and in Washington State. Families experiencing poverty often face stressors that include a lack of access to some basic needs such as stable housing, sufficient food, healthcare, and childcare. Unfortunately, these stressors can impact a family and, in some cases, trigger an intervention from CPS. In many situations, it is the underlying problem of poverty that triggered child welfare involvement and not willful neglect.
 - Families that are experiencing poverty are often over surveilled, subject to additional scrutiny from institutions like schools, healthcare providers, and social services.
 - Additionally, research on [disadvantaged neighborhoods and child maltreatment referrals](#) indicates that families from marginalized racial and ethnic groups, who are disproportionately affected by poverty, are more likely to be involved in the child welfare system. It is this overrepresentation with child welfare involvement that an acknowledgment of the interplay of race, poverty, and structural inequities must be addressed by DCYF.

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- Recommendation: Research from [Chapin Hall \(2021 and 2023\)](#) indicate that material hardship increases the risk of child welfare involvement and help with housing, utilities, and cash assistance programs reduce child maltreatment and involvement with CPS.
 - The PIFS CRP recommends that DCYF develop and facilitate a task force composed of DCYF staff, CRP members, community partners, individuals with lived experience, subject matter experts in child maltreatment, poverty, and public policy. The task force would explore the feasibility of sponsoring a program to evaluate the effectiveness of temporary economic support and its effectiveness in preventing recurrent child maltreatment among Washington families.
 - Several similar pilot projects are currently underway across the United States, including the largest with [800 families who were referred to Illinois Department of Children and Family Services](#). These initiatives aim to assess the impact of guaranteed basic income in stabilizing families and reducing child welfare involvement. If DCYF is committed to prioritizing prevention and reducing the recurrence of child welfare cases, addressing economic disparities and the underlying problems of poverty must be a priority.
 - By exploring the potential of economic support as a preventative measure, DCYF can align its resources with evidence-based practices that target poverty-related stressors contributing to child maltreatment. This approach supports DCYF's mission to enhance family well-being and DCYF's dedication to prevention while also reinforcing DCYF's mission to protect children and strengthen families.

DCYF Response to PIFS CRP Recommendation:

DCYF agrees that the systemic and historical impacts of poverty, both past and present, significantly contribute to child welfare involvement, foster care entries, and racial disproportionalities in the child welfare system in Washington State. Regarding racial disproportionality, DCYF analysis indicates that a substantial portion of these disparities occurs before direct child welfare involvement. Specifically, we found that 70% of the disproportionality in foster care entry for Native children and 89% for Black children is attributed to disproportionality in intakes—that is, the volume of reports received by the department prior to any decision being made on intake disposition.

To address immediate needs, DCYF operates a program that provides concrete goods to support families engaged with the child welfare system, where financial hardship may impact their ability to ensure their children's safety. DCYF leadership has shared data with the CRP on the costs and distribution of these goods, underscoring our commitment to addressing poverty-related needs.

The House budget resolution, now before Congress, proposes to cut federal funding for essential safety net programs such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Medicaid, and federal housing assistance.

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These programs play a critical role in supporting families' ability to care for their children. Anticipated policies that could impose additional work requirements or restrictions on public benefits would further harm vulnerable families. DCYF recognizes the importance of educating elected officials about the detrimental effects of such proposals and is committed to working closely with community-based organizations to protect and strengthen the social safety net.

Given that the effectiveness of temporary economic supports in preventing recurrent child maltreatment is already well-documented, DCYF believes additional research or evaluation in this area is unnecessary. The value of these supports has been firmly established by existing studies. Rather than forming a new task force for further evaluation, DCYF suggests that a more appropriate recommendation might be to advocate for the implementation of temporary economic supports on a broader scale in Washington State. This could be addressed through collaboration with organizations like the Economic Services Administration (in DSHS) or the Washington Economic Justice Alliance (formerly the Governor's Poverty Reduction Workgroup), which are leading efforts to reduce poverty. The Washington Economic Justice Alliance has already played a key role in initiatives such as the implementation of the Washington Working Families Tax Credit.

Critical Incident Review (CIR) CRP Subcommittee Identified Theme and Recommendations for Practice Improvement

The CIR CRP Subcommittee identified the theme of **ENGAGEMENT** during their work in fiscal year 2023-2024. The CIR CRP Subcommittee offers the following recommendations for DCYF to explore ways to improve engagement.

1. The subcommittee reviewed many cases, including specific cases involving Black and Native families. Trust in DCYF is difficult for these communities and the subcommittee would like to identify the need for improved engagement and relationship building with Black, Brown, and Native families. DCYF should identify and implement the following:
 - Improved caseworker training that is built on cultural competency. Staff should receive regular and robust training with an emphasis on understanding the historical trauma and systemic inequities affecting marginalized communities, particularly Black, Brown, and Native families. The training should be mandatory and include learning about implicit biases and how these can impact engagement and service delivery.
 - Culturally responsive service delivery programs. The REI CRP recommended several programs that have achieved scientific rating from the California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse that are also culturally responsive. The CIR Subcommittee strongly recommends that DCYF work to implement the use of those programs to improve the service delivery and engagement of Black, Brown, and Native families.

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2. Incorporate peer navigators or parent allies who have shared cultural and lived experiences with families involved with DCYF. The ability to have someone with a shared culture that has similar experiences can work to build trust, reduce stigma, and improve communication and engagement.
3. Leverage the use of Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) that already serve in the community. These organizations often have established trust and cultural understanding and can facilitate a more meaningful engagement between families and DCYF.
4. DCYF should address barriers to engagement that include transportation challenges, employment related barriers, and concrete supports.
 - Transportation and employment barriers can include the inability to secure reliable transportation, no paid time off, and lack of leave. This can result in missed court dates and/or service engagement. These barriers can be viewed as non-compliance with case plans. For parents in low-wage or hourly employment, the fear of losing income may impact their ability to fully engage.
5. Father Engagement. DCYF should continue to work to improve father engagement. This could include:
 - Provide DCYF staff with specialized training of the importance of father engagement. This training should address stereotypes or biases that may overlook the role of fathers in caregiving.
 - Continue to partner with and develop fatherhood programs that are also culturally responsive.
 - Peer navigators to engage fathers and provide positive role models.
6. Additionally, the CIR Subcommittee identified the following areas of concern during their review of the 2023 Critical Incidents:
 - Need for improved housing and housing stability for families with DCYF involvement.
 - DCYF should consider expanding trauma-informed care training, also addressing the unique needs of Black, Brown, and Native families. This could provide staff with a greater understanding of the emotional, psychological, and systemic challenges faced by families with DCYF involvement.
 - The CIR Subcommittee identified that challenges existed between systems servicing families with DCYF involvement. DCYF should work with existing systems (courts, attorneys, hospitals, service delivery) to ensure that families have contact and access to necessary services and resources.

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- All staff should carry Narcan and provide to any/all families with DCYF involvement.
- Safety Plans – CIR Subcommittee identified a need for staff to revisit safety plans during the life of a case. Review policy and training around addressing needs for safety plan revision.

DCYF Response to CIR CRP Subcommittee Recommendations:

DCYF recognizes the critical importance of engagement and is committed to addressing the subcommittee’s recommendations. In FY 2023-2024, DCYF continued to work on improving engagement with families, particularly Black, Brown, and Native Families. These families often face systemic barriers and historical trauma that impact their trust in systems.

DCYF’s investment in programs addressing community needs includes tribally specific services outlined in the [Racial Equity and Impact CRP Recommendation](#) section of this report. Additionally, DCYF is investing CBCAP ARPA funding in fatherhood support programs for American Indian/Alaska Native father figures. The Lummi Nation, Snoqualmie Indian Tribe and United Nations of All Tribes Foundation are providing strength-based parenting support for fathers and father figures rooted in Indigenous knowledge. Facilitators in each program are trained in “Fatherhood is Sacred,” and the programs incorporate traditional culture and practices, such as drum making and hide tanning.

The initiatives identified above and in the REI CRP section, are part of DCYF’s broader strategy to build a more equitable prevention service and support system for children, youth, and families. By expanding the number of culturally responsive and specific services offered, DCYF aims to address gaps such as parent education, a lack of proximate providers providing in-home services, and other prevention-based interventions that may contribute to racial disproportionality in the child welfare system.

DCYF is using motivational interviewing (MI) to better help its clients. MI is included in the Child and Family Service Plan (CFSP) as a tool to improve engagement. MI’s client centered approach supports sustainment of the family’s motivation toward progress. MI’s focus is motivating children and families to succeed through precisely tailored support, guaranteeing optimal service matching and active participation.

In addition, DCYF has integrated the Family Practice Model (FPM) with the intent to provide practical guidance for workers in Child Welfare using values-based case management, including engaging, assessing, and planning with families. The FPM also provides information and tools for staff that include training, coaching, professional development, and personal supports.

DCYF recognizes the value of peer navigators and parent allies in building trust and improving engagement. DCYF initiated a pilot project that ended in late 2023. DCYF is currently reviewing the closing report from Amara, the community partner who conducted the pilot project, and

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working with program staff to address barriers that were developed during the initial project. DCYF is reviewing the possibility of launching another pilot, addressing the barriers and challenges that have been identified. DCYF will notify the CRP of the status of this project when more information is available.

DCYF is aware of the practical challenges that deter family engagement, including transportation issues, employment-related barriers, and the need for concrete supports. We are actively seeking solutions to mitigate these obstacles, such as providing flexible service hours, offering transportation assistance, and connecting families to resources that alleviate economic pressures. While efforts are underway to reduce these barriers, DCYF recognizes the ongoing need to enhance access to services and support families with essential resources and programs.

DCYF acknowledges the additional areas of concerns the CIR CRP Subcommittee outlined in their recommendation, and provides the following:

- Housing stability for youth and families involved with DCYF is a valid and serious concern. The 2023 budget allocated \$2.374 million for the biennium to establish the Foster Care Housing Program (FCHP), enabling the DCYF to provide contracted housing supportive services for youth eligible for the Foster Youth to Independence (FYI) voucher. Contracts are in place across all six state regions, leveraging existing relationships with Independent Living Services contractors to enhance outreach and coordination. To address housing challenges in child welfare cases and transitions from care, DCYF signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Association of Washington Housing Authorities and a non-profit housing provider, securing 2,167 vouchers and apartments. DCYF also commits to offering supportive services to help young people secure and maintain housing despite barriers such as lack of rental or credit history, criminal background, or trauma-related challenges.
- DCYF staff can carry Naloxone. Additionally, staff can provide harm reduction kits to families who struggle with SUD. In the harm reduction kits, families receive a lock box, fentanyl testing strips, Naloxone, and educational materials to raise awareness about the dangers of synthetic opioids. Since Nov. 1, 2024, DCYF has distributed more than 23,000 doses of Naloxone with 753 doses successfully reversing overdoses and saving lives.
- DCYF utilizes funding from sources like CAPTA to sponsor staff trainings. Most recently staff had the opportunity to attend the annual NW Children's Foundation Forum where the latest research on trauma, healing resilience, and preventing burnout was provided.
- Safety plans are a vital part of successful case planning. Under DCYF Policy 1130, safety plans should be reviewed and monitored a minimum of twice monthly as long as the safety threat exists, and a safety plan should be revised, and a new safety assessment should be done as threats emerge or are eliminated throughout the life of a case. DCYF

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continuously provides training on safety planning through both mandatory and voluntary programs. Safety planning is integrated into required trainings, such as the all-state mandatory Senate Bill 6109 training on High-Priority Safety Outcomes (HPSOs), as well as voluntary trainings like Foundations of Practice. Additionally, safety planning is reinforced through the implementation of Safe Child Consultations and the accompanying trainings. The Alliance incorporates safety planning as a key component of its core curriculum. Furthermore, regional QA/QPS staff conduct regular safety plan trainings at their discretion, with ongoing discussions held monthly through the Safety Leads Meeting.

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