



Agency Recommendation Summary

The Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) requests \$3,166,000 (\$3,126,000 General Fund-State) and 14.0 Full Time Equivalents (FTE) in the 2024 Supplemental Budget to implement essential agency infrastructure to address emergency management and safety needs, including providing staff support. DCYF employees, particularly front-line workers, experience chronic levels of high stress and face occasional critical incidents and trauma. DCYF requests resources for essential agency infrastructure necessary to meet safety and emergency management requirements and to support employees through resilience and prevention training, crisis response, and mental health support to staff.

Program Recommendation Summary

090 - Program Support

The Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) requests \$3,166,000 (\$3,126,000 General Fund-State) and 14.0 Full Time Equivalents (FTE) in the 2024 Supplemental Budget to implement essential agency infrastructure to address emergency management and safety needs, including providing staff support. DCYF employees, particularly front-line workers, experience chronic levels of high stress and face occasional critical incidents and trauma. DCYF requests resources for essential agency infrastructure necessary to meet safety and emergency management requirements and to support employees through resilience and prevention training, crisis response, and mental health support to staff.

Fiscal Summary

Fiscal Summary <i>Dollars in Thousands</i>	Fiscal Years		Biennial	Fiscal Years		Biennial
	2024	2025	2023-25	2026	2027	2025-27
Staffing						
FTEs	1.3	14.0	7.65	14.0	14.0	14.0
Operating Expenditures						
Fund 001 - 1	\$179	\$2,947	\$3,126	\$2,856	\$2,856	\$5,712
Fund 001 - A	\$3	\$37	\$40	\$37	\$37	\$74
Total Expenditures	\$182	\$2,984	\$3,166	\$2,893	\$2,893	\$5,786
Revenue						
001 - 0393	\$3	\$37	\$40	\$37	\$37	\$74
Total Revenue	\$3	\$37	\$40	\$37	\$37	\$74

Decision Package Description

DCYF has over 4,800 staff in more than 75 facilities and offices throughout the state. The agency is experiencing significant staff turnover, notably front-line workers. DCYF staff in crucial roles experience prolonged exposure to trauma, violent incidents, and high caseloads of people with acute needs. These experiences can negatively impact the safety, health, and well-being of agency workers. DCYF needs the capacity to prepare, manage, and intervene in critical incidents in order to reduce the likelihood of future incidents. DCYF also needs to put new structures in place to build the resilience of staff to cope with critical incidents and chronic stress. DCYF has a responsibility to provide a safe and healthy workplace, and to have effective programs and training to meet federal and state guidelines, recommendations, and requirements, such as those of the US Department of Health and Human Services (<https://www.hhs.gov/surgeongeneral/priorities/workplace-well-being/index.html>), OSHA (<https://www.osha.gov/laws-regs>), and Washington statute (e.g., RCW 41.04.362). Employee safety and well-being is an essential ingredient in retaining skilled employees.

Employee Safety

DCYF has had one employee to manage and perform the agency’s required and recommended staff safety needs since the agency’s formation. Day-to-day staff safety matters were deprioritized during the pandemic as the person was shifted to implement continuity and emergency response activities so that DCYF could function safely during a global health crisis. While DCYF’s one safety employee was tasked with responding to the pandemic and did not have capacity to address day to day trauma and critical incidents, one FTE is not sufficient to support the health and well-being of the trauma that DCYF employees face each day, in particular, child welfare social workers and juvenile rehabilitation staff.

A workplace safety survey conducted by the 2023 State Agency Safety Professionals Alliance (SASPA) and the Department of Enterprise Services (DES), indicated that “active threats/assaults from customers, clients or others” was one of the highest potential safety hazards of concern to DCYF employees (39.94% of the responses). Employees shared specific concerns in comments that included receiving threats of harm from clients, being assaulted, unsafe or unsecure facilities, burnout or excessive stress, exposure to drugs (especially Fentanyl), mental exhaustion, and other examples of safety concerns and trauma in the workplace. Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), and Labor & Industries Division of Occupational Safety and Health, entitles employees to a safe workplace and charges the employer to keep their workplace “free of known health and safety hazards.”

DCYF has an urgent need for dedicated and skilled safety staff to support all DCYF facilities and offices throughout the state. Based on DCYF accident reports, there were over 250 accidents and/or injuries in 2022. This is likely an underrepresentation of actual incidents due to staff sometimes lacking information about reporting requirements and categories. This represents a 63% increase in accident/injury reports compared to the average rate over the previous three years. In Juvenile Rehabilitation alone there were 90 separate incidents of staff assaults, which range from intentional assault to unintentional contact resulting in physical injury to staff. DCYF has an urgent need for dedicated and skilled safety staff to support all DCYF facilities and offices throughout the state.

To meet this need, DCYF requests 1.0 Program Specialist 5 (Safety Officer) and 5.0 Program Specialist 4 FTEs (Safety Program Specialists) to support the safety needs of over 75 facilities and offices. The Safety Officer will serve in a supervisory role, and will lead safety audits, reporting, and training. All of these safety staff will support the agency to meet safety requirements through trainings, monitoring, technical assistance, and other mitigation strategies in order to prevent injurious or potentially fatal events to employees. This work requires on-site and in-person services to inspect, respond, train, and facilitate safety committee meetings, among other technical assistance and monitoring. Safety specialists will also address basic ergonomics, workplace safety, situational awareness, de-escalation training and incident investigations. The addition of these dedicated safety positions is necessary to adequately ensure the safety and well-being of the DCYF workforce which ultimately impacts the people whom they serve. DCYF will hire two safety specialists in FY24 to provide immediate assistance to field staff, revitalize safety committees in all facilities and offices, provide training to mitigate staff assaults and injuries, address personal and environmental safety, and help assure safety compliance and risk mitigation for the agency.

Emergency Management

Emergencies and disasters disrupt DCYF operations. DCYF has several agency and statewide roles during disasters. These include an Emergency Support Function #6 (EFS 6) responsible for coordinating with state partners to provide mass care, emergency assistance, temporary housing, and human services for communities when the needs of disaster survivors exceed local, state, and tribal capabilities. This is a role included in the state's repatriation plan and the agency has a responsibility to maintain emergency response capabilities among our employees. During a state emergency or disaster DCYF has a role in Continuity of Operations/Disaster Recovery to maintain the agencies essential functions necessary to protect children, youth and families in our care.

In addition to DCYF's one dedicated safety management FTE (WMS2 Emergency Management Administrator), DCYF hired one non-permanent Emergency Management Coordinator to help support over 75 DCYF facilities and offices across the state. This is an inadequate staffing level to assure compliance with state and federal emergency management requirements. Without additional staff DCYF cannot adequately meet training requirements, manage the continuity of operation plans, and provide coordination and technical assistance should a significant emergency occur.

DCYF requests 1.0 Program Specialist 5 (Emergency Management Coordinator) and 1.0 Program Specialist 4 (Emergency Management Specialist) FTE to conceptualize, promote, and oversee agency performance in developing and implementing capabilities to include risk and vulnerability analyses, risk reduction, continuity of operations, emergency operations and emergency coordination center plans. These positions will provide planning assistance, emergency management training, site assessments and mitigation analyses. They will also conduct drills and exercises to build the agency's organizational and individual employee capability to respond effectively to emergencies and disasters and to enable DCYF to continue delivery of its mission essential functions during any incident.

Employee Supports

The work performed by DCYF staff is emotionally and physically demanding. Critical and traumatic incidents present a danger to employees, negatively impact staff performance, and result in high turnover. Moreover, high turnover in frontline staff harms the agency's ability to meet the needs of the children, youth, and families.

DCYF Human Resources data (see DCYF 2023, 2023 Child Welfare Retention Report and Recommendations) shows that over 2,100 child welfare employees left DCYF between July 2018 and September 2022. DCYF continues to experience turnover in our caseworkers and juvenile rehabilitation frontline staff. The staff turnover and workforce shortages are detrimental to existing staff and to the people and communities whom DCYF serves.

DCYF facilitated 11 child welfare focus group sessions with 1,052 participants (55% of the child welfare workforce). Staff ranked "supports" as the second highest important factor to retaining staff. Supports include reducing risks of staff assault, addressing personal and environmental safety, and creating a workplace culture that promotes psychological safety by being a trauma-informed organization that understands trauma and its negative effects on its employees.

DCYF has staff who are trained in crisis intervention techniques and who volunteer to assist coworkers involved in a critical incident. They complement a small team of peer support staff who understand the impacts these situations have on their peers, including secondary and vicarious trauma. All of these volunteers provide these supports outside of their regular job duties.

DCYF requests 6.0 Program Specialist 4 FTE, one per region, to train and support crisis response volunteers, facilitate and provide immediate on-site intervention and supports to DCYF staff involved in acute traumatic incidents, and to provide trauma-informed and healing-centered practices that prevent, mitigate or address post-traumatic stress for staff whose work is at higher risk to develop post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). These trainings will:

- Provide stress management and educational support necessary to ensure optimal functioning of DCYF staff who work with children and youth receive services;

- Promote job retention capabilities and reduce turnover;

Enhance the quality of response for DCYF staff needing crisis and peer services; and

Acquaint DCYF staff with critical incident stress management techniques.

These FTE will also work closely with the requested Safety FTE to review critical incidents and follow up with after action items to possibly avoid similar incidents from happening again.

Critical and traumatic incidents are known to have negative impacts on staff performance; and in some situations, may present a danger to the safety and welfare of DCYF employees. Unaddressed trauma, and especially with continual exposure, can lead DCYF staff to experience depression, sleep disturbance, substance abuse, suicidal ideation, and other conditions, which may impact their relationships with colleagues, family, and friends, and overall quality of life. Inadequately addressed traumatic stress and its detriment to psychological and physical health among the DCYF employees can lead to deterioration of the morale and work environment of an entire unit or office.

To address these concerns and needs, DCYF will contract with consultants to provide crisis debriefing and response services to staff. These mental health professionals, will facilitate or attend in-person meetings with staff involved in or impacted by a critical incident involving an assault, child fatality or near fatality, or other traumatic incident to provide clinical support within 72 hours of the incident. The consultants will also provide up to three additional in-person individual or group debriefing sessions and provide referrals for psychological services (e.g., individual, family, or group therapy), Employee Assistance Program or internal peer support, as needed.

Together, peer support staff, volunteers and mental health professionals create a holistic and trauma-informed crisis support system to mitigate the impact of a traumatic event, provide needed day-to-day mental health supports for employees who experience trauma to facilitate normal recovery, and screen employees who might benefit from additional professional care and support services.

Outcome

DCYF is requesting a total of 14.0 FTEs and resources to align emergency management and safety with crisis response and peer support to provide a continuum of services and supports for DCYF employees. Combined with contracted mental health services and a network of trained volunteers, these staff and resources, through planning and training, will provide DCYF employees skills to reduce risks of staff assaults and injuries, address personal and environmental safety, and create a workplace culture that promotes psychological safety by being a trauma-informed organization that understands trauma and its negative effects on its employees. Standardized outcomes, to include critical incident and safety data, peer support encounters, community mental health services referrals, and other data are collected and analyzed over time to evaluate effectiveness and make improvements.

Assumptions and Calculations

Expansion, Reduction, Elimination or Alteration of a current program or service:

In FY24, DCYF will expend \$448,800 and employ 4.0 FTE.

Detailed Assumptions and Calculations:

DCYF requests \$3,166,000 (\$3,126,000 General Fund-State) in the 2024 Supplemental Budget to implement essential agency infrastructure to address emergency management and safety needs, and to provide support for its workforce.

DCYF requests funding to support 14.0 FTE, volunteer assignment pay, travel to support employee safety and mental health, and to provide contracted mental health services.

DCYF estimates a need of \$686,000 for contracted mental health services to provide crisis diffusing and support to staff involved in a serious critical incident (i.e., child fatality; severe staff assault; death of a coworker, provider, former youth, etc.). This is an estimated cost based on hourly rates for the service providers and an estimated number of incidents. High and moderate trauma incident estimates are based on injury claims data and data on the reasons that employees seek peer-service supports.

\$228,000 for DCYF volunteer assignment pay, which is a \$200 stipend per deployment to assist in high and moderate trauma situations. Volunteers can help fill emergent needs when no other supports are readily available.

\$90,000 for travel so trained DCYF Peer Support & Crisis Response Specialists can provide both assistance and coordination in other parts of the state during critical incidents that necessitate additional supports.

SAFETY				
	FY24	FY25	FY26	FY27
FTE				
1 Program Specialist 5	-	152,000	145,000	145,000
5 Program Specialist 4	182,874	699,000	667,000	667,000
	182,874	851,000	812,000	812,000
EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT				
	FY24	FY25	FY26	FY27
FTE				
1 Program Specialist 5	-	152,000	145,000	145,000
1 Program Specialist 4	-	140,000	133,000	133,000
	-	292,000	278,000	278,000
EMPLOYEE SUPPORTS				
	FY24	FY25	FY26	FY27
CONTRACT SERVICES				
High Trauma Incidents (60 Incidents * 30 Hours * \$104/Hour)	-	187,000	187,000	187,000
Moderate Trauma Incidents (240 Incidents * 20 Hours * \$104/Hour)	-	499,000	499,000	499,000
VOLUNTEER SERVICES				
Salary	-	192,000	192,000	192,000
Benefits	-	36,000	36,000	36,000
FTE				
6 Program Specialist 4	-	838,000	799,000	799,000
TRAVEL				
High Trauma Incidents (60 Incidents * 2FTE * \$150/Night)	-	18,000	18,000	18,000
Moderate Trauma Incidents (240 Incidents * 2FTE * \$150/Night)	-	72,000	72,000	72,000
	-	1,842,000	1,803,000	1,803,000
Total Expenditures				
	FY24	FY25	FY26	FY27
Safety	182,874	851,000	812,000	812,000
Emergency Management	-	292,000	278,000	278,000
Employee Supports	-	1,842,000	1,803,000	1,803,000
	182,874	2,985,000	2,893,000	2,893,000

Workforce Assumptions:

DCYF requests \$1,705,000 in General Fund-State and 14.0 Full Time Equivalents (FTE) in the Supplemental Budget.

Safety:

- 1.0 FTE Program Specialist 5 - \$130,000 per year
- 5.0 FTE Program Specialist 4 - \$603,000 per year (two are assumed to start in November 2023 to meet immediate needs)

Emergency Management:

- 1.0 FTE Program Specialist 5 - \$130,000 per year
- 1.0 FTE Program Specialist 4 - \$120,000 per year

Employee Supports:

- 6.0 FTE Program Specialist 4 - \$722,000 per year

Strategic and Performance Outcomes

Strategic Framework:

This aligns with the Governor’s Results Washington goal of Efficient, Effective and Accountable Government by investing in a continuum of employee supports that increases job satisfaction, recruitment and retention.

This proposal also aligns with DCYF’s Strategic Priorities by providing “a focus on supporting staff as they contribute to the agency’s goals and outcomes” so that they can have “a relentless focus on the outcomes for children.” It would advance equity through implementation of trauma-informed and healing-centered practices for staff to address traumatic work-related events inherent with their work, and to create a continuum of wellness supports for staff. Doing so also improves quality and intention of DCYF’s practice, giving capacity to support staff as its most valuable resource.

Performance Outcomes:

Expanding safety, creating capacity for emergency management and response, and implementing a continuum of employee supports will aid DCYF in the ongoing work retention crisis, improve worker well-being, mental health and resiliency, and validate and support staff in day-to-day as well as traumatic situations. Unified support services will reduce worker turnover, burnout, injuries, and lawsuits. It will allow staff to better manage current stress-related symptoms, avert or minimize the impact of future manifestations, and return to their pre-trauma functional baseline.

A stable and healthy DCYF workforce ultimately affects the children, youth and families it serves. This proposal supports the needs of staff, including safety and emergency preparedness of the agency, and is a strategic move towards becoming a trauma-informed and healing-centered organization.

Equity Impacts

Community outreach and engagement:

This proposal was developed with robust input from internal stakeholders including front line staff including social workers, JR counselors, clinical staff and the peer support team. DCYF's existing emergency management, safety, and peer-support staff who work in the field engage regularly with employees across the state from underserved regions and underrepresented communities. Information from these interactions and through other data, such as geographical coverage data and frequency of safety events, indicate disparities that can be addressed with support of this proposal.

Additionally, external feedback was collected from providers and partners in the work as well as the Washington Federation of State Employees who expressed support.

Disproportional Impact Considerations:

All DCYF employees and the communities they serve will benefit from this proposal, especially those that are presently underserved. Region 4, for example, is a high-density area with a racially and ethnically diverse population but is presently underserved. Regions 1 and 2, the eastern part of the state, consists of geographically separated population centers and rural communities that are also underserved.

Target Populations or Communities:

All DCYF employees and the communities they serve will benefit from this proposal. There will not be any populations or communities who would be marginalized or disproportionately impacted.

Other Collateral Connections

Puget Sound Recovery:

Not applicable.

State Workforce Impacts:

Not applicable.

Intergovernmental:

Not applicable.

Stakeholder Response:

This decision package was presented to the Washington Federation for State Employees (WFSE) whose response was positive and pleased to see concerted efforts to increase worker safety and resilience.

State Facilities Impacts:

Not applicable.

Changes from Current Law:

Not applicable.

Legal or Administrative Mandates:

Not applicable.

HEAL Act Agencies Supplemental Questions

Not applicable.

IT Addendum

Does this Decision Package include funding for any IT-related costs, including hardware, software, (including cloud-based services), contracts or IT staff?

No

Objects of Expenditure

Objects of Expenditure <i>Dollars in Thousands</i>	Fiscal Years		Biennial	Fiscal Years		Biennial
	2024	2025	2023-25	2026	2027	2025-27
Obj. A	\$104	\$1,335	\$1,439	\$1,335	\$1,335	\$2,670
Obj. B	\$37	\$438	\$475	\$438	\$438	\$876
Obj. C	\$0	\$686	\$686	\$686	\$686	\$1,372
Obj. E	\$2	\$25	\$27	\$25	\$25	\$50
Obj. G	\$3	\$124	\$127	\$124	\$124	\$248
Obj. J	\$10	\$91	\$101	\$0	\$0	\$0
Obj. T	\$26	\$285	\$311	\$285	\$285	\$570

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