



Agency Recommendation Summary

The Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) requests \$15,012,000 (\$15,012,000 General Fund-State) in the 2025-27 Biennial Budget to implement the community-based Family Reconciliation Services (FRS) program in three early implementation regions. This request supports families with at-risk youth and addresses the disparate outcomes experienced by marginalized communities disproportionately represented in FRS caseloads.

Program Recommendation Summary

090 - Program Support

The Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) requests \$15,012,000 (\$15,012,000 General Fund-State) in the 2025-27 Biennial Budget to implement the community-based Family Reconciliation Services (FRS) program in three early implementation regions. This request supports families with at-risk youth and addresses the disparate outcomes experienced by marginalized communities disproportionately represented in FRS caseloads.

Fiscal Summary

Fiscal Summary <i>Dollars in Thousands</i>	Fiscal Years		Biennial	Fiscal Years		Biennial
	2026	2027	2025-27	2028	2029	2027-29
Operating Expenditures						
Fund 001 - 1	\$7,506	\$7,506	\$15,012	\$7,506	\$7,506	\$15,012
Total Expenditures	\$7,506	\$7,506	\$15,012	\$7,506	\$7,506	\$15,012

Decision Package Description

The purpose of Family Reconciliation Services (FRS) is to achieve reconciliation between the parent and child or youth when conflicts or crises arise, to reunify the family, and to maintain and strengthen the family unit while minimizing involvement with the child welfare system. FRS is currently provided by DCYF caseworkers, but many families struggle to access services relevant to their needs. Families of color are disproportionately impacted by the lack of access to culturally responsive services. By transitioning to community-based FRS provision, more families will receive services relevant to their needs and will experience reduced involvement with the child welfare system.

DCYF seeks to transition FRS from a model delivered by DCYF to a community-based model (contracted with private agencies) that was co-designed with community members and people with lived experience. DCYF believes that moving FRS to a community-based model will allow families to access services that are culturally relevant and appropriate to them, which will result in a higher percentage of families receiving services and will reduce racial disproportionality in service access. Moving to a community-based model will also reduce the association with Child Protective Services (CPS) and child abuse and neglect investigations.

Background

Currently, DCYF provides FRS on a voluntary basis to youth and families experiencing conflict. Families with youth ages 12 to 17 may request FRS by calling their local DCYF office or intake line and request services to address conflict in the home.

Family conflict happens for many reasons including housing or economic instability, incarceration of a parent or caregiver, mental health or substance use challenges, lack of parent or caregiver knowledge regarding youths' developmental needs, family or intimate partner violence, lack of family acceptance of LGBTQIA+ identities, and lack of community connections or support. Family protective factors are critical in helping to mitigate and overcome conflict that happens at home. Protective factors may include things like opportunities for pro-social family engagement, social community connections, parental resilience, social and emotional competence of youth.

Currently, DCYF caseworkers will meet with families, or the youth requesting services to better understand their crisis and needs, complete an assessment, and make appropriate referrals for in-home or community services. Services may include referrals to mental health treatment, short-term support and counseling, substance abuse treatment, and crisis planning. Around 2,000 families access FRS annually, but only 13% receive a DCYF-contracted combined in-home service for a variety of reasons. Absent culturally appropriate or relevant services, families may choose to seek other avenues of conflict resolution through their community. Because the share of Black, American Indian and Alaska Native families who request FRS are two to three times greater than these groups' shares of total state population, families of color are disproportionately impacted under the current system.

FRS utilization has fallen over the past 20 years, from around 6,500 cases served per year in 2002 (DCYF data) to around 2,900 in 2022 (FRS Annual Report FY 2022). Families fail to engage in FRS services in part due to the association a DCYF-delivered model has with CPS investigations and the intrusive natures of those investigations. In 2020, HB 2873 amended statute modifying the definition of FRS to authorize culturally relevant, trauma-informed, community-based entities to provide services under contract with DCYF.

The Community-Based Family Reconciliation Services Program

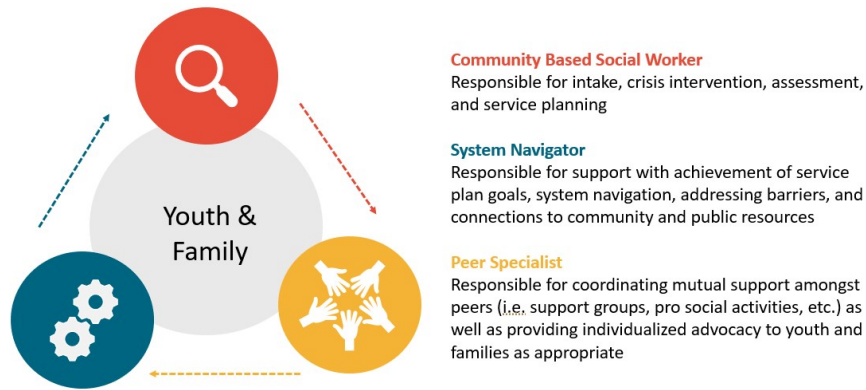
The enacted 2022 Supplemental Budget required DCYF “to codesign community-based family reconciliation services to assess and stabilize youth and families in crisis through primary prevention services” (ESSB 5693 (2022), Section 230(22)). The budget bill specified the co-design team must “develop a community-based family reconciliation services program model that addresses entry points to services, program eligibility, utilization of family assessments, provision of concrete economic supports, referrals to and utilization of in-home services, and the identification of trauma-informed and culturally responsive practices.” The [co-design process](#) included lived experts, tribes, child welfare professionals, community providers, and other stakeholders.

The design process identified three pathways for accessing the community-based FRS program: 1.) Self-referral by youth or parent 2.) Community-based referrals (i.e. schools, shelters, friends/family, community organizations, etc.) 3.) System-based referrals (child welfare, juvenile courts or juvenile rehabilitation, hospitals, etc.). Figure 1 shows the staffing model, figure 2 shows the pathway from referral to receiving services, and figure 3 shows three levels of need for FRS services.

Staffing Model is Comprised of Three Personnel

The CBFRS program will be comprised of teams with three distinct personnel roles. This model provides a contracted agency social worker, system navigator, and a peer specialist (Figure 1).

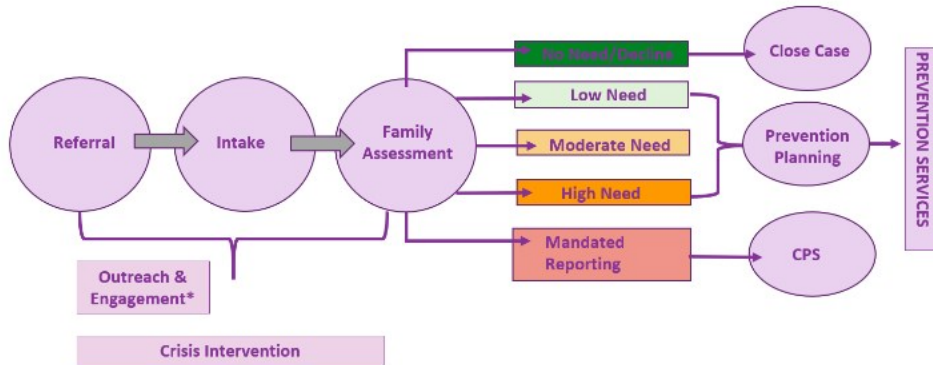
Figure 1. The CB FRS Staffing Model



The CBFRS Program Will Utilize a Tiered Approach Based on Need

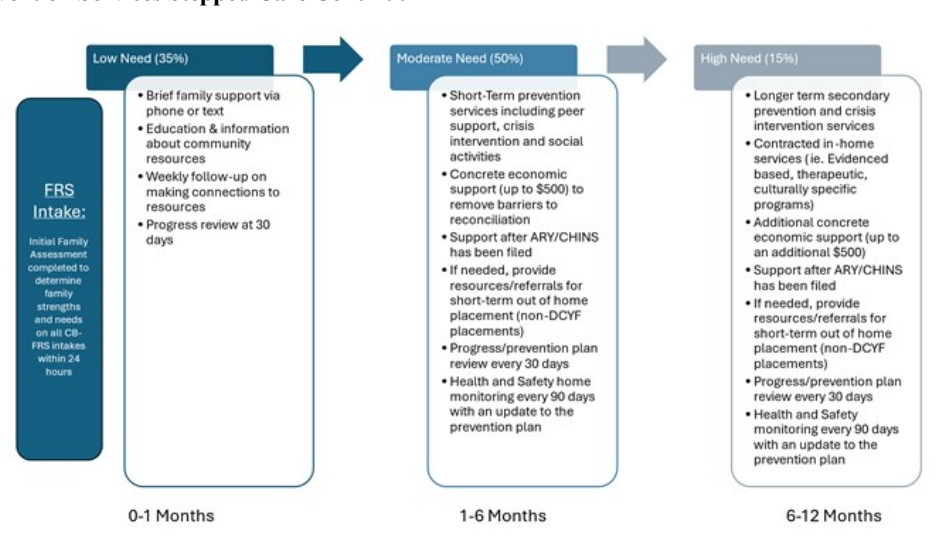
The Housing Stability for Youth in Courts ([H-SYNC](#)) model informed the development of the CB FRS’s tiered approach, providing case management based on level of need (Figure 2).

Figure 2. The CB FRS Tiered Approach to Case Management



*System and Community Connector also engaged in outreach to identify eligible youth and families.

Figure 3. FRS Prevention Services Stepped Care Continuum



The new community-based FRS will have the three pathways for access, as mentioned above. After a referral is made, the community-based organization will conduct an assessment of the family’s needs. Some of these assessments will find that no service is needed. Some assessments will show a low to high level of needs and these will be met by a team assigned to the family that includes a social worker responsible for conducting the assessment and service planning, a systems navigator to assist the family in finding the right services and removing barriers, and a peer specialist to provide additional support and advocacy for the youth and families. Families with higher needs may also receive contracted in-home services. In addition, in collaboration with DCYF, community providers may work with families for a maximum of up to 12 months to assist families in accessing economic supports, necessary for the family to achieve desired outcomes under the community-based FRS program.

Proposal

In the early implementation phase, DCYF requests funding to implement the co-designed community-based FRS in three regions. The early implementation regions, 1, 3, and 5 were determined based on the current number of intakes, geographic location, and consultation with child welfare field operations.

If successful, the program will increase the number of families willing to engage in services due to a third party (not DCYF) conducting the assessment and providing services. DCYF’s current program will remain until the early implementation sites can be reviewed and assessed for improved outcomes. If DCYF receives funding to expand the community-based model statewide, the current FRS program will transition to community-implemented. DCYF requests funding for the early implementation regions for two years, anticipating the transition to a statewide system will happen after that.

Assumptions and Calculations

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

The funding requested is for a new contracted service.

Detailed Assumptions and Calculations:

DCYF requests \$15,012,000 (\$15,012,000 GF-State) in the 25-27 Biennial Budget to implement the CBFRS model. Assumptions are based on a service model that includes staffing models, personnel costs, overhead costs, economic support, and caseloads.

DCYF continues to examine assumptions behind rates models to ensure that proposed rates are reflective of provider costs and that all data is up to date. DCYF estimates that 3,254 families will receive services based on the counts of FRS referrals by office in the three early expansion sites.

The department estimates costs of \$7,506,000 (\$7,506,000 GF-State) in FY 2026 and ongoing fiscal years to implement the CBFRS. The total estimated annual cost is comprised of three main cost drivers, FRS Community Service, Economic Support, and Clinical Services. Assumptions by fiscal year for each cost driver is below:

FRS Community Service:

FRS Community Service estimates are based on how many teams are needed by region multiplied by a standard contracted cost per team based on DCYF’s agency cost model. The standard cost per team is \$219,436.

(**Region 1** 7 teams *\$219,436 FRS Contracted team cost) + (**Region 3** 7 FRS Teams * \$219,436 FRS Contracted team cost)+(**Region 5** 6 FRS Teams * \$219,436 FRS Contracted team cost) = \$4,389,000 Total cost in FY 2026 and ongoing fiscal years.

Economic Support:

Economic Support cost estimates are based on an estimated amount of low to moderate need families by region multiplied by the standard Economic Supports payment in DCYF’s cost model plus an estimated amount of high need families by region multiplied by the standard Economic Supports payment in DCYF’s cost model. The standard economic support payment is \$500.

Region 1 [(581 low to moderate need families * \$500 Economic Support) + **Region 1** 87.15 high need families * \$500 economic support)] + [**Region 3** 588.5 low to moderate need families * \$500 Economic Support) +**Region 3** 88.28 high need families * \$500 Economic Support)] + [**Region 5** 457 low to moderate need families * \$500 Economic Support) + **Region 5** 68.55 high need families] = \$935,000 total estimated economic support in FY 2026 and ongoing fiscal years.

Clinical Services:

Clinical services are calculated based off of how many families are estimated to be offered combined in-home services (CIHS) multiplied by the standard Clinical Intervention payment amount of \$4,500 per family.

(**Region 1** 173.2 estimated families offered CIHS * \$4,500) + (**Region 3** 175.5 estimated families offered CIHS * \$4,500) + (**Region 5** 136.3 estimated families offered CIHS * \$4,500) = \$2,182,000 total estimated clinical services cost in FY 2026 and ongoing fiscal years

Cost assumptions by region are provided in the table below.

Cost Driver	Biennial Total	Annual Total	Region 1	Region 3	Region 5
Families Served	3,254	1,627	581	588.5	457
FRS Community Service	\$8,777,000	\$4,388,719	\$1,536,052	\$1,536,052	\$1,316,616
Economic Support	\$1,870,000	\$935,238	\$334,075	\$338,388	\$262,775
Clinical Services	\$4,364,000	\$2,182,221	\$779,508	\$789,571	\$613,142
Total Estimated Costs	\$15,012,000	\$7,506,000	\$2,649,635	\$2,664,010	\$2,192,532

Workforce Assumptions:

Not Applicable.

Historical Funding:

CBFRS is an implementation request. There is no historical funding available for implementation.

Strategic and Performance Outcomes

Strategic Framework:

This package aligns with DCYF's strategic priorities for prevention by partnering to ensure communities are supportive for children, youth, and families

and by providing community-based services that support families and promote the healthy development of children and youth. A community-based service will reduce disproportionality and advance racial equity and reduce the number of youths placed out of home for families in crisis. Specifically, this decision package addresses the following strategic priorities:

- Safely reduce the number of youth in out of home care by preventing entries into foster care.
- Support quality and intention of DCYF practice.
- Create successful transitions into adulthood for youth in our care by enhancing availability of services and supports.

Performance Outcomes:

The following specific performance outcomes are anticipated from funding this Decision Package:

- **Increased youth and family participation in prevention services:** Only 10% of FRS youth and families are currently participating in in-home services.
- **Increased referrals to FRS program:** The CB FRS System Navigator will be able to form connections and increase community knowledge of the program.
- **Decreased out-of-home foster care placement for youth involved in FRS:** A reduction in out-of-home foster care placement for youth
- **Decreased number of CPS referrals after FRS case closed.**
- **Reduce Families filing ARY and CHINS petitions.**
- **Increase services that are culturally and developmentally responsive.** Reducing racial disproportionalities and advance racial equity

Equity Impacts

Community Outreach and Engagement:

Extensive community engagement and collaborative efforts shaped every aspect of the Community-Based FRS program design. In response to the 2022 passage of ESSB 5693, DCYF, in partnership with the Department of Commerce, embarked on a comprehensive co-design process to develop an innovative program model that addresses the complex needs of youth and families in crisis. Spanning 2023 to June 2024, this rigorous and inclusive co-design process brought together a diverse group of stakeholders, including:

- Tribal Affiliated Organizations;
- LGBTQIA+ Serving Organizations;
- Runaway and Homeless Youth Service Providers;
- Mentoring and Advocacy Organizations;
- Family Support Services;
- Family Resource Centers

Systems professionals came from a variety of professional backgrounds including:

- Department of Children, Youth and Families
- Department of Commerce
- Department of Social & Health Services (DSHS)
- HealthCare Authority (HCA)
- Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI)
- Employment Security Department (ESD)
- Juvenile Courts

The Community-Based (CB) Family Reconciliation Services (FRS) program will serve all families and specifically benefit black, indigenous, LGBTQI2S and Hispanic families from the program's strengths-based, trauma-informed approach, cultural responsiveness, and family preservation efforts.

Disproportional Impact Considerations:

By acknowledging and addressing these equity impacts, the CB FRS program can promote inclusivity and address systemic barriers faced by underserved populations, ultimately contributing to more effective service delivery and better outcomes for all at-risk 12-17-year-old youth and their families.

Target Communities and Populations:

The community-based Family Reconciliation Services model will be phased in starting with Regions 1, 3, and 5. DCYF is hoping to target BIPOC communities and communities disproportionately represented in child welfare systems.

Community Inputs and Incorporation:

The insights gathered through the co-design process were instrumental in shaping the FRS program which was designed to address the complex needs of youth and families. Specifically, the co-design participants emphasized the importance of the following recommendations, which were integrated into the Community-Based FRS program model, reflecting DCYF's commitment to co-creating a program that is responsive to the needs and concerns of the communities that we serve:

- A multifaceted intake process that incorporates a diverse range of referral sources, with an emphasis in self-referral to ensure accessibility and inclusivity.
- This intake process would be conducted utilizing a community-based intake line, as opposed to the current process of FRS participants being required to call an intake in to the Child Abuse and Neglect reporting line in order to receive services.
- Culturally responsive and strengths-based assessment and service planning processes that prioritize individualized, actionable plans tailored to the unique needs and circumstances of each family.
- Culturally specific service options that focus on primary prevention, provide concrete economic support, and expand in-home services to foster greater stability and well-being.
- Direct access to service providers and warm "hand-offs" to other supports during transition planning and aftercare to ensure seamless continuity of care.

Timelines driven by family needs, with focus on providing aftercare and follow-up support to promote long-term sustainability.

Other Collateral Connections

HEAL Act Agencies Supplemental Questions

N/A

Puget Sound Recovery:

N/A

State Workforce Impacts:

Labor relations and collective bargaining have been informed of the CB FRS program and potential impact to current FRS worker.

Intergovernmental:

DCYF is currently working on developing a separate Tribal model for FRS. The Tribes are aware and informing the current model. There is overwhelming support from community partners DCYF anticipates a need for collaboration between the community providers and local tribes.

Stakeholder Impacts:

A multitude of community stakeholders contributed to the design of this model, as mentioned above in the community outreach and engagement section. DCYF is anticipating support from the community.

State Facilities Impacts:

N/A

Changes from Current Law:

Agency Requested Legislation will be submitted by DCYF to provide support for the early implementation of the CB FRS model and expansion is funds are provided.

Legal or Administrative Mandates:

The 2022 supplemental budget, ESSB 5693, required DCYF “to codesign community-based family reconciliation services to assess and stabilize youth and families in crisis through primary prevention services”. The budget proviso specifies the co-design team must, “develop a community-based family reconciliation services program model that addresses entry points to services, program eligibility, utilization of family assessments, provision of concrete economic supports, referrals to and utilization of in-home services, and the identification of trauma-informed and culturally responsive practices.”

Governor's Salmon Strategy:

N/A

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
	2026	2027	2025-27	2028	2029	2027-29
Obj. N	\$7,506	\$7,506	\$15,012	\$7,506	\$7,506	\$15,012

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