



Report to the Washington State Legislature

# Annual Quality Assurance Report Fiscal Year 2018

July 1, 2017, Through June 30, 2018  
RCW 43.20A.870 and RCW 74.13.260



Washington State Department of  
**CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILIES**



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## Contents

Executive Summary.....	1
Performance Measure Summary.....	2
Performance Improvement Initiatives.....	3
Conclusion.....	5

## Executive Summary

State law requires the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) to produce an annual Quality Assurance Report, which summarizes the agency's efforts to provide high-quality service to families involved in the child welfare system, ultimately improving the resilience, health and education of children, youth and families. This is the 22nd report detailing performance outcome data under RCW 43.20A.870 and RCW 74.13.260 that shows performance in the following specific service areas.

### Child Protective Services (CPS) Response Time

DCYF responds quickly to allegations of abuse or neglect and implements safeguards to protect children who have been abused or neglected from further abuse or neglect at the hands of their caregivers.

### Children's Health and Safety in Out-of-Home Care

DCYF monitors children in out-of-home care, performs visits on licensed facilities and works to provide safe placements to children who have been removed from their families due to abuse or neglect so that they are not abused or neglected in licensed care.

### Adherence to Permanency Planning Guidelines

DCYF works toward placing children in safe permanent homes as quickly as possible and tracks progress with reference to permanency within 12 months.

### Children's Length of Stay in Out-of-Home Placement

DCYF seeks to minimize the amount of time children spend in out-of-home care prior to reunification or other permanency plan completion.

DCYF provides or oversees the provision of services and supports throughout the public child welfare continuum of care. DCYF's roles include:

- Responding to and investigating reports of suspected child abuse and neglect.
- Providing or overseeing the provision of child and family services and supports to help parents safely care for their own children whenever possible.
- Securing safe and stable temporary placements for children until they may safely be returned home or placed into an alternative safe and stable permanent home.
- Overseeing the provision of medical, educational and mental health services to children in out-of-home care.
- Licensing and monitoring foster family and relative homes for temporary placement of children, as well as congregate care or therapeutic facilities to care for children.
- Providing services and supports to youth transitioning from out-of-home care into responsible independent living.

DCYF tracks performance in many areas of service delivery and oversight in an effort to improve outcomes. For more detail on these measures and others, visit our [Agency Performance Dashboard](#).

## Performance Measure Summary

DCYF is accountable to the Legislature and the public for continuing to improve the child welfare system. DCYF recognizes no government entity alone can ensure the safety of children. DCYF relies on mandated reporters such as community-based service providers, faith communities, schools and caring individuals to speak up on behalf of vulnerable children by reporting suspected child maltreatment.

This data comes from the federally mandated State Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS), which is called FamLink in Washington State and is the most current available. State measures are reported by state fiscal year (SFY), which is July 1 through June 30. Federal measures, required by the federal Administration for Children and Families, are reported by federal fiscal year (FFY), which is October 1 through September 30.

Federal targets in this report reflect federal requirements and performance needed to avoid a federal Program Improvement Plan. These federal measures use an entry cohort approach, which requires the state to wait 12 months or more to determine whether the outcome being measured has occurred. The year label reflects the year of the entry cohort being measured.

For more detail, visit our [Agency Performance Dashboard](#).

Measure	State Target* / Federal Target**	Performance***
Timely response in emergent referrals	> 98.5%*	97.6%
Timely response in non-emergent referrals	> 97%*	98.0%
Children who did not experience recurrence of abuse	< 6%	7.5%
Children who are abused or neglected while in the placement and care authority of the state	< 6.8 days / 100,000**	6.2%
Foster homes receiving health and safety monitoring visits	> 10%*	13.0%
Children visited every month by their worker	> 98%*	98.1%
Children achieving permanency within 12 months of placement	> 37.9%**	36.0%
Median number of days children are placed in care	Previous year: 603.5	627
Percentage of children who re-entered care within 12 months following reunification with their family	< 7%**	5.6%

\* Targets are established by DCYF to set a standard for performance.

\*\* Federal targets reflect performance necessary to avoid a federal Program Improvement Plan.

\*\*\* State measures report performance through SFY 2018. Federal measures report performance for children entering in FFY 2016 and FFY 2017 because the measures look forward 12 or 24 months to determine if the outcome being measured occurred in FFY 2018.

## Performance Improvement Initiatives

### Child Outcome Goals

In 2018, DCYF established overarching outcome goals for children, youth and families (or “child outcome goals”) that will guide the work of the agency as identified in [2E2SHB 1661 Section 101\(2-3\)](#). The DCYF Office of Innovation, Alignment, and Accountability (OIAA) has led this work since January 2018, working with DCYF leadership as well as staff and external stakeholders. A working version of the initial 10 child outcome goals was published on the agency website in October 2018:

#### Overall

Race and family income are eliminated as predictors of well-being.

#### Resilience

1. Children and youth are supported by healthy relationships with adults
2. Parents and caregivers are supported to meet the needs of children and youth
3. Family economic security

#### Education

4. Kindergarten readiness
5. Youth school engagement
6. High school graduation

#### Health

7. Healthy birthweight
8. Child/youth development
9. Youth mental/behavioral health

This set of priority outcome areas will help drive aligned service delivery in a way that contributes to the achievement of outcomes that support children, youth and families to thrive. OIAA will translate each outcome area into an analytic framework that will communicate the current state of each outcome and serve as a tool for the agency and external partners to monitor progress and identify strategies to drive improvement.

### Baseline Performance Assessment

In establishing OIAA, 2E2SHB 1661 Sec 104(2) envisions a major focus of the work of OIAA is measuring agency performance to inform continuous improvement efforts, support systemic reform work and measure progress specifically toward achieving the child outcome goals.

In order to ground the performance measurement work of the new agency, DCYF is undergoing a baseline performance assessment in three broad areas:

1. Performance: Quantified baseline measures of key program activities for the three agencies of origin, including a comparison to other states and national standards where those measures exist.
2. Priorities: Recommendations for a limited set of priority performance measures that, based on evidence, will produce the greatest gains in improving the child outcome goals.

3. Process: Recommendations for organizational structures and elements needed to support performance improvement (both day-to-day operational continuous quality improvement, as well as performance improvement, supports required for major reform efforts).

DCYF anticipates the completed baseline performance assessment in the summer of 2019.

### Permanency from Day One

In the fall of 2018, DCYF was awarded a \$7.7 million, five-year grant from the federal Children's Bureau to conduct a project, Permanency from Day One: Washington's Concurrent Planning, to support the agency to achieve better permanency outcomes for children and youth.

In order to achieve more fitting and timely permanency plans and adoption for children and youth, the project is designed to build enhanced system capacity to support workers in concurrent planning and family engagement and new and expanded family supports through mentoring and other direct services. This is a two-part approach; by supporting the workforce and supporting families, the state will achieve improved permanency outcomes, including adoption, reunification and guardianship.

### Child and Family Services Review | Program Improvement Plan

The Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) is a federal review conducted by the Children's Bureau. The review examines the delivery of child welfare services and the outcomes for children and families served by child protective services, foster care, adoption and other related programs. Washington's Program Improvement Plan (PIP), which will respond to the results of the CFSR final report from the Children's Bureau, is due in the summer of 2019. The PIP will include an examination of the root causes and contributing factors to any poor results in the CFSR, plus strategies to address them.

The reviews are structured to help states identify strengths as well as areas needing improvement within their agencies and programs. Ultimately, the goal of the reviews is to help states improve child welfare services and achieve positive outcomes for families and children who receive services.

### Performance Improvement Infrastructure

OIAA maintains the data infrastructure for aggregating and reporting data from the FamLink system to support performance improvement activities in child welfare offices across the state. In addition to providing daily updated reports on health and safety checks and CPS response time (initial face-to-face report), in 2015 and 2016 the former Children's Administration worked with the Department of Social and Health Services Research and Data Analysis division to develop the first set of priority performance metrics for those key performance indicators that data demonstrated to be significantly associated with child safety, permanency and well-being. New displays of priority indicators were developed in 2018, and OIAA is preparing to roll out reporting to staff across the state. DCYF will use this as an example of a robust empirical process that may be replicated to identify additional priority performance measures across the new agency.

Additionally, in the coming months and years, OIAA will develop a new integrated data analytic environment to support integrated performance improvement data aggregation, reporting, analysis and research, as envisioned in HB 1661.

## Conclusion

As the public child welfare agency for Washington State, DCYF is held to very high standards for improving outcomes for children, youth and families.

In addition to continuous quality improvement efforts designed to meet the requirements of federal, state and judicial oversight entities, DCYF engages in ongoing self-appraisal. DCYF workers are dedicated to doing the best work possible for vulnerable children, not because of mandates but because it is the work to which the agency and its many dedicated employees are committed.

DCYF will continue to engage in continuous quality improvement efforts and to increase research-based efforts to protect children and strengthen families so they flourish.