



Agency Recommendation Summary

The Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF) requests \$7,084,000 General Fund-State in the 2024 Supplemental Budget to implement a community-based Family Reconciliation Services (FRS) model. DCYF will implement three early implementation sites in King, Pierce, and Yakima counties, with community-based (contracted) FRS providers. The goal of the request is to expand access to culturally appropriate prevention services and to reduce and minimize involvement with the child welfare system. DCYF also requests funding for the Washington State Institute for Public Policy (WSIPP) to evaluate the early implementation sites and will submit an estimate of resources necessary to evaluate results later this fall.

Program Recommendation Summary

010 - Children and Families Services

The Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF) requests \$7,029,000 General Fund-State in the 2024 Supplemental Budget for three early implementation sites to pilot community-based Family Reconciliation Services (FRS).

090 - Program Support

The Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF) requests \$55,000 in General Fund-State in the 2024 Supplemental Budget for an implementation evaluation of the FRS early implementation sites by the Washington State Institute for Public Policy (WSIPP).

Fiscal Summary

Fiscal Summary <i>Dollars in Thousands</i>	Fiscal Years		Biennial	Fiscal Years		Biennial
	2024	2025	2023-25	2026	2027	2025-27
Operating Expenditures						
Fund 001 - 1	\$0	\$7,029	\$7,029	\$8,434	\$0	\$8,434
Fund 001 - 1	\$0	\$55	\$55	\$108	\$0	\$108
Total Expenditures	\$0	\$7,084	\$7,084	\$8,542	\$0	\$8,542

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 staff 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, and concrete supports in time of need.

Currently, DCYF caseworkers connect with families or youth requesting services to better understand their crisis and needs, complete assessments, and make appropriate referrals for services or community resources. Caseworkers can also play a role in supporting a family's effort to file an At-Risk Youth (ARY) or Child in Need of Services (CHINS) petition with juvenile courts and may continue to monitor active ARY or CHINS cases when requested by the court. 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 file ARY or

CHINS petitions, or seek other avenues of conflict resolution through their community. Because the shares 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.

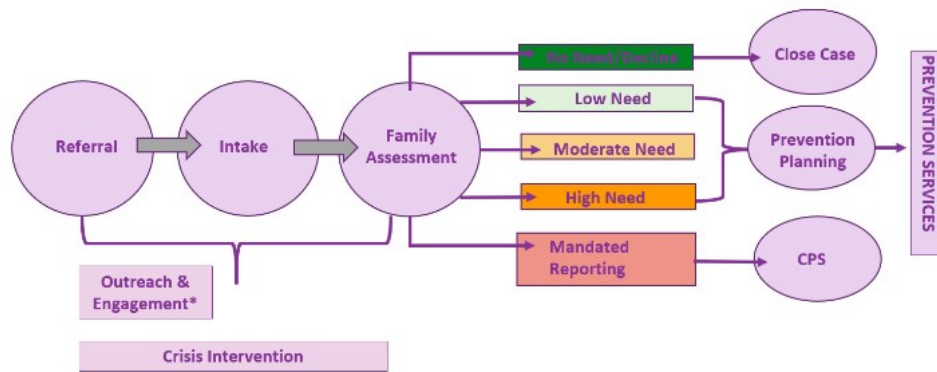
FRS utilization has fallen over the past 20 years, from around 6,500 cases served per year in 2002 (DCYF data) to around 2,900 in 2022 (FRS Annual Report FY 2022). Families fail to engage with DCYF FRS services in part due to the association a DCYF-delivered model has with CPS investigations and the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

FRS Codesign Process Completed

The 2022 Supplemental Budget required DCYF “to co-design 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 proviso 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.” Over the last year DCYF has worked collaboratively with youth and families with lived experience, tribes, community providers, and other stakeholders, utilizing co-design principles and approaches, to create a new community-based FRS model.

After considering geographic infrastructure and racial disproportionality, the co-designers proposed that the first phase of contracts with community-based agencies for delivery of FRS should be in King, Pierce, and Yakima counties (deemed “early implementation sites”).

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.). The community-based FRS model is based on the UW’s Housing Support for Youth in Courts (H-SYNC) stepped care approach. (SAJE, 2018). Figure 1 shows the pathway from referral to receiving services, figure 2 shows three levels of need for FRS services, and figure 3 shows the staffing model.



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

Figure 1. FRS redesign community-based model

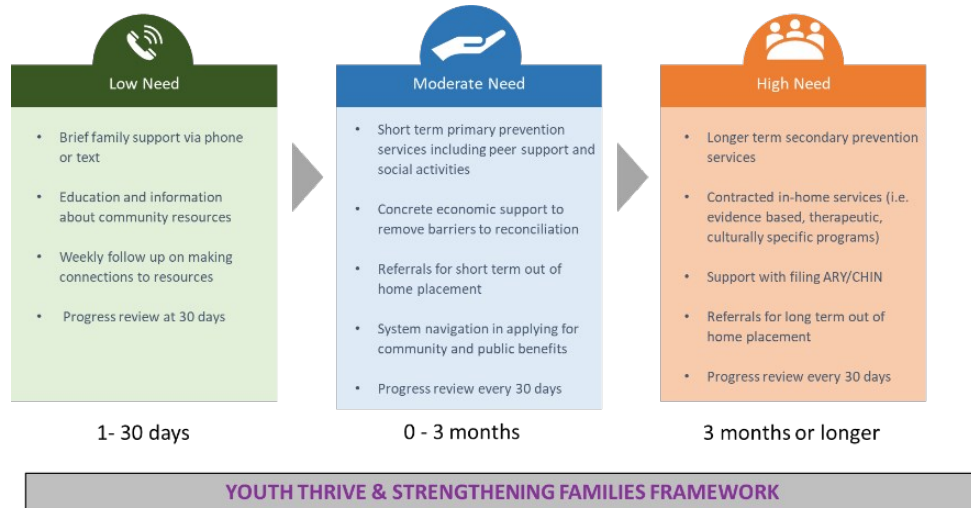


Figure 2. FRS Prevention Services Stepped Care Continuum



Figure 3: FRS Community Based Model Staffing, all positions staffed through community-based agency.

DCYF built the community-based FRS model utilizing a co-design process that ensures that a multitude of stakeholders are represented in the design of this model. Individuals have been engaged in the process since June of 2022 and will continue to provide insight through implementation on July 1, 2024. Early implementation sites were determined in collaboration with co-designers based on racial disproportionality by region. Regions 5 and 2 had a disproportionate need for BIPOC communities.

The new community-based FRS will have the aforementioned three pathways for access. After a referral is made the community-based organization will conduct an assessment of the family’s needs and challenges. 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.

Proposal

In the early implementation phase, DCYF requests funding to implement three expansion sites for the co-designed community-based FRS. The early implementation sites in King, Pierce, and Yakima counties sites will serve over 1,000 families in FY 2025 and an assumed 20% increase in FY 2026. Funding for this model is based on the estimated cost to serve families, with a primary focus on enabling Contractors to recruit and retain direct service staff for service delivery. DCYF is committed to public, transparent, and data driven methods for developing rate models that fully compensate Providers for the cost of a service and supports worker well-being. The costs to deliver services, outlined in the Assumptions section below, were developed using the following key strategies:

1. Use of Employment Security Department’s published Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates to identify competitive wages.
2. Partnering with service Providers to understand costs in delivering the service.
3. Modeling the cost of benefits for personal time off, single participant health care, dental, vision, and professional development.
4. Using contract requirements to ensure wages and benefits are used for worker well-being.

Specific to the FRS model, and with input from the co-design group, the model includes significant concrete goods funding for families and lived experience compensation for the peer navigator staff position.

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, FRS will transition from state-implemented to community-implemented. DCYF requests that the early adopter locations will receive funding for two years, anticipating that the transition to a statewide system will happen after that.

DCYF anticipates fewer DCYF intakes locally as families seek community-based service providers and increased access and engagement in FRS from overnight youth shelters, HOPE Centers, and community resource centers. This model will emphasize families receiving culturally responsive services, evidence-based therapies, non-evidence based primary prevention and concrete economic support. The FRS community-based model is being designed to have many elements that qualify for Title IV-E funding under the Families First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA). However, additional data will need to be collected and stored in order to comply with the requirements of FFPSA. Therefore, federal funding should not be assumed in the initial pilots.

WSIPP Evaluation

DCYF anticipates collecting data and metrics to evaluate performance, and requests funding for the Washington State Institute for Public Policy (WSIPP) to perform an implementation evaluation over the course of the two-year funding period. WSIPP will consult with DCYF about the goal of the evaluation and the information DCYF will need to collect to achieve that goal. WSIPP will complete a descriptive evaluation after 18 months of programming using data collected by DCYF. The goals would be to:

- Report on service uptake and how the services are being used.
- Report on recommended program modifications prior to statewide rollout.
- Report on preliminary markers of program efficacy (*if possible*).

DCYF is still considering the data and metrics necessary to measure progress in the outcomes below:

1. More families who request FRS receive primary prevention services appropriate to their needs, potentially as measured by the percentage of FRS cases who participate in prevention services;
2. Families receive services that are culturally and developmentally responsive, potentially as measured via survey;
3. Increase in the number of youths who self-refer to FRS; and
4. Less deeper system intervention, as measured through the number and percentage of cases resulting in CHINS, out-of-home placement, and/or dependencies.

Assuming the pilot starts in FY25, WSIPP would consult with DCYF through the initial 18 months of program implementation, aiming to receive all relevant data in January 2026 and would complete a final report on the implementation by June 30, 2026.

WSIPP would also conduct a longer-term outcome evaluation to study the effects of the FRS program. It is assumed that work on this evaluation would occur in FY29 and FY30, with a final report on June 30, 2030. The goal would be to answer the questions:

- Does FRS participation relate to child welfare service system interventions such as dependencies, out-of-home placement, runaway?
- Does FRS participation relate to other relevant outcomes such as homelessness or juvenile justice involvement?

Assumptions and Calculations

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

The funding requested in the 2024 Supplemental Budget is for a new contracted service. DCYF spent an estimated \$2.9 million on the provision of FRS in these three regions in FY 2023, which is a mix of contracted combined in-home services and staff time.

Detailed Assumptions and Calculations:

Children and Family Services

DCYF requests \$7,029,000 in GF-S in FY 25 and \$8,434,000 in GF-S in FY26 to implement the community-based FRS model. To estimate costs, DCYF developed regionalized per family cost estimates based on a service model that includes assumptions regarding staffing models, personnel costs, overhead costs, and caseloads. DCYF continues to examine assumptions behind rates models to ensure that proposed rates are reflective of provider costs and that all data are up-to-date. DCYF also estimated the number of families that would need to receive services based on counts of FRS referrals by office in the three early expansion sites. It is assumed that 20 percent more families would receive services in FY26.

The estimated cost for Region 4 (Seattle/King County) is \$3,916,000 in FY25 and \$4,699,000 in FY26. The estimated cost is based on per family costs of \$6,614 and an estimated 592 families in FY25 and 710 families in FY26.

The estimated cost for Region 5 (Tacoma/Pierce County) is \$1,979,000 in FY25 and \$2,374,000 in FY26. The estimated cost is based on per family costs of \$6,362 and an estimated 311 families in FY25 and 373 families in FY26.

The estimated cost for Region 2 (South Central/Yakima County) is \$1,134,000 in FY25 and \$1,361,000 in FY26. The estimated cost is based on per family costs of \$6,337 and an estimated 179 families in FY25 and 215 families in FY26.

It is assumed that DCYF caseworkers will continue to work with FRS cases as the early implementation sites are implemented and will work with cases who choose to file CHINS or ARY petitions.

Program Support

DCYF requests \$55,000 in GF-S in FY25 and \$108,000 in GF-S in FY26 for an implementation evaluation by WSIPP of the FRS early implementation sites. These costs are based on data costs and assumptions regarding staff time. It is assumed that DCYF will request funding for an outcome evaluation of the FRS community-based pilot in the 2027-29 Biennium.

Workforce Assumptions:

This request does not include FTEs.

Strategic and Performance Outcomes

Strategic Framework:

Strategic Framework:

Contracting FRS out to community-based providers aligns practice 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 youth 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:

DCYF will continue to collect data reported on in the 2022 report to the Legislature. Further, DCYF will collect data necessary to meet Family First Preservation Services Act (FFPSA) requirements. DCYF continues to define the specific metrics of the program, but the overall outcome goals are:

- Increase families being referred to engaging in prevention services.
- Reduce families referred for FRS filing a CHINS or ARY petition.
- Reduce number of FRS youth being placed in out of home care.
- Increase services that are culturally and developmentally responsive.
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As part of this decision package, DCYF also requests funding for WSIPP to complete an assessment of the program.

Performance Outcomes:

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- Reduce families referred for FRS filing a CHINS or ARY petition.
- Reduce number of FRS youth being placed in out of home care.
- Increase services that are culturally and developmentally responsive.

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Equity Impacts

Community outreach and engagement:

Individuals have been building/designing the model alongside DCYF. Individuals have been engaged in the process since August of 2022 and will continue to provide insight through implementation.

Through co-design we've engaged 90+ individuals that range from Lived Experts, Community Providers, Systems Professionals, Tribes, Advocates, and Social Workers.

Community co-designers came from a variety of professional backgrounds 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 & Families (DCYF)
- 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

Disproportional Impact Considerations:

The FRS community-based approach will be piloted in Regions 2, 4 and 5. DCYF is hoping to target BIPOC communities both from suburban and rural communities.

Target Populations or Communities:

Although DCYF is working to design a specific Tribal model with Tribal Government, the initial model is not designed specifically for that population, however, nothing prevents tribal families from accessing this service.

Other Collateral Connections

Puget Sound Recovery:

Not applicable.

State Workforce Impacts:

Not applicable.

Intergovernmental:

DCYF is currently working on developing a separate Tribal model for FRS. The Tribes are aware and informing the current model. No oppositional folks have been identified. There is overwhelming support from community partners. There may need to be collaboration between the community providers and local tribes.

Stakeholder Response:

A multitude of community stakeholders contributed to the design of this model. DCYF is anticipating support from the community.

State Facilities Impacts:

Not applicable.

Changes from Current Law:

Not applicable.

Legal or Administrative Mandates:

FRS Legislative Request:

The 2022 supplemental budget required DCYF “to co-design 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.”

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. N	\$0	\$7,029	\$7,029	\$8,434	\$0	\$8,434
Obj. C	\$0	\$55	\$55	\$108	\$0	\$108

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