# Child Welfare & Early Learning Navigator Project (CWELN)

Virtual

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## Bless This Land, Beyond The Land Acknowledgement

Erin Mountain- Ancestral Land of the Nisqually and Cowlitz peoples.

Antonia Bancroft (Dine)-Ancestral lands of the Cowlitz, Confederated Tribes of Grande Ronde and Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians.





#### Agenda

- Where did the CWELN Project come from?
- What is a Child Welfare Early Learning Navigator?
- Why does Early Learning matter in Child Welfare?
- What have we learned so far?
- What's next?
- Resources



#### Child Welfare Early Learning Navigator Project (CWELN)

- DCYF was awarded the Federal Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five (PDG B-5)
- Initial Grant was awarded in 2018
- Renewed in 2019 through the end of December 2022

#### **Project Goals**

- Overall goal is to improve and strengthen the pathway from Child Welfare to Community Early Learning programs.
  - ✓ Increase engagement in early learning and family support services among CPS-involved families.
  - ✓ Prevent subsequent maltreatment among CPS-involved families and prepare vulnerable children for academic success.
  - ✓ Help DCYF fulfill its mandate by linking child welfare and early learning functions.
  - ✓ Identify & refine solutions to be scaled out state wide.



#### Child Welfare Early Learning Navigators



Six navigators working with different DCYF child welfare field offices across various communities, including:

- 2-South King County
- 2-Yakima County
- 1-Grays Harbor, Mason, & Pacific Counties
- 1-Cowlitz County (Tribal Navigator)



#### A Day in the Life of a Navigator

Identify

Assess

Match

Handoff

Enroll

Follow Up













Navigator reviews reports, intakes, case notes and engages caseworkers to discuss family's EL needs.

Navigator contacts family or provides information for the caseworker to share with the family.

Family indicates which services are of interest.

Navigator
helps family
contact/notifies
agency; helps
family
complete
enrollment.

Agency reaches out to family to complete enrollment.

Navigator contacts providers to ensure interested families are successful and begin services.



#### Why Does Early Learning Matter in Child Welfare?

Parents deepen their understanding of developmentally appropriate expectations.

Young children need at least one healthy, safe, responsive, and nurturing caregiver.

Parents are encouraged to bond, nurture, and create a safe environment for their children.

Assessing Early Learning needs is Child Safety & Well-being. Most Early Learning programs have family supports components.





#### What we have learned so far

- Service referral gap for child welfare involved families.
- Building relationships is very important.
- Timely follow up is crucial.
- Getting a child enrolled can sometimes be a lengthy process.

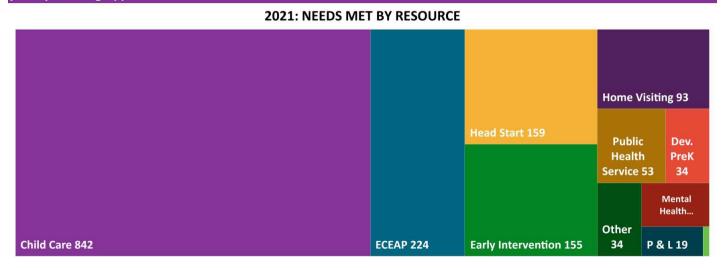




# CHILDREN ASSESSED FOR EARLY LEARNING NEEDS



In 2021, more than 4,700 families involved in child welfare were assessed for early learning needs; 44% of these families had their early learning needs met.





#### What is next?

- Navigators continue to build materials and training to inform child welfare staff about early learning programs and how to access them.
- Continue to build relationships with community and state Early Learning partners.
- Working within our agency to add to our current FAMLINK database
  - Prompts for caseworkers
  - Change service referral process
- Continue to expand the project to a statewide scale.



### Thank you!

#### Resources:

- CWELN Fact Sheet
- Conversation Guide and Matrix
- Article: Connecting families involved in child protective services to early learning programs and family supports in Washington
- https://www.dcyf.wa.gov/about/government-affairs/pdg