

2018 Supplemental Budget Decision Package

Agency: 307 Department of Children, Youth, and Families

Decision Package Code/Title: PL – A2 / Create a Social Worker Mentorship Program

Budget Period: 2017-19

Budget Level: Policy Level

Agency Recommendation Summary Text:

The Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) requests \$6,804,000 (\$6,668,000 GF-State) and 62.0 FTE to reduce social worker turnover through training and mentorship. The funding will allow DCYF to extend the current regional social worker training program for new hires by adding a 12-month mentorship period for each social worker. Mentors will work for a year closely with new hire social workers by providing timely responses, valuable insights and ongoing guidance. Strong mentorship and guidance will improve DCYF’s ability to retain workers.

Fiscal Summary:

Operating Expenditures	FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021
001-1 General Fund-State	\$0	\$6,668,000	\$11,853,000	\$11,853,000
001-A General Fund-Federal	\$0	\$136,000	\$242,000	\$242,000
Total Cost	0	6,804,000	12,095,000	12,095,000
Staffing	FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021
FTEs	0.0	62.0	107.0	107.0
Revenue	FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021
001-A General Fund-Federal	\$0	\$136,000	\$242,000	\$242,000
Object of Expenditure	FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021
Object A – Salaries	\$0	\$4,625,000	\$8,224,000	\$8,224,000
Object B – Benefits	\$0	\$1,692,000	\$3,028,000	\$3,028,000
Object E – Goods and Services	\$0	\$487,000	\$843,000	\$843,000

Package Description:

Social service workers (“caseworkers”) encounter children whose safety and well-being rely on the skills and abilities of the caseworker to:

- Utilize intervention that meets the degree of danger and risk posed to children,
- Use clinical and critical thinking skills to make proper, objective assessments, and

- Work with parents and children impacted by trauma and who face the most concerning social problems in society including poverty, mental illness, substance use disorder, homelessness, domestic violence.

Caseworkers in child welfare must engage families in a trauma-informed manner. Caseworkers also rely on and work with external stakeholders in the child welfare system as partners and providers. They must have the familiarity and ability to work within the court system, representing recommendations on behalf of Washington State.

Caseworkers face complex and nuanced challenges through their career. Most caseworkers enter the field following their passion or calling. However, few stay in the field long-term. Many others get frustrated and leave. In recent years, DCYF caseworkers have an especially high turnover rate as compared to DSHS counterparts. In 2015, DCYF Social Service Specialists 1-3 had a 19.9 percent turnover rate, as compared to the same class in ALTA (14 percent) and ESA (11.7 percent). DCYF even had a higher turnover rate among Social Service Specialists 4 (supervisor class). In CA, this high turnover rate is mostly due to resignations with 62 percent of SSS 1-3's resigning (as opposed to retiring or having their appointment end), and 89 percent of those resigning left the Department of Social and Health Services all together. The caseworker turnover is not only hurting the child welfare system economically but also negatively impacts the goal of creating a stable relationship between children and their families.

This package provides newly hired caseworkers, after their initial foundational training, with casework mentors to help new caseworkers develop and practice skills that take time to learn. The mentor provides ongoing support and feedback, reducing the pressure and stress new employees experience as they learn the job. By increasing support, mentors are a missing component in efforts to stabilize and retain the workforce. Mentors will provide checks and balance on decision-making compromised by lack of experience, while teaching and reinforcing practice based on policy, objective information, and collaboration with families and external stakeholders.

Base Budget:

This is a new program.

Decision Package expenditure, FTE and revenue assumptions, calculations and details:

Using the average monthly count of trainees through Regional Core Training (RTC), we were able to calculate the total number of trainees by region for each year. We assumed the ratio of four trainees to each mentor would generate the best possible outcome.

Assumptions:

At a 1:4 mentor-to-caseworker ratio: In the first year of implementation, DCYF will assign mentors to 248 caseworkers and the number of mentees will increase by 428 in the second year.

DCYF will need 62 mentors in the first year as mentors are brought on board and 107 in the second year. DCYF assumes 428 new caseworkers in the second year. Due to the need for mentors to be experienced staff, CA will most likely promote existing caseworkers into these positions and higher additional

caseworkers to take on the bulk of the mentor’s caseload. Mentors will continue to carry a light caseload in order to maintain necessary field skills and knowledge.

Decision Package Justification and Impacts

What specific performance outcomes does the agency expect?

It is expected that the mentorship program will impact the agency in the following areas:

1. Decrease turnover by improving caseworker support and increasing job satisfaction.
2. Create consistency in the fundamentals of practice: safety assessment and planning, parent and child engagement, case planning, transparency with families, communication and collaboration with child welfare partners, and permanency planning.
3. Manage and promote talent by providing experienced and exceptional caseworkers with an option of mentoring rather than supervision. Many excellent caseworkers are not interested in supervision and remain caseworkers. The agency does not currently have an alternative promotional pathway other than supervision.
4. Provide the support, modeling, and feedback that supervisors do not have time to provide. While supervisors meet with caseworkers to staff cases, provide direction, and ensure compliance with policy, they do not have time to shadow their new caseworkers in the field, on home visits, to court, on health and safety visits, and other case activities. Mentors will be expected to shadow workers on these types of case activities, modeling and observing activities that take time and practice to reach proficiency.

Performance Measure detail:

With a phased-in implementation, the agency will be able to design and implement an evaluation of the program.

1. The evaluation will include the retention rates and comparisons between caseworkers who receive mentoring and those who don’t, similar to the Family Assessment Response evaluation model.
2. The evaluation will include exit surveys and employee satisfaction surveys (for mentors and caseworkers).
3. Case transfers can result from employees who leave the agency, in addition to those employees who move to a different program. A reduction in case transfers resulting from employee exits may be an indicator of increased job satisfaction.

Fully describe and quantify expected impacts on state residents and specific populations served.

N/A

What are other important connections or impacts related to this proposal?

Impact(s) To:		Identify / Explanation
Regional/County impacts?	No	Identify:
Other local gov’t impacts?	No	Identify:

Tribal gov't impacts?	No	Identify:
Other state agency impacts?	No	Identify:
Responds to specific task force, report, mandate, or exec order?	No	Identify:
Does request contain a compensation change?	No	Identify:
Does request require a change to a collective bargaining agreement?	No	Identify:
Facility/workplace needs or impacts?	Yes	Identify: Additional leased space may be necessary in some locations to accommodate additional staff.
Capital Budget Impacts?	No	Identify:
Is change required to existing statutes, rules or contracts?	No	Identify:
Is the request related to or a result of litigation?	No	Identify lawsuit (please consult with Attorney General's Office):
Is the request related to Puget Sound recovery?	No	If yes, see budget instructions Section 14.4 for additional instructions
Identify other important connections		

Please provide a detailed discussion of connections/impacts identified above.

What alternatives were explored by the agency and why was this option chosen?

Seasoned caseworkers and supervisors are sought as first line support for new hires. As much as they want to provide assistance, their workload usually prevents them from being available when newer employees seek their assistance.

The agency does not currently have any type of mentoring program. Transitioning seasoned caseworkers to a mentoring role and back filling their positions with new caseworkers will make the intended program succeed.

The agency could create a pilot program in the regions that would establish a mentorship program for a subset of the caseworker population. This pilot would provide the same mentorship as in the larger population, but for roughly one month of Region Care Training graduates. Using the average number of monthly Regional Core Training graduates, DCYF would need two mentors for Region 1, five mentors for Region 2, and three mentors for Region 3. This would involve 10 FTEs that would cost \$1,223,000 (\$1,162,000 GF-State)

What are the consequences of not funding this request?

The agency currently experiences a 20 percent turnover rate, representing a significant cost to the agency in recruiting, hiring, and training. The newly hired caseworker now includes a generation of individuals looking for job satisfaction, ongoing and strong support, and work-life balance. Agreement within the child welfare sector is that it takes about two years for a newly hired caseworker to become proficient. Field caseworkers, supervisors and others have provided the agency with consistent feedback about the need for greater support, better training, and the significant risk of having so many new and young caseworkers who feel overwhelmed by the work and leave not long after they complete their initial training. The annual employee survey identifies ongoing support and communication as areas in need of improvement.

The agency believes that implementation of a mentoring program will stem the tide of turnover, create greater job satisfaction, and grow practitioners who are more likely to see child welfare and public service as a career.

How has or can the agency address the issue or need in its current appropriation level?

DCYF provides training to new caseworkers through Regional Core Training (RTC). This training provides an introductory lesson to help new caseworkers familiarize themselves with the process. What this training lacks is a follow up with on the job training and mentorship.

Other supporting materials:

N/A

Information technology:

- No
- Yes

