

2018 Supplemental Budget Decision Package

Agency: 307 Department of Children, Youth, and Families

Decision Package Code/Title: PL – B2 / Increase child safety in care

Budget Period: 2017-19

Budget Level: Policy Level

Agency Recommendation Summary Text:

The Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) requests \$2,092,000 (\$2,050,000 GF-State) and 21 FTEs to reduce increased workload in four administrative units. The funding and FTEs will allow DCYF to improve service delivery by reducing workload and clearing the backlogs in the administrative approvals, public disclosure requests, background checks, and relative search programs. Ensuring approvals of administrative approvals and decreasing backlogs for relative searches will increase the safety of children placed with relatives who have a criminal history and increase the ability to place with relatives. Improving the timeliness of background checks will improve child safety and placement stability. Reducing backlogs for public disclosure will keep DCYF from being fined for non-compliance.

Fiscal Summary:

Operating Expenditures	FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021
001-1 General Fund-State	\$0	\$2,050,000	\$1,927,000	\$1,927,000
001-2 General Fund-Federal	\$0	\$42,000	\$39,000	\$39,000
Total Cost	\$0	\$2,092,000	\$1,966,000	\$1,966,000
Staffing	FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021
FTEs	0	21.0	21.0	21.0
Revenue	FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021
001-2 General Fund-Federal	\$0	\$42,000	\$39,000	\$39,000
Object of Expenditure	FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021
Object A – Salaries		\$1,271,000	\$1,271,000	\$1,271,000
Object B – Benefits	\$0	\$533,000	\$533,000	\$533,000
Object E – Goods and Services	\$0	\$288,000	\$162,000	\$162,000

Package Description:

Children’s Administration (CA), soon to be part of DCYF, has seen an increase in workload and backlogs related to administrative approvals, public disclosure requests, background checks, and relative search over the last 18 months.

The Administrative Approvals unit has experienced an 83 percent increase in monthly requests since the start of the program and has a current backlog of 500 approval requests. Thirteen percent of public disclosure requests have been open for more than 120 days. The number of background check requests has increased 358 percent since January 2016. The Relative Search unit currently has 2,099 requests that have been open for more than 120 days.

Centralization of these tasks have removed them from the workload of caseworkers, reducing workload and freeing them up to conduct critical work with families and children.

Administrative Approvals

The Division of Licensed Resources (DLR) conducts caregiver background checks on foster parent applications, group care programs, child-placing agencies, and unlicensed caregivers. For applicants who have a serious non-disqualifying criminal conviction or negative action, such as a founded determination of child abuse or neglect or a licensing revocation, DLR conducts an administrative approval by obtaining law enforcement records, court records, information regarding rehabilitation, and statements from the applicants. The review may also include a review of child welfare records. Staff assess the information and the resulting administrative approval document, with a recommendation, goes forward for an approval at a higher level.

DCYF centralized the process for administrative approvals for both DLR and the Division of Child and Family Services (DCFS) in December 2016 to improve the quality of the work, increase safety of children placed in out-of-home care, and to create efficiencies in the process. DCFS did not track the number of administrative approvals prior to centralization, so staffing levels were based on extrapolation of DLR data.

Staffing levels were established based on the original estimate of 100 administrative approvals per month. In 2017, DCYF received an average of 183 requests a month. The additional staff will help in reducing the workload and clearing the current backlog of 500 administrative approvals, so children are not left in situations where the caregiver has not been vetted or placement/permanency is delayed.

Public Disclosure

The Public Disclosure Unit (PDU) is responsible for processing all disclosure requests for CA. These include email and text message searches and video redaction. The requests vary in complexity; some can be completed in as little as an hour, but many can take hundreds of hours to process. The PDU also has multiple statutory timelines to meet when responding to public disclosure requests, and DCYF gets regular challenges that requests have not been met "timely."

The number of new requests is growing as the number of open requests builds. In January 2017, the PDU had 1,890 open requests, received 595 requests over the month, and processed 788 files. In August 2017, the PDU had 1,995 open requests, received 784 new requests, and processed 741 files. Between January and August, there was an average of 1,969 open requests and a monthly average of 766 new requests.

Background Check

Children's Administration centralized the background check processes in April 2016. This unit completes 50,000 background checks annually for prospective adoptive and foster parents, unlicensed placements, contracted providers, and others who may have unsupervised access to children in DCYF's care.

Children's Administration is the only administration in DSHS/DCYF authorized to access the Federal Bureau of Investigation's National Crime Information Center (NCIC) to place a child with a relative or other suitable person within one hour of removal from the child's primary caregiver.

In January 2016, DCYF expanded the time an emergent placement may be requested from one hour to seven calendar days from the day a child was initially removed. With a one-hour timespan to find an emergent placement for a child, DCYF was not often able to place the child with a relative or other suitable person because of the chaotic circumstances surrounding removal. With the assistance of our assistant attorney general, DCYF determined that we could extend our use of NCIC to place with relatives or other suitable persons soon after the required shelter care hearings or family team decision meetings where parents and relatives are present and have the time to recommend potential relative placements. This was capped at seven days to include the 72-hour requirement for the hearings and meetings and take into account weekends and holidays. This change created a 250 percent increase in the number of background requests.

This unit also responds to and processes requests for child abuse and neglect findings from other states who are charged with approving prospective adoptive and foster parents. Effective October 2017, the federal Child Care and Development block grant that provides states with child care subsidies requires all licensed, registered, or regulated child care to include, as part of the background check process, a search of each prospective provider's child abuse and neglect history of every state that individual has lived in the last five years. While the number of these requests are unknown, this process is not automated and requires DCYF to receive, search, and return results manually. DCYF also processes requests from other states for prospective adoptive and foster parents.

The number of NCIC background checks for emergent placements have increased from 120 a month in January 2016 to 550 a month in August 2017. The background checks require a one-hour turnaround time and must be available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Relative Search

Children's Administration centralized the relative search process in April 2014. On average, this unit receives 450 relative search requests each month and sends more than 60,000 letters to relatives annually. Placing with relatives increases safety, permanency, and well-being for youth in care, and can also reduce out-of-home care costs by placing children with kin or engaging relatives in transporting to and supervising visitation between parents and children. DCYF must search and notify relatives of a child placed in the department's care, and notify these relatives within 30 days of a child's removal from home. This notice must include options for the relative to participate in the care and placement of the child.

Currently, DCYF is unable to meet this 30-day requirement and is responding to these requests 120 or more days after the child was removed from home. This backlog reduces the number of relatives DCYF is

able to reach and potentially increases the cost of out of home care and decreases permanency for children.

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

Administrative Approvals

DLR needs six additional FTEs: Four Social Services Specialist 3 (SSS-3), one Secretary Senior to cover clerical tasks, and one supervisor, SSS-4.

One SSS3 processes 20 approval requests per month. The additional FTEs will process 80 additional requests monthly.

Public Disclosure

PDU needs five additional FTEs, Forms and Records Analyst 3s.

A public disclosure specialist can complete an average of 14.3 requests each month. With an additional five FTEs, the unit will be able to process 71.5 more public disclosure requests monthly.

Background Checks

BCU needs 3.5 additional FTEs, Social & Health Program Consultant 1 (SHPC-1).

One SHPC-1 processes 118.5 requests monthly. The additional FTEs will process 474 requests monthly.

Relative Search

RS needs 6.5 additional FTEs, SSS-3.

A relative search specialist processes 36 requests a month. The additional FTE will process 234 requests monthly.

Decision Package Justification and Impacts

What specific performance outcomes does the agency expect?

Administrative Approvals

Reduce the administrative approval processing time from 90 days to 60 days and eliminate backlog in the unit.

Background Checks

Complete requests for child abuse and neglect history within two working day of receiving the request.

Performance Measure detail:

A010 – Provide support services to children and families. Children are safe from abuse and neglect. Provide stable, nurturing, and permanent placements as quickly as possible for children who are placed into out-of-home care. Ensure the immediate safety of alleged child-age victims. Help families

and communities improve the well-being of children in their own homes. Provide the administrative and functional supports needed to ensure the delivery of timely, accurate services.

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

Administrative Approvals, Background Checks, and Relative Search

Children will be placed in safe, secure homes and with relatives. Foster homes will be licensed faster, and resources will not be pulled from other areas of the administration.

Public Disclosure

Constituents, families, and attorneys, will receive public disclosure request results in a timely manner. The state of Washington will not be subject to fines and penalties.

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?	No	Identify:
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		

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

Administrative Approvals

In order to manage the work, the department has assigned administrative approval work to other DLR staff, reducing the amount of time they have to license new foster or group homes. DCYF has used non-permanent temporary employees, assigned a second supervisor to assist, and assigned work to licensing staff. These alternatives reduce DCYF's ability to respond to the placement crisis as fully as it would like.

What are the consequences of not funding this request?

Administrative Approvals

Delays in the administrative approval process can cause a situation where a court orders placing children into homes for which DLR has not completed a safety assessment related to an issue requiring the need for an administrative approval. Children cannot be placed in unlicensed homes with a pending administrative approval. Absent a court order, delaying completion of the administrative approval slows placement and causes DCYF to incur foster care maintenance costs in licensed care for children awaiting placement with an unlicensed caregiver.

Public Disclosure

DCYF could face court-ordered sanctions for failing to process public disclosure requests within the statutorily-mandated timelines leading to increased costs.

Background Checks

DCYF would be unable to meet the legal requirements to complete a NCIC background check to place a child, in an emergent situation, with a relative or other suitable person and require that child to be placed in a foster home. The department would also not be able to provide criminal history information for child and worker safety to investigative caseworkers prior to them responding to allegations of child abuse or neglect.

Relative Search

DCYF would continue to fall behind the required timeframe to identify and notify relatives per law. Children could lose connections with other siblings in care or be placed in foster care instead of with a relative, both of which impact the well-being of the child and potential permanence with a relative if reunification is not possible.

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

Background Checks

The workload has increased with recent changes in legislation and federal requirements. The new requirements include obtaining background check information prior to authorizing an individual to have unsupervised access to a child. In the past, the department has effectively provided this work within existing resources, but increasing requirements and numbers of emergent background check situations, CPS allegations, and child care requirements, make this no longer an option.

Relative Search

DCYF consolidated this required work to a centralized unit; however, the workload was unknown at the time and requires additional resources to be successful and meet the legal requirements.

Other supporting materials:

Information technology:

- No
- Yes

