



Report to the Washington State Legislature

Annual Quality Assurance Report Fiscal Year 2023

July 1, 2022 through June 30, 2023

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RCW 43.216.022 and RCW 74.13.260



Washington State Department of
CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILIES

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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 27th report detailing performance outcome data under RCW [43.216.022](#) and RCW [74.13.260](#) highlighting 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 by their caregivers.

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

DCYF monitors children in out-of-home care, performs health and safety monitoring visits in licensed foster homes, 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 measures whether permanency is achieved through reunification, adoption, or guardianship within 12 months of children entering out-of-home care.

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 to improve outcomes. For more detail on these measures and others, visit our [Agency Performance Page](#).

Performance Measure Summary

DCYF is accountable to the Governor, 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, medical professionals, and school personnel, as well as caring individuals to speak up on behalf of vulnerable children by reporting suspected child maltreatment.

This data comes from FamLink, Washington’s automated child welfare information system. All measures are reported by state fiscal year (SFY), which is July 1 through June 30, and show the most current data available for each specific measure. All states are accountable for the federal measures required by the Administration for Children and Families, state measures are identified by DCYF as other critical areas of focus.

Federal targets in this report reflect federal requirements and performance needed to avoid a 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 the [Agency Performance Page](#). The metrics in the Agency Performance Page are updated annually; therefore, results may vary slightly from what was reported at the time this report was finalized.

Measure	State Target* / Federal Target**	Performance***
Children in emergent reports seen within 24 hours (As of 12/2022, time extensions and attempted contacts are no longer counted as compliant)	> 95%*	81.3%
Children in non-emergent reports seen within 72 hours	> 95%*	89.4%
Children who experience recurrence of maltreatment	< 6%**	8.6%
Children who are abused or neglected while in the placement and care authority of the state	< 6.8 victimizations / 100,000 days**	7.9
Foster homes receiving health and safety monitoring visits	> 10%*	12.1%
Children visited every month by their caseworker	> 95%*	96.5%
Children achieving permanency within 12 months of placement	> 37.9%**	41.5%
Median number of days children are placed in care	< Previous year: 466	534
Percentage of children who re-entered care within 12 months following guardianship or reunification with their family	≤ 5.5%**	4.7%

*State 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 2023. Federal measures report performance for children entering in SFY 2021 and SFY 2022 because the measures look forward 12 or 24 months to determine if the outcome being measured occurred in SFY 2023.

Performance Improvement Initiatives

Strategic Priorities

DCYF released its first five-year Strategic Race and Equity Plan in 2021. The plan includes six agency wide priorities – a first overarching priority related to Racial Equity, three priorities related to our intention for children, youth, and families, and two related to building the necessary capacity needed to accomplish the first four.

1. Eliminate racial disproportionalities and advance racial equity
2. Safely reduce the number/rate of children and youth in out-of-home care by half
3. Create successful transitions into adulthood for youth and young adults in our care
4. Create a high-quality integrated Birth-8 system
5. Improve quality and intention of our practice
6. Improve quality and availability of provider services

Importantly, these priorities will help the agency meet its outcome goals for children, youth, and families in Washington, with a specific focus on the populations for which we are responsible. The resilience, education, and health outcomes that DCYF established in 2018 are often worse for people of color, and DCYF remains committed to eliminating disproportionalities in each of these priorities by race/ethnicity, family income, geography, sexual identity/gender expression, and disability status. Information about progress is available on the [Agency Performance Page](#).

As part of its accountability function, DCYF's Office of Innovation, Alignment, and Accountability (OIAA), in collaboration with program leaders, have established targets and metrics for measuring and reporting on agency priorities. OIAA envisions that each agency priority will have a primary outcome indicator, one or more balancing indicators to help monitor potential unintended consequences, and a set of driver indicators that lead to the outcome. Once these indicators are developed, they will be monitored throughout the life of the Strategic Plan. Wherever possible, indicators will be reported as trends over time, and will be organized and examined by race/ethnicity, geography, and family income.

Child and Family Services Review | Program Improvement Plan

The Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) is a review conducted by the federal 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. The review is structured to help states identify strengths as well as areas needing improvement within their agency and programs. Ultimately, the goal of the review is to help states improve child welfare services and achieve positive outcomes for families and children who receive services.

Washington's Program Improvement Plan (PIP), which responds to the results of the CFSR final report from the Children's Bureau, was approved by the Children's Bureau in June 2020, and strategy implementation was completed June 30, 2022. Washington will continue to measure performance improvement and has until December 31, 2023, to show measurable improvement on specified CFSR outcomes related to safety, permanency, and well-being. To date, Washington has met 4 of the 10 improvement targets. We hope to have Item 3 approved for completion based on the July - September measurement report submitted in October

2023. If improvement goals are not met the Children’s Bureau will issue a financial penalty for each unmet outcome. The four unmet goals all comprise one outcome.

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, to support the agency to achieve better permanency outcomes for children and youth. Two key strategies will enhance earlier and consistent engagement of youth and families, in alignment with the CFSR/Program Improvement Plan: Enhanced permanent planning meetings and youth directed recruitment.

Enhanced permanent planning meetings (PPMs) were implemented in January 2021 and are now in twenty-two targeted offices to promote successful teaming to engage families, youth, and other key case participants in the case planning process and to address systemic issues that have been identified as barriers to permanency. This intervention has continued through March 2024. While the in-depth evaluation of this intervention will not be available until 2024, the following highlights some of the information gathered from OIAA data.

- A total of 4,949 PPM’s have taken place on Treatment cases utilizing 11 facilitators since implementation on January 11, 2021. This is compared to 2,164 meetings that took place on Control cases, utilizing far more facilitators, or staff acting as facilitators, during this same timeframe.
- Preliminary data shows that participants in the Treatment group receive almost six meetings, on average, compared to 2.6 meetings for the Control group. Participation of youth in the PFD1 meetings is between 5.5 and 6.7 times greater, for other extended family between 2.6 and 3.1 times greater, and for fathers between 2.25 and 2.66 times greater. The likelihood of mothers attending is also between 2 and 2.3 times greater.
- Child/youth attendance per case in Treatment cases is 3.46 times higher than in non-project offices statewide.
- In all Control and non-project regions, average attendance by youth, mothers, fathers, relative and caregivers is much lower than in Treatment offices.

The second strategy, enhanced youth directed recruitment, was implemented statewide in April 2021 for all legally-free youth not in permanent placements. It encourages youth-directed recruitment strategies for placement and youth voice in case planning and decision-making for placement and recruitment decisions. Grant funding ended for this intervention on September 30, 2023, and it is now sustained for continued implementation under the Washington State Adoption Recruitment contract.

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), OIAA is developing interactive dashboarding tools to support staffs access to information. OIAA continues to work to develop a new integrated data analytic environment to support integrated performance improvement data aggregation, reporting, analysis and research, as envisioned in HB 1661.

In addition to our internal performance improvement infrastructure efforts, OIAA continues to work with the Department of Social and Health Services Research and Data Analysis division to enhance the priority performance metrics for those key performance indicators that analysis has demonstrated to be significantly associated with child safety and permanency. DCYF will use this as an example of a robust empirical process that may be replicated to identify additional priority performance measures across the agency.

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.