

# Child Welfare Early Learning Navigators (CWELN)

Early learning referrals made to regional families of birth to 5-year-old children with involvement in the child welfare system.

## In July 2021,<sup>1</sup> CWELN:



Conducted **6,020** early learning needs assessments from pilot to date for child-welfare involved families



Supported **48%** of those children and families to meet their unique early learning needs



Offered services in **100** zip codes across Washington State

## Why CWELN?

For a child welfare-involved family to connect to early learning services, the family has to proactively ask for services – researching services, initiating contact with the provider, and navigating the enrollment process on their own. This means that many eligible families miss the opportunity to benefit from early learning services.

## What do CWELNs do?

The navigators – who have expertise in both the child welfare and early learning systems – address this service referral gap by working alongside families and social service specialists to ensure interested families successfully start in services. The navigator proactively identifies and reaches out to eligible families, assesses early learning needs, and then matches them with a service in their community with a focus on services with a wrap-around component.

1. Washington State Department of Children, Youth, and Families. (2021). CWELN Quarterly Referral Dashboard. Retrieved July, 2021.

How has this project deepened connections between child welfare and early learning?

Child Welfare

Early Learning

CWELN

From the pilot start in January 2019 to July 2021, there was a **61% increase** in the number of child welfare-involved families who had their early learning needs met.

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[www.dcyf.wa.gov/publications-library/IAA\\_0004.pdf](http://www.dcyf.wa.gov/publications-library/IAA_0004.pdf)



Washington State Department of  
**CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILIES**

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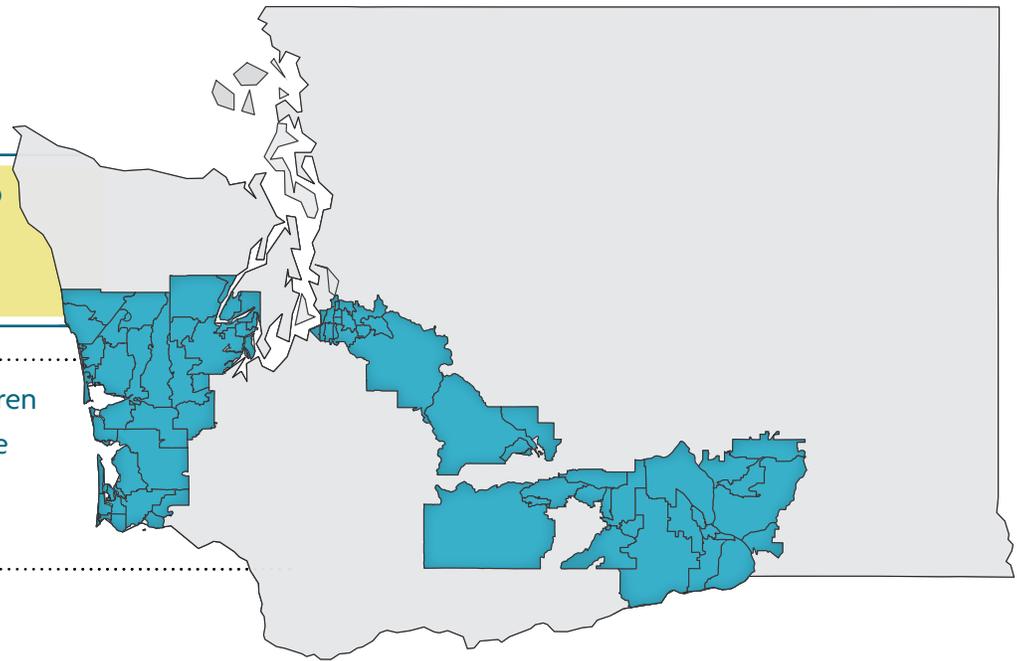
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## Where does CWELN provide support?

The map depicts every zip code served by a CWELN from pilot to July 2021.



Families and their birth-5 children involved in child welfare will be served by **navigators in more locations in 2022.**

### Successes

- ✓ PDG-R B-5 funding supported hiring a project coordinator and two additional navigators
- ✓ Visual dashboard developed to share project's quarterly progress
- ✓ Developed and disseminated *DCYF CWELN Conversation Guide and Matrix of Early Learning Support* to provide resources to out-of-pilot areas
- ✓ Increased visibility to administrative leadership, which led to being named in Governor's proposed budget

Challenges	Actions and Next Steps
No funding identified to bring CWELN to scale statewide due to inflexible spending system	➤ Identify <b>new funding streams</b>
Data system insufficient to answer systems-level research questions	➤ Navigators to determine <b>data collection requirements</b> in future child welfare data system
Family experiences following early learning referrals are limited/difficult to track due to information barriers	➤ Child welfare-involved <b>family interviews</b> planned for spring 2022 as component of ongoing project evaluation ➤ <b>Automation of data collection</b> and development of best practices and protocols outside agency for follow-up
Insufficient engagement of tribal families	➤ <b>Tribal-focused navigator</b> position established and filled in late 2021
Limited resources and support for engaging culturally and linguistically diverse families	➤ <b>Maximizing existing internal contracts</b> , for example, translating CWELN services into six most represented family languages to improve connection of families to their community's early learning resources