

Concrete Goods as a Primary Support for Washington Families

Access to Concrete Supports in times of need, ensures families have the resources necessary to live. These supports come in various forms, including material goods like grocery gift cards and hygiene supplies, economic assistance such as housing support, and services like helping with healthcare arrangements or providing counseling. Access to these resources results in a reduction of parental stress which increases family security and the well-being of children.

Unfortunately, not everyone can access these necessities and it is becoming increasingly challenging as inflation rises and many Federal economic supports that were bolstered during the pandemic are ending.

Family Economic Insecurity and Child Welfare

Economic hardship and the resulting parental stress can impact a parent's ability to meet their family's needs. Persistent stressful conditions such as extreme poverty can lead to "toxic stress," which research shows results in the likelihood of neglect investigations increasing nearly threefold. If families experience multiple types of hardship, after experiencing no hardship, the likelihood of being investigated for physical abuse nearly quadruples.

Facilitating access to essential assistance reduces parental stress and the risk of maltreatment. By providing concrete goods to families, we can reduce the barriers of access to these necessities, decrease family engagement with the department, and protect children at the root by ensuring family well-being.

"The future prosperity of any society depends on its ability to foster the health and well-being of the next generation. When a society invests wisely in children and families, the next generation will pay that back through a lifetime of productivity and responsible citizenship." -FrameWorks Institute

Concrete supports in times of need: Access to concrete supports and services that addresses a family's needs and helps minimize stress caused by challenges



"This is the moment to build a child and family well-being system that propels families to grow and thrive together – on their own terms." -Dr. Melissa T. Merrick, President and CEO of [Prevent Child Abuse America](#)

Strengthening Families Prevents Child Abuse & Neglect

Prevention of child maltreatment is possible. One example of an evidence-based prevention strategy is providing concrete goods to families in times of need to buffer parental stress and supports children's needs to be met. This approach applies one of the key elements within the Strengthening Families Protective Factors ([Center for the Study of Social Policy](#)):



Parental Resilience: I can overcome hard times.



Knowledge of Parenting and of Child/Youth Development: I know where to go to find out about parenting skills and my child's developmental growth.



Social Connections: I have people who know and support me



Concrete Supports: I know where to turn for help.



Social and Emotional Development: I know how to help my children talk about their feelings.

Engaging families to build these factors strengthens families, enhances child development, and reduces the risk of child abuse and neglect.

Providing concrete goods to families in need helps buffer parental stress and ensures children's needs are met.

“The best thing a society can do is ensure its children are taken care of” -Brigid Schulte, Director of Better Life Lab

Washington State's Concrete Goods Approach

In recognizing the impact of the pandemic on families as well as the effectiveness of concrete supports in times of need, Washington State Legislature allocated \$2 million to the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) for concrete goods for State Fiscal Year 2022 (7/1/21 – 6/30/22) and State Fiscal Year 2023 (7/1/22 – 6/30/23).

The Strengthening Families Washington (SFWA) team, within the Division of Partnership, Prevention, and Services, collaborated with various teams and divisions across the agency to identify community partners with expertise in engaging low-income families.

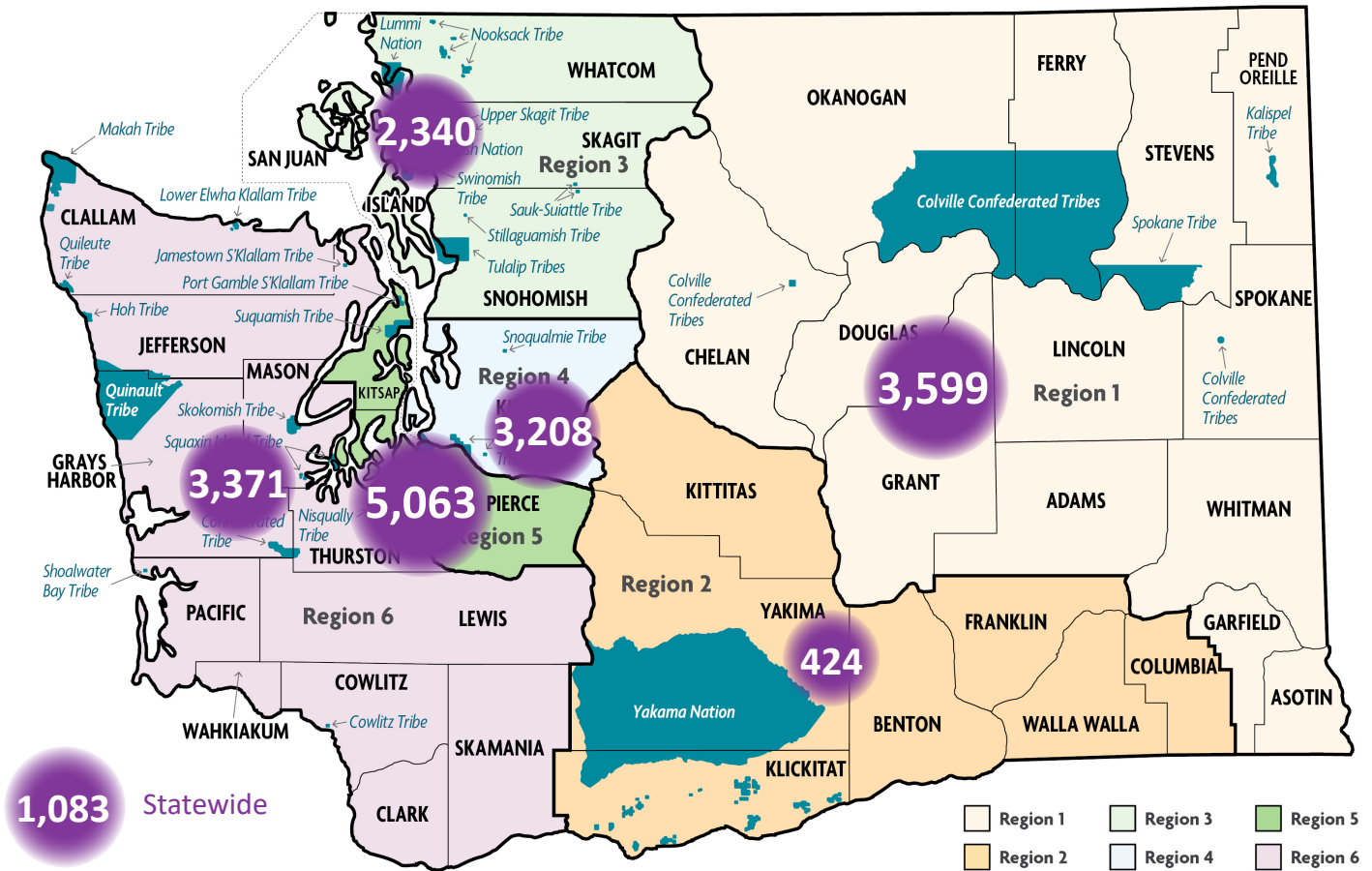
DCYF's Concrete Goods Impact

In State Fiscal Year 2022 (SFY22), approximately 100 organizations provided concrete goods to nearly 17,000 families across the state. Various organizations, including early learning programs, family resource centers, food banks, social service organizations, and more purchased and distributed concrete goods to low-income families. Approximately \$1.7 million was spent across DCYF teams and divisions.

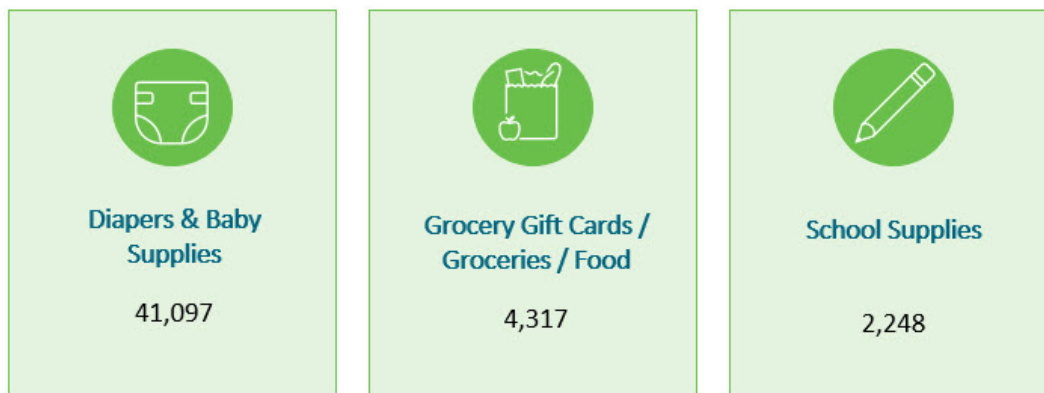
In State Fiscal Year 2023 (SFY23), approximately 66 organizations provided concrete goods to over 19,000 families across the state. Various organizations, including early learning programs, family resource centers, food banks, and social service organizations purchased and distributed concrete goods to low-income families. Approximately \$1.8 million was spent on over 55,000 goods including diapers, grocery gift cards, school supplies, and personal hygiene items.

Number of Families Served by Region

by 51 organizations statewide



Total Number of the Most Common Goods Provided to Families



Hygiene Supplies	Gift Card - Other	Household Items/ Furniture	Cleaning Supplies	Gas GC/ Gas/ Bus Pass/ Auto Repair/ Transportation	Clothes	Short Term Bills/ Rent/ Temp. Housing	Employment Assistance
2,184	2,106	1,737	607	504	502	97	29