



Report to the Washington State Legislature

ANNUAL QUALITY ASSURANCE REPORT FISCAL YEAR 2019

July 1, 2018, through June 30, 2019

RCW 43.20A.870 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 23rd report detailing performance outcome data under RCW 43.20A.870 and RCW 74.13.260 that shows 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 tracks progress with reference to permanency within 12 months.

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

Performance Measure Summary

DCYF is accountable to the 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 Washington's Comprehensive Child Welfare Information System (CCWIS), called FamLink, and is the most current available. State measures are reported by state fiscal year (SFY), which is July 1 through June 30. Federal measures, required by the federal Administration for Children and Families, are reported by federal fiscal year (FFY), which is October 1 through September 30.

Federal targets in this report reflect federal requirements and performance needed to avoid a federal 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 our [Agency Performance Dashboard](#).

Measure	State Target* / Federal Target**	Performance***
Timely response in emergent referrals	> 98.5%*	97.9%
Timely response in non-emergent referrals	> 97%*	97.9%
Children who experience recurrence of maltreatment	< 6%	7.4%
Children who are abused or neglected while in the placement and care authority of the state	< 6.8 victimizations / 100,000 days**	6.2
Foster homes receiving health and safety monitoring visits	> 10%*	14.0%
Children visited every month by their worker	> 98%*	98.0%
Children achieving permanency within 12 months of placement	> 37.9%**	35.0%
Median number of days children are placed in care	< Previous year: 627	591
Percentage of children who re-entered care within 12 months following reunification with their family	< 7%**	8.3%

* 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 2019. Federal measures report performance for children entering in SFY 2017 and SFY 2018 because the measures look forward 12 or 24 months to determine if the outcome being measured occurred in SFY 2019.

Performance Improvement Incentives

Strategic Priorities

In early 2020, DCYF released a Draft Strategic Plan, including the top five agency priorities that will guide the work of the agency for the next five years. The DCYF Office of Innovation, Alignment and Accountability (OIAA) worked in coordination with DCYF leadership to establish the draft agency priorities, which were published on the DCYF website in February 2020. Three of the five priorities relate to our intention for children, youth and families, while the other two relate to building the necessary capacity needed to accomplish the first three.

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

Importantly, these priorities will help the agency to 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 and also family income, geography, sexual identity/gender expression and disability status.

As part of its accountability function, DCYF's OIAA, in collaboration with program leaders, will establish targets and metrics for measuring and reporting on each of the five 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 disaggregated 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 responded to the results of the CFSR final report was approved by the Children's Bureau on June 19, 2020, and DCYF will begin implementation on July 1, 2020. The PIP includes an examination of the root causes and contributing factors to any poor results in the CFSR, plus strategies to address them.

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 will be implemented in nine 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. The second strategy, enhanced youth directed recruitment, will be implemented statewide. This recruitment will target all legally-free youth not in permanent placements, and will facilitate transitioning those youth into permanency placements by identifying barriers and strategizing solutions to those barriers.

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 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 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.

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.

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.