



2022 Progress Report

EXTENDED FOSTER CARE— SYSTEMS ASSESSMENT



Washington State Department of
CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILIES

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Partnership, Prevention and Services Division | Approved for distribution by Steve Grilli, Assistant Secretary



Washington State Department of
CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILIES

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This report is prepared as the status update required by the proviso below:

(b) A status update must be submitted to the governor and appropriate fiscal and policy committees of the legislature by November 30, 2022. A final report must be submitted to the governor and appropriate fiscal and policy committees by June 30, 2023.

Introduction

The Department of Children, Youth, and Families' (DCYF) Extended Foster Care (EFC) is a federally funded program for young adults who are dependent on their 18th birthday. Young adults may voluntarily opt into the EFC program and stay up to age 21 when their legal dependency ends. While in the program, they must be working toward vocational or educational goals, be participating in a training program, or have a documented medical condition that prevents them from engaging in one of the above activities.

While young adults are in EFC, the state shares responsibility for their health and safety, and they may access any of the services available to foster youth under the age of 18. Young adults in an approved supervised independent living (SIL) placement are eligible to receive a housing stipend to support them with housing costs. Young adults in a foster placement or Behavior Rehabilitation Services (BRS) placement do not receive stipends because those are paid to the placement to offset the cost of care.

As of June 2022, there were 858 young adults enrolled in EFC. Slightly less than 80% were placed in a SIL placement and receiving stipends. More than half of EFC enrollees are of color, with nearly 20% reporting American Indian or Alaska Native heritage. Approximately 5% are eligible for Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA) services. The majority of EFC enrollees live on the west side of the state – approximately 20% are located on the east side.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, to ease the impact on these vulnerable emerging adults, the Governor issued a moratorium on ending the dependencies of young adults in EFC. The moratorium expired on Sept. 30, 2021, and approximately 323 young people over the age of 21 were discharged from their dependencies.

The EFC program is lucky to have a dedicated team of community partners who serve on our EFC Community Workgroup. Our partners represent advocacy agencies, attorneys, state agencies, and community service providers. The Community Workgroup meets on the first Tuesday of every other month.

2022 Budget Proviso for EFC

In the 2022 Legislative Session, the Legislature appropriated \$200,000 for an EFC systems assessment.

\$200,000 of the general fund—state appropriation for fiscal year 2023 is provided solely for the department to contract for a systems assessment of state and federally funded services and benefits for young adults enrolled in or exiting extended foster care and make recommendations to improve the continuum of supports for the extended foster care population to support successful transitions to independent adulthood...

The department and contractor must engage with state agencies administering relevant programs, contracted organizations serving the extended foster care population, and young adults currently in extended foster care and those who have exited since September 2021 to conduct the systems assessment. A status update must be submitted to the Governor and appropriate fiscal and policy committees of the legislature by Nov. 30, 2022. A final report must be submitted to the Governor and appropriate fiscal and policy committees by June 30, 2023.

EFC Systems Assessment Project

The EFC program was delighted to have funding to contract for a systems assessment. The proviso outlined several items that must be a part of the assessment, including:

1. A survey of state and federally-funded services and benefits and the utilization by young adults enrolled in EFC
2. A young adult needs assessment
3. Identification of gaps or redundancies in the existing program and service array, including funding sources that could be leveraged to fill those gaps
4. An assessment of the various data systems currently used to report on the EFC population

The plan for the systems assessment was developed collaboratively with the Governor's office and with the EFC Community Workgroup. After significant discussion, the assessment was divided into three separate contracts for projects. *(See Appendix A for more information on project design linked to proviso requirements)*

1. DCYF entered into a partnership with SDM Consulting to conduct the EFC young adult needs assessment. Recognizing that the timeline for the systems assessment was short, DCYF utilized underspent funds in Adolescent Programs' budget to allocate \$50,000 for the EFC co-design process. *(See Appendix B for more information on co-design)*
 - a. DCYF elected to utilize the co-design model for the young adult needs assessment to increase engagement in the process and to ensure their voices are adequately represented. The contractor selected has experience working with young people in the system.
2. DCYF entered into a partnership with DCYF's Office of Innovation, Alignment, and Accountability (OIAA) and the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) Research & Data Analysis (RDA) unit to conduct the data systems assessment and to provide the initial analysis for the service utilization study and the descriptive analysis of the young adults in EFC. DCYF allocated \$50,000 to RDA for this project.
3. DCYF entered into a partnership with the University of Washington's Partners for Our Children (P4C) to conduct the service Landscape Analysis, which includes a review of state agencies administering relevant programs and services as well as contracted organizations serving the extended foster care population. P4C will also review results of the EFC co-design process with young people, the study conducted by RDA, and best practices for EFC in other states, as well as consult with the EFC program on practice improvements, including connecting with DCYF staff, community partners, and advocates. P4C will prepare a report that combines recommendations and results from the other projects into a final set of recommendations to the Legislature for how best to serve this population of young adults. DCYF allocated \$150,000 to P4C for this project.

Total funds allocated for the systems assessment (including DCYF underspend): \$250,000

DCYF Implementation Planning

At the same time that the contracted partners are conducting their projects, the EFC Program Manager will be working with the regional leads and the System of Care Administrator to conduct an internal review of DCYF practice, which will be informed by P4C, and will continue to build community partnerships that may be able to support the implementation of innovative ideas resulting from the assessment.

Next Steps for Contractors

SDMC will resume co-design work with young adults in January. P4C has begun meeting with SDMC to develop a partnership plan. RDA's initial draft of the data report will be shared with DCYF and P4C in early March to inform additional work by P4C. P4C will be connecting with the EFC program manager to develop the initial plan for focus groups with DCYF staff and stakeholders, at the same time as they are conducting the landscape analysis and research review.

Ongoing EFC Efforts

The EFC Program Manager continues to support the field in serving young adults currently enrolled in EFC. The updated EFC policy is anticipated to be released late summer of 2023. The Program Manager is working with regional EFC leads on developing the outline for an EFC practice guide, and is consulting with program managers in the housing, prevention, and independent living skills programs on the best way to build a system of care that adequately meets the needs of the young people in EFC. DCYF is working with SDMC to develop a proposal to set up a new EFC Youth Oversight Board as a component of the needs assessment.

DCYF expects to utilize the recommendations from the systems assessment projects to develop a decision package for the 2024 Legislative Session.

APPENDIX A: Project Matrix

(36) \$200,000 of the general fund—state appropriation for fiscal year 2023 is provided solely for the department to contract for a systems assessment of state and federally funded services and benefits for young adults enrolled in or exiting extended foster care and make recommendations to improve the continuum of supports for the extended foster care population to support successful transitions to independent adulthood. (pg. 477, lines 5-10)

PROJECT CONTRACTORS

	SDM Consulting Project	DSHS Research & Data Analysis Project	UW Partners for Our Children Project	DCYF EFC Program
<i>Term of Contract</i>	<i>April 2022-June 2023</i>	<i>October 2022-June 2023</i>	<i>January – June 2023</i>	<i>ongoing</i>
<i>Contract Amount</i>	<i>\$50,000</i>	<i>\$50,000</i>	<i>\$150,000</i>	<i>-----</i>
<i>Source of Funds</i>	<i>DCYF/AP Underspend</i>	<i>Proviso – Assessment</i>	<i>Proviso – Assessment</i>	<i>-----</i>

ASSESSMENT REQUIREMENTS PER PROVISIO

(a) The systems assessment must include, but is not limited to, the following:

Proviso Requirements (Below)	SDM Consulting Project	DSHS Research & Data Analysis Project	UW Partners for Our Children Project	DCYF EFC Program
<i>(i) A survey of state & Federally funded services & benefits</i>				
<i>And the utilization of such services and benefits</i>				
<i>How these services & benefits contribute to a continuum of supports</i>				
<i>(ii) A young adult needs assessment – must gauge young adults’ awareness of and ability to access available services & benefits</i>				
<i>(iii) Identification of gaps or redundancies within the existing array of state and federally funded programs</i>				

Please note that the shaded boxes represent the organization responsible for addressing the section of the proviso.

EXTENDED FOSTER CARE– SYSTEMS ASSESSMENT

(a) The systems assessment must include, but is not limited to, the following: **(Con't)**

Proviso Requirements (Below)	SDM Consulting Project	DSHS Research & Data Analysis Project	UW Partners for Our Children Project	DCYF EFC Program
<i>(iv) Identification of funding sources or programs that could be used to address any gaps</i>				
<i>(v) An assessment of the various data systems currently used or capable of being used to report on the population</i>				
<i>data assessment must include a discussion of any system limitations and recommendations to support future data tracking of outcomes</i>				
<i>(b) <u>The department and contractor</u> must engage with state agencies administering relevant programs, contracted organizations serving the population</i>				

Please note that the shaded boxes represent the organization responsible for addressing the section of the proviso.

APPENDIX B: Co-Design

Co-design is an approach to designing systems *with* people and not *for* them. The purpose of co-design is to elevate the voices and contributions of people with lived experience. Co-design focuses on sharing power, prioritizing relationships, and using participatory means of engagement to design systems that center those closest to and are most impacted by services. The process is described by KellyAnn McKercher in *Beyond Sticky Notes* (2020).

In alignment with co-design best practices, DCYF Adolescent Programs staff followed a multi-phased co-design approach with the various groups listed below. Each group did the same activities and processes. The 6-phase approach utilized was: Build the conditions, Align and Immerse, Discovery, Design, Test, Refine, Implement and Learn

1. **Build the Conditions:** The purpose of these meetings was to get to know each other as a group coming together to tackle the problem. The group collectively formed relationships, got a better understanding of the problem at hand, and ultimately decided how they would like to have conversations with each other.
2. **Align and Immerse:** The purpose of this meeting was problem discovery. Participants were asked here the “challenges” or “roadblocks” prevented successful transitions and asked to identify any questions they may have related to the problem. In addition to this, co-designers were informed what other groups identified as problems based on their collective experience. To respect the confidentiality of Co-Designers, no individual stories or identifying information was shared; all information was shared as themes from qualitative conversations.
3. **Discovery:** In this co-design session, co-designers were asked to identify solutions to the problems they had previously identified in the other phase. In addition, questions that were previously asked were answered.
4. **Design:** This is the phase where the solution ideas turn into design recommendations. Co-designers are asked what and how they would like to see changed and based on that a recommendation for design is included. Please note that this report mainly addresses the design recommendations.
5. **Test and Refine:** This phase of the co-design process comes when we are ready to start implementing the new recommendations. The “test,” usually comes in the form of a pilot or a smaller scale model. Co-designers will be re-engaged in this process and asked to refine the implementation based on the results of the testing phase.
6. **Implement and Learn:** This phase of the co-design process comes when the program is ready to be implemented statewide. Co-designers will be asked to look at the model and adjust the model design through implementation. This phase also has a heavy emphasis on lessons-learned.