



## FAMILY TIME LEGISLATIVE REPORT UPDATE



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

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## Executive Summary

This report was written in compliance with ESSB 5092 Sec. 227(8). This proviso provided \$750,000 in general fund-state (\$862,000 total funds) in the 21-23 Biennial Budget to assist the department to “develop, implement, and expand strategies to improve the capacity, reliability, and effectiveness of contracted visitation services for children in temporary out-of-home care and their parents and siblings. Strategies may include, but are not limited to, increasing mileage reimbursement for providers, offering transportation only contract options, and mechanisms to reduce the level of parent-child supervision when doing so is in the best interest of the child.”<sup>1</sup>

DCYF’s contracted visitation services are provided through a program called Family Time. Family Time provides parents and guardians a chance to interact with their child while the child is placed in out of home care. There are roughly 6,200 children and youth in out of home care.<sup>2</sup> As provided by RCW 13.34.136, when a child is placed out of home, the department must submit a permanency plan of care to the Juvenile Court that includes a plan for family visits. Approximately 5,000 youth have court ordered visit plans.<sup>3</sup> Typically visit plans are for two visits per week (eight per month).

Currently, contractors do not provide all of the visitations; some visitations occur through arrangements made by relatives, licensed caregivers, and social workers. On average about 16,630 visits are scheduled every month by contracted service providers (199,560 annually). About 50% of children in out of home care are placed with relatives. These relatives can and do provide visitation when needed. Licensed caregivers and DCYF staff also provide visits.

The department used these funds to supplement funding provided for the implementation of Chapter 208, Laws of 2021 (E2SHB 1194), which placed new requirements on DCYF to strengthen parent-child visitation. Proviso funding was used to support changes to Family Time contracts to ensure that the first visit occurs within the first 72 hours and to ensure that transportation needs do not represent a barrier to the scaling down of visit supervision levels.

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<sup>1</sup> Chapter 334, Laws of 2021 (ESSB 5092), 21-23 Biennial Operating Budget.

<sup>2</sup> There were 6,140 children and youth in out-of-home placements as of January 2023. Source: Relative vs. Non-Relative Placement data accessed January 23, 2023, by the Office of Innovation, Alignment & Accountability (OIAA), Washington State Department of Children, Youth, and Families.

<sup>3</sup> Of the 6,140 children and youth in above footnote, 85% -- or 5,192 -- require visitation. Source: Visit Plan Data accessed January 23, 2023 by OIAA.

## E2SHB 1194 Background:

E2SHB 1194 went into effect July 25, 2021. This bill required DCYF to ensure that all children in out of home placement receive a visit with their parents within 72 hours of coming into care. The bill also included statutory changes designed to ensure that supervision levels scale down after the first visit in order to support the family toward reunification DCYF must provide evidence to the court that a safety concern still exists to require supervised visits. Without such evidence, the court is required to order unsupervised visitation.

Historically, a key barrier to scaling down supervision levels was the lack of a transportation-only reimbursement in Family Time. In order to ensure that transportation to the visit was provided, visits were often designated as “supervised” to make sure that the child received transportation to the visit location. Additionally, Family Time contracts did not allow for mileage reimbursement unless transportation for the visit exceeded 30 miles. Proviso funding was used to supplement HB 1194 funding to update contracts to allow for mileage reimbursement and transportation-only reimbursement in order to support the scaling down of supervision levels.

## Implementation Progress

DCYF implemented new visitation contracts on July 1, 2021. These contracts were specifically designed to provide the first visit within 72 hours. There is one contractor each for Regions 3, 4, 5 and 6 and one contractor who serves both Regions 1 and 2. In addition, proviso funds allowed DCYF to update contracts to address the transportation barriers to decreasing supervision levels..

## Data Analysis

E2SHB required DCYF to provide visitation within 72 hours of a child being placed out of home and made other changes that were intended to reduce the visit supervision level when it is in the best interest of the child and safe to do so. DCYF analyzed data regarding 72-hour visits (which did not regularly occur, or at least were not tracked, prior to July 2021) and levels of supervision in visitation plans. The results of this analysis are shown in the table below, examining the time period January 1, 2021, through October 25, 2022.

The following table includes the percentages of visit plans in each supervision level, in three categories:

- 72-hour Initial: Initial visit plan for the first visit occurring within 72-hours of a child coming into care.
- Initial Ongoing: Initial visit plan that is not a 72-hour initial visit plan. When the department chooses to facilitate the initial 72-hour visit with parents, rather than contract out this service, the first contracted visit for the family is categorized as “Initial Ongoing.”
- Ongoing: Visits that occur after a 72-hour Initial visit or Initial Ongoing visit.

Supervision Levels for Visitation identified in Visitation Plans, Jan 1, 2021 – Oct. 25, 2022			
		Jan. 1, - July 25, 2021	July 25, 2021 - Oct. 25, 2022
<b>72-hour Initial</b>			
	Supervised	NA	92.2%
	Monitored	NA	6.9%
	Unsupervised	NA	0.8%
<b>Initial Ongoing</b>			
	Supervised	77.5%	73.2%
	Monitored	19.3%	22.1%
	Unsupervised	3.3%	4.7%
<b>Ongoing</b>			
	Supervised	64.7%	58.0%
	Monitored	31.0%	32.5%
	Unsupervised	4.4%	9.4%

Data source: OIAA – FamLink Visit Plan data

Note: Cases may have multiple plans thus there could be duplication in the numbers. NA indicates 72-hour visitations were not regularly provided and were not tracked prior to July 25, 2021. Initial ongoing visits are first visits that occurred before July 25, 2021. Ongoing are visits which occur after initial ongoing or 72-hour visit.

The data indicate that the level of supervision decreased following the implementation of E2SHB 1194. The percentage of supervised visits in Initial Ongoing visit plans decreased from 77.5% to 73.2%, with the decline largely offset by an increase in monitored visit plans. There was also a decrease in supervised visits for ongoing visit plans from 64.7% to 58.0%, with a corresponding increase in unsupervised visits, which increased from 4.4% to 9.4%. These differences indicate modest success in changing practice to meet the intent of the legislation.

DCYF analyzed supervision levels in visitation plans to calculate the number and percentage of parents who participated in unsupervised visitation prior to reunification. However, analyzing supervision levels in visit plans has its limitations; when reunification begins, supervision levels reduce quickly, and new visit plans are not always created in FamLink during the reunification transition. These changes in supervision are often only captured in “notes” and communicated directly to the service provider to carry out the change in a timely manner in place of creating a new visit plan and referral to track the change in supervision. For this reason, it difficult to draw accurate conclusions about trends in visit supervision.

## Alignment with DCYF Strategic Priorities

RCW 74.13B.020 relates to family support and related services-Performance-based contracting. This RCW required DCYF to extend the geographic coverage area of the Network Administrators (NA). A NA is a contracted private agency that develops a network of service providers, managing the oversight and quality of the work. The current NA contract in region 1 and 2 is set to expire on June 30, 2023. DCYF has a long-term goal to expand the NA for Family Time by procuring state-wide. DCYF has the following goals for the new NA:

- Increase service availability; reduce service gaps, eliminate wait times and streamline referral process, including acceptance of all referrals in the NA catchment area.
- Improve cultural relevance; create more community-based service organizations with connection to the community they serve to support cultural responsiveness and equity
- Provide adequate oversight and quality assurance; services meet the same standards of delivery statewide, consistent core training, onboarding, and support of service provider network. This would include; trauma informed service and family engagement framework. Direct oversight of provider network billing integrity and service reporting.

## Conclusion

Family Time continues to make progress towards increasing the level of unsupervised visits and to ensure we are able to monitor this change. DCYF continues to work with our IT division in identifying and working on system needs for Family Time data collection. While the increased funding has assisted in stabilizing Family Time, an expansion and updates to Network Administer will improve capacity, reliability and effectiveness.