

Strategic Plan Template

State Name: Washington State

Date Strategic Plan Submitted: July 24, 2025

Timeframe Covered by Strategic Plan: July 2025 - June 2026

Overall Goal/Mission of CIP: *Aim, purpose, direction, or priority to be achieved by the CIP over the span of the grant.*

Mission: CIP aims to improve outcomes for children and families involved in the child dependency system by supporting interagency collaboration, innovation, and practical solutions. Through partnerships with judicial officers, lawyers, child welfare professionals, and other system partners, and by integrating research, tools, training, and data, CIP advances data-driven strategies that support lasting improvements across the child welfare and judicial systems.

Priority Area #1: Safety

Copy and paste the portion below the blue line for your activities/projects.

Outcome #1: As a result of cross-system training and strategic planning process ([Safety Summit Project](#)) courts and system partners will use congruent language to clearly and consistently articulate safety-related information, including the harms of removal, in ways that support family and system well-being. Court systems will understand the importance of ensuring that parents understand safety threats, conditions for return, and what they need to do to provide safety for their child(ren). Increased fidelity to safety framework practices is anticipated to occur system wide, including in the following areas:

- Assessment of safety in the home (safety threats, child vulnerability, and protective capacity)
- Assessment of the harm of removal
- Balancing of child safety and harm of removal
- Safety planning that creates immediate safety in the home to prevent removal
- Conditions for return home
- Family time visitation plans
- Case planning
- Developing parental capacity; evaluating progress and compliance

Need Driving Activities & Data Source: *How do you know this is a need in your state? Description of the need of the court or service population leading to the proposed outcome and activities; in addition, please provide the source describing this need.*

2021 Hearing Quality Evaluation: In 2021 the Capacity Building Center for Courts (CBCC) conducted a baseline evaluation of safety decision making practices of seven courts in Washington State. The following themes emerged:

- Vulnerabilities, protective capacities, and conditions for return are rarely discussed at hearings;
- Safety analysis and discussions of safety planning rarely occur in court;
- Safety-related justifications for supervised family time were rarely articulated;
- The need for child welfare and court professionals to better understand and be able to articulate how case plan progress relates to safety.

Recommendations for improvement from the researcher and author of the evaluation, Dr. Alicia Summers, included:

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1. Enhance understanding of all stakeholders through multidisciplinary trainings;
2. Engage parents to better understand concepts and language regarding safety considerations;
3. Enhance training of professionals around safety planning, conditions for return home, and case planning;
4. Enhance training to ensure knowledge translates to behavior change, where practice aligns with understanding of safety training concepts.

2022 Hearing Quality Evaluation: Four sites that held Safety Summits in 2021 were evaluated 3-5 months post-training to compare practice to the baseline hearing quality assessment. Results of the evaluation showed statistically significant findings across a number of different measures:

- Increase in discussion all safety assessment factors at Shelter Care Hearings;
- Increase in discussion of safety planning at Shelter Care Hearings;
- Increase in information presented to the court and discussion in court regarding why supervision is needed in relation to a safety threat;
- Increase in number of judicial inquiries into agency efforts to prevent removal, vulnerabilities of the child, and visitation (generally) in Shelter Care hearings;
- Increase in verbal reasonable efforts findings by judicial officers in Shelter Care hearings;
- More documents submitted prior to the Shelter Care hearing that contained a safety analysis, with more documents including a reference to protective capacity, vulnerabilities, and conditions for return;
- More documents submitted prior to Shelter Care Hearings contained contextual safety information about the parent’s overall parenting practices and how the parent manages his/her own life.

The hearing quality evaluation also notes areas or practice where expected change was not seen, indicating where enhanced efforts are needed in future learning opportunities, including:

- There continues to be very little discussion of why the child cannot go home today and little inquiry into conditions for return;
- Judicial officers rarely inquired about safety planning in the Shelter Care hearings;
- Judicial officers rarely made any active inquiry related to contextual factors (e.g., nature and extent of maltreatment; circumstances related to maltreatment; child’s functioning).

The findings of the evaluation were closely reviewed and discussed by the Safety Summit State Advisory Committee. This multidisciplinary group utilized the findings to identify areas of positive practice change and opportunities for enhanced efforts. Specifically, findings will be used to inform revisions to the current Safety Summit training curriculum (Safety Summit 1.0) and creation of new, more advanced cross-system trainings that support practical application of Safety Framework principles in dependency cases (Safety Summit 2.0).

Keeping Families Together Act (HB 1227): In 2021 the Washington State Legislature passed the Keeping Families Together Act (HB 1227) with the intention of making fundamental change to the front-end of the child dependency court system (i.e., the Shelter Care process) and was aimed at significant reform of how the child dependency system works with impacted families. This historic bill went into effect on July 1, 2023 and was driven by a number of factors, including the continued overrepresentation of Black and Indigenous children in the child welfare system and an acknowledgement that, even in cases of abuse and neglect, forcibly removing a child from their home is inherently traumatic. HB 1227 raised the legal standard for child removal to “prevent imminent physical harm” and required that the evidence of harm demonstrate a causal relationship between the threat to child safety and the particular conditions of the home. Historically, courts have made child removal decisions based solely on the need to control the immediate threat to child safety with little to no consideration of the many harms that children often experience as a result of being forcibly removed from their primary caregiver(s). HB 1227 statutorily required judicial officers to weigh the likely harm of removal against the imminent physical harm posed to the child in the home when determining if there is a sufficient basis for child removal at the Shelter Care Hearing. With the passage of HB 1227, ‘imminent physical harm’ also became the new legal standard to place a child who is in shelter care in licensed foster care instead of with a capable relative/suitable other, unless placement with the relative/suitable other would hinder reunification efforts. HB 1227 included the mandatory consideration of whether there are any prevention services, including housing assistance and other reasonably available services, that the

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family could participate in that would prevent or eliminate the need for removal. If there are such services, and the parent agrees to participate, the new law specified that the court shall return the child home. Finally, HB 1227 also created a presumption that out-of-home placement should be with a relative or suitable other person whenever possible, and expands judicial consideration into proposed licensed foster care placements. The expanded judicial inquiries included in HB 1227 will highlight the importance of all partners in court systems having a shared understanding and language around child safety, along with the ability to articulate safety threats in relation to the specific conditions of the home. The additional consideration of whether prevention services could prevent or eliminate the need for removal created the need for more advanced training and skill development opportunities.

High Potency Synthetic Opioids (SB 6109): In 2024, the Washington State Legislature passed legislation to clarify state guidelines on emergency child removal to ensure the safety of children from lethal risks posed by synthetic opioids while recognizing the importance of not removing children from their homes and families except as a last resort to avoid otherwise imminent physical harm. The legislation was driven by an alarming increase in child fatalities in recent years, the growing misuse of synthetic opioids such as fentanyl, and the lack of services for those who in need of treatment for opioid addiction. Courts are required to give “great weight” to the risk of lethality posed by the presence of a high-potency synthetic opioid in the home when making determinations around removal and placement at different points in the case, necessitating a need for increased capacity of courts to accurately assess and plan for child safety in cases involving high-potency synthetic opioids. The legislation also provided funding for additional services and support programs.

Child Fatalities and Near Fatalities: Child fatalities and near fatalities in Washington State continue to expose critical gaps in child safety assessment and intervention, underscoring the urgent need for enhanced system-wide training on the use of the Safety Framework. From January 1, 2024, to December 31, 2024, OFCO conducted 78 administrative examinations of child fatalities involving both child abuse or neglect cases and fatality cases unrelated to child maltreatment, and 62 examinations of child near fatalities ([2025 Office of the Family and Children’s Ombuds \(OFCO\) Report on Child Fatalities and Near Fatalities in Washington State](#)). Of these, OFCO considered 38 child fatalities and 44 child near fatalities to be related to child maltreatment. Accidental ingestions and overdoses accounted for over 25% of the fatalities (20 fatalities) and 66% of the near fatalities (41 fatalities) OFCO reviewed. Seventy-eight percent of the critical incidents from accidental ingestion of drugs or drug overdoses involved fentanyl. Of the 61 incidents involving accidental ingestions, 38 incidents involved accidental ingestion by children ages 0 to 3 years of age. Of the 38 child fatalities related to child maltreatment, 7 children died due to physical abuse and 14 as a direct result of neglect. OFCO found maltreatment concerns in 17 additional cases. The majority of the maltreatment-related fatalities involved infants (birth to 12 months); they accounted for over 63% of the fatalities (24 fatalities). Twelve infant fatalities were sleep-related, which was a decrease from 2023. Sixteen of the 38 families had an open case with DCYF at the time of the fatality. The majority of fatalities (14/16) occurred while the children were in the parents’ care, one of which occurred during an overnight visit of a dependent child with the parents. Of the 16 families with an open case at the time of death, nine were open for a CPS investigation, four had an open CFWS case, two were participating in FVS, and one had an open case with the FAR program. Of the 38 maltreatment-related fatalities, two fatalities occurred after family reunification; one child passed away from methadone ingestion during an overnight visit with the parent, and another passed away from physical abuse by a relative three years after reunification. Four families had open or prior dependencies that did not involve the child that died. As evidenced by this report, these fatalities frequently occurred in families with recent or active involvement with the child welfare system, emphasizing the need for early identification of safety threats and more consistent, informed application of the Safety Framework by professionals across the system.

Lack of Clarity Around In-Home with Conditions Dependency Petition Filing: While Washington State has been on the forefront of numerous innovations aimed at family preservation in child welfare, it also historically had higher rates of child removal by the child welfare system compared to many other states. The most current state comparison data from FY 2022 shows that 35% of maltreated children in Washington receive foster care services (i.e., are removed), as compared to only 20% nationally. This is despite Washington State having a lower percentage of children (6% vs. 10%) who were assessed to be victims of maltreatment and a lower rate of maltreatment fatalities per 100,000 children as compared to national statistics. Historically, the system views the filing of a dependency petition in Washington State as being synonymous with removal of a child. However, legal mechanisms currently exist to allow the state to file a dependency petition without removing the child (“In-Home with Conditions”).

It had been anticipated that the passage of HB 1227, which raised the legal standard for child removal, would result in an increase in filings of dependency petitions without requests for removal (in-home with conditions). Despite having a cross-system workgroup on in-home with conditions cases in preparation for HB 1227 implementation, DCYF has Under the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (P.L. 104-13), an agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Control Number and expiration date. The estimated time to complete the Strategic Plan is 52 hours.

not changed its policy or process to support in-home filing. While there has been an increase in the number of children returned home by the court at the Shelter Care Hearing, there has been no measurable change in the number of dependency petitions filed without requests for removal. Waiting until a child is in danger of imminent physical harm before seeking court intervention can allow for unsafe conditions to worsen, increasing the likelihood of abuse, neglect, and even fatal outcomes. According to the 2025 OFCO Report on Child Fatalities and Near Fatalities in Washington State, during both Child Fatality Reviews and Child Near Fatality Reviews, the Committees frequently identified confusion over circumstances that would meet the threshold for either removing a child from the home and/or filing a dependency petition to obtain court supervision. The Department appeared to apply the same standard for seeking removal of a child from the home to filing for a dependency, and did not seek court supervision through a dependency proceeding while also keeping the child in the home.

- **M.K. Child Fatality Review:** The Committee discussed that it may be beneficial for DCYF to have further discussions statewide, including with their legal counsel, about utilizing in-home dependency action to assist with child safety.
- **O.S. Child Fatality Review:** The Committee spoke at length about the impact of the Keeping Families Together Act (House Bill 1227) . . . One specific aspect discussed was the standard to request court oversight, with the child remaining in the parent’s care. Some Committee members believed the standard for requesting court oversight, with the child remaining in the parent(s) care would be lower than requesting court oversight with out-of-home placement. The field office believed the standard is the same for both and emphasized the overall higher standard imposed by HB 1227.
- **R.W. Child Fatality Review:** The Committee believed there were at least two different times during the case at issue here where an active safety threat was present and met the threshold for further intervention, such as offering a voluntary placement agreement or filing a dependency petition. The Committee acknowledged that the staff believed, based on their experiences in previous cases, that the court would have denied the dependency petition. However, the Committee believes that even if the dependency petition was denied, filing the petition would more than likely have been an appropriate response.
- **M.T.J. Child Fatality Review:** The Committee was concerned that the history with DCYF was not fully appreciated during the 2023 case. Specifically, the mother’s pattern of neglecting her children and concerns that were identified in the mother’s psychological evaluation from the prior dependency case.

In addition, the 2025 OFCO Report on Child Fatalities and Near Fatalities in Washington State, makes robust recommendations for DCYF to develop clear guidelines and training on the use of in-home filing in collaboration with judicial officers, court administrators, and child welfare professionals. This could allow DCYF to provide services, support, and protective supervision in cases where a child is not at imminent risk of physical harm but is exposed to circumstances that pose a danger to their psychological or physical development. The report highlights confusion among staff between the legal standards for removal and for finding a child falls within the definition of a “dependent child”, noting that court oversight can and should be pursued even when children remain safely in the home. It emphasizes that prior child welfare involvement must be fully considered in assessing risk and underscores that strategic use of in-home dependencies can reduce family separation, provide structured services, and improve child safety outcomes through court accountability and support.

Theory of Change: *Provide a summary (overview) of how the activities/projects below will lead to the anticipated outcome above.*

Create robust safety framework training for court communities:

- SO THAT a shared understanding and language of safety is created across the system;
- SO THAT sufficient information is collected and shared;
- SO THAT threats of danger are identified, child vulnerabilities and protective capacities are accurately assessed throughout the life of the case;
- AND THAT the likely harms of removal to the child are identified;
- SO THAT child safety and harm of removal are embedded into all facets of system practice;
- SO THAT everyone involved in a case, including parents, can understand and articulate information about child safety and harm of removal;

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SO THAT effective safety plans are created that prevent or eliminate the need for removal;
 SO THAT a child can safely return or remain home while the case continues;
 OR THAT if a child is placed out-of-home, appropriate family time is ordered and conditions of return home are identified and understood;
 SO THAT at all parties are clear as to what strategies and services are necessary to achieve permanency;
 SO THAT safe and lasting permanency is achieved in each and every case.

| Activity or Project Description <i>Specific actions or project that will be completed to produce specific outputs and demonstrate progress toward the outcome.</i> | Collaborative Partners <i>Responsible parties and partners involved in implementation of the activity.</i> | Anticipated Outputs of Activity <i>What the CIP intends to produce, provide or accomplish through the activity.</i> | Goals of Activity (short and/or Long-term) <i>Where relevant and practical, provide specific, projected change in data the CIP intends to achieve. Goals should be measurable.</i> Progress toward Outcome | Timeframe <i>Proposed completion date or, if appropriate, "ongoing".</i> | Resources Needed <i>Where relevant identify the resources needed to complete the activity.</i> | Plans for Evaluating Activity <i>Where relevant, how will you measure or monitor change?</i> |
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| Briefly describe the overall activity or project that should help lead to the outcome identified above. | | | | | | |
| <i>Action Step 1 – Continue offering and promoting Safety Summit 1.0 training</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safety Summit State Advisory Team • DCYF Headquarters • Local Planning Teams | General Safety Framework training curriculum and delivery structure that aligns with state law and practice. | Ongoing updates to the Safety Summit 1.0 training curriculum to incorporate relevant legislative changes, appellate decisions, and best-practice research. | Ongoing | N/A | Number of trainings requested |
| <i>Action Step 2 – Continue developing and promoting Safety Summit 2.0 training options.</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safety Summit State Advisory Team • DCYF Headquarters | Safety Summit 2.0 training curriculum and delivery structure that aligns with state law and practice. | Ongoing development and refinement of “next level” Safety Summit training options that focus on advanced skill development in applying the safety framework to dependency cases. | Ongoing | N/A | Number of trainings requested |
| <i>Action Step 3 – Work with local court systems to hold Safety Summit 1.0 training in 1-2 jurisdictions</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safety Summit State Advisory Team • FJCIP • DCYF Headquarters • DCYF Region Staff • DCYF Local Staff | Facilitation of a cross-system training on the basic use of the safety framework in practice and action planning group activities. | Improve understanding of key safety principles across local court systems. System partners utilize Strategic Plan to collaboratively change safety practice and improve permanency outcomes. | June 2026 | N/A | Satisfaction Survey |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local Court Staff Local Site Planning Team | Strategic Plan produced for every participating jurisdiction. | | | | |
| <i>Action Step 4 - Work with local court systems to hold Safety Summit 2.0 training</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Safety Summit State Advisory Team FJCIP DCYF Headquarters DCYF Region Staff DCYF Local Staff Local Court Staff Local Site Planning Team | Facilitation a practical cross-system learning opportunity designed to enhance the skills, abilities, and understanding of system partners in articulating and applying the safety framework in identified key areas of need. | <p>Increased utilization of Conditions for Return.</p> <p>Enhance understanding of the differences between Safety Planning and Case Planning.</p> <p>Improve understanding of how the Safety Framework is applies Pre- vs. Post-Disposition.</p> <p>Increase capacity of court systems to effectively assess and plan for child safety in cases involving domestic violence.</p> | June 2026 | N/A | Satisfaction Survey |
| <i>Action Step 5 – Create an online e-course module on high-potency synthetic opioids (HPSO) in the context of child welfare</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jurists-in-Residence Department of Health Health Care Authority DCYF, including Deputy Assistant Secretary of Child Welfare | High-Potency Synthetic Opioids e-course module | <p>Increase judicial and system understanding of the characteristics, risks, and prevalence of high potency synthetic opioids, including how they differ from other opioids.</p> <p>Enhance capacity of systems to recognize signs of exposure, overdose symptoms, and safely respond using best practices, including appropriate use of naloxone.</p> | December 2025 | Articulate360 | <p>Number of website views</p> <p>Knowledge Test within course module</p> |

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| | | | Improve ability of systems to apply strategies to reduce exposure risk in professional settings and make informed decisions when encountering situations involving synthetic opioids. | | | |
| <i>Action Step 6 – Start a cross-system FWCC workgroup with the goal of developing a recommended court procedure for processing in-home with conditions cases, along with.</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Judges and court commissioners Court administrators FJCIP DCYF Attorney General’s Office Office of Public Defense Office of Civil Legal Aid Child Advocate Programs Former foster youth Parents with lived experience Community, services, and technical assistance providers | <p>Recommended court procedure for processing in-home with conditions cases from the time of petition filing through Fact-Finding.</p> <p>Tools, resources, and training to support implementation of recommended procedure into court system practice.</p> | <p>Streamline and clarify court procedures to support timely and consistent filing of non-removal dependency petitions across jurisdictions.</p> <p>Improve coordination and communication among courts, child welfare agencies, legal professionals, and other system partners to ensure appropriate use and understanding of in-home with conditions filings.</p> | Anticipated to start September 2025 with no defined end-date. | Examples of procedures used in other states to process cases that are filed without requests for removal | <p>Number of cases filed without requests for removal (i.e., in-home with conditions)</p> <p>Percentage of in-home with conditions cases filed where the child remains in-home until Fact-Finding.</p> <p>Percentage of in-home with conditions cases where the child is removed prior to Fact-Finding.</p> <p>Whether any of the changes in the percentage of in-home placements with court-ordered conditions are successful in increasing child safety.</p> |

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Priority Area #2: Quality Court Hearings

Copy and paste the portion below the blue line for your activities/projects.

Outcome #2: Creation of a Shelter Care Hearing Observation Tool that accurately captures relevant data points and provides valuable insight into the implementation of new practices during the Shelter Care Hearing. Researchers will use this tool to collect and analyze performance measure data that can be used to evaluate the impacts of the Keeping Families Together Act (HB 1227) on the quality of the Shelter Care Hearing process. Local court systems will have the knowledge and capacity to utilize the Shelter Care Hearing Observation Tool in the continuous evaluation and quality improvement of their Shelter Care Hearing process.

Need Driving Activities & Data Source: *How do you know this is a need in your state?* Description of the need of the court or service population leading to the proposed outcome and activities; in addition, please provide the source describing this need.

[Keeping Families Together Act \(HB 1227\):](#) In 2021 the Washington State Legislature passed the Keeping Families Together Act (HB 1227), which made fundamental changes to the front-end of the child dependency court system (i.e., the Shelter Care process). A primary objective in passing this law was reducing unnecessary removals of children by keeping families safely together whenever possible. HB 1227 sought to accomplish this primarily through expanded authority of the court in decision-making. It significantly expanded judicial inquiry into whether there is a sufficient basis for ordering a child to be removed from the home (“child removal decisions”) and created multiple required findings. Judicial officers are now required to consider whether prevention services exist that would prevent or eliminate the need for removal. HB 1227 also expanded judicial authority in placement decisions when removal is ordered, with the overarching intention of ensuring that placement into licensed foster care is being used as the option of last resort to preserve child safety. HB 1227 requires judicial officers to inquire about the location of the proposed placement and created a clear presumption that placement should be with relative or suitable other whenever possible. It gave judicial officers the authority to order DCYF to provide financial/tangible assistance to relative and suitable other caregivers if that assistance would allow the child to be placed there or remain placed there. When placement with a relative or suitable other is not possible, HB 1227 created new inquiries to help judicial officers determine the foster care placement option that keeps children safely connected with the people, places, and things most important to them, while simultaneously working towards the goal of reunification. HB 1227 also contained a number of new provisions that directly impact administrative court processes and procedures, including that all discoverable materials be provided prior to the Shelter Care Hearing and the requirement to hold an additional Shelter Care Hearing any time a child is removed during the life of a case.

The many statutory changes made by HB 1227 were intended to create a more equitable Shelter Care process that results in better outcomes for all families. While Washington has robust data collection systems that include information-sharing with the state agency, the data metrics with anticipated impacts including:

- Decrease in overall number of child removals;
- Reduction of racial/ethnic disparities;
- Decrease in number of Dependency Petitions filed;
- Increase in number of children who return/remain home at the Shelter Care Hearing;
- Increase in utilization of prevention services (safety plans) during the Shelter Care process;
- Less time spent in out-of-home care for children who are removed;
- Increase in percentage of kinship placements (relatives and suitable others) at the Shelter Care Hearing.

As a part of the work of the Family Well-Being Community Collaborative (FWCC), CIP staff worked from 2021-2023 with court and cross-system partners to analyze the anticipated impacts of HB 1227 on the legal standards, inquiries, findings, and process that apply during the Shelter Care process. The ultimate goal of these efforts was to create practical tools that courts can use to effectively implement the changes of HB 1227. These tools include the following:

- [iDecide:](#) The iDecide tool is a web-based application that was originally designed to support judicial officers in understanding and applying HB 1227. The statutory analyses completed by the FWCC workgroups were used to create four interactive decision-making branches that guide users through the statutory inquiries and findings related to child removal, placement, and family time visitation. The decision-making branches strictly adhere to the law and list statutory remedies when present. Relevant

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statutory citations, legal guidance, and supplemental resources are included throughout the tool to promote quality decision-making. The iDecide tool also contains a Resource Library and Training Library where users can access resources, materials, tools, and recorded trainings that support HB 1227 implementation. The cross-system FWCC workgroups worked diligently over a two-year period to develop iDecide, and this investment has helped expand the use of iDecide by all parties involved in child dependency cases to better understand and fully participate in the Shelter Care process.

- [Court Readiness Toolkit](#): The HB 1227 Court Readiness Toolkit provides a systematic way for local court jurisdictions to assess their current shelter care process, identify changes needed to comply with the new law and implement them. The *Assessment* section of this planning tool is designed for use by cross-system teams to assess their system's current capacity to implement the major components of HB 1227 and identify areas in need of improvement. Court systems can then use the *Roadmap* to map their local Shelter Care process with tools, resources, and suggestions for how courts can capitalize on existing opportunities to improve process in each respective area.

The magnitude of the statutory changes made in HB 1227 created the need for a robust data evaluation plan for monitoring the impacts of HB 1227 on dependency court systems. The FWCC's Data & Evaluation Workgroup was created to develop a plan for identifying, collecting, tracking, and evaluating the impacts of HB 1227 on court process and outcomes. The workgroup reached the consensus that many of the data metrics needed to assess the impacts of HB 1227 (above) were not available for collection through any existing mechanism, and that creation of a hearing observation tool would be the best way to capture this information.

Child Fatalities and Near Fatalities: The recent increase in child fatalities and near-fatalities has fueled speculation that HB 1227 is responsible for these tragic outcomes. Courts, in particular, have come under scrutiny, with some identifying judicial decisions related to removal as a contributing factor. However, these assertions are based largely on anecdotal stories and there is currently no empirical evidence linking HB 1227, or court practices under it, to the rise in fatalities or near-fatalities. While the structured hearing study observation was not launched in response to these concerns, it has become an important tool in countering misinformation. By offering objective, data-driven insight into what is actually occurring in courtrooms, the study helps provide clarity about factors related to critical incidents and supports a fuller picture of how courts are applying the law in real cases.

Theory of Change: *Provide a summary (overview) of how the activities/projects below will lead to the anticipated outcome above.*

Create an observation tool for evaluating quality of Shelter Care Hearing practices in local courts:

SO THAT relevant data points can be collected;

SO THAT any significant changes, patterns, and trends can be assessed;

SO THAT the quality of practice at Shelter Care Hearing can be analyzed;

SO THAT the quality of Shelter Care Hearing practice prior to HB 1227 can be compared to the quality of Shelter Care Hearing practices after HB 1227 goes into effect;

SO THAT any impacts of HB 1227 in improving the quality of practice at Shelter Care Hearings can be determined;

AND THAT the effectiveness of tools and resources created by CIP to support HB 1227 implementation can be assessed;

SO THAT effective tools, resources, and future learning opportunities can be developed to support quality Shelter Care Hearing practice;

AND THAT court communities can accurately assess their local practices and outcomes;

SO THAT court communities have the skills, knowledge and capacity to hold quality Shelter Care Hearings;

SO THAT children are not unnecessarily removed from their homes;

AND THAT when children are removed from the home they do not remain out of the home longer than necessary;

AND THAT when children are removed from the home placement with relatives or suitable others is prioritized;

SO THAT the traumatic impacts of system involvement are reduced;

SO THAT families experience improved outcomes.

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| Briefly describe the overall activity or project that should help lead to the outcome identified above. | | | | | | |
| <i>Action Step 1 – Link court administrative data— including time to review hearings, permanency planning, and case outcomes—to the existing court observation dataset.</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> WSCCR researchers Local courts | Integrated dataset | Establish a comprehensive, analyzable dataset that enables integration of judicial practice observations with outcome and timeliness data. | October 2025 | N/A | N/A |
| <i>Action Step 2 - Explore how variations in judicial and court practice, as recorded through court observation, may be associated with the duration and outcomes of dependency cases.</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> WSCCR researchers | Evaluation report | Identify statistically significant relationships between observed court practices and case outcomes/timeliness | January 2026 | N/A | statistical analysis |
| <i>Action Step 3 – Use evaluation findings to create recommendations that inform future training, policy development, and system improvements focused on achieving better outcomes for families.</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> WSCCR researchers FWCC | Recommendations for training and policy development | Develop recommendations for training, policy, and practice change based on evaluation findings. | March 2026 | N/A | N/A |
| <i>Action Step 4 - Share evaluation findings and recommendations with courts and system partners.</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> WSCCR researchers FWCC | Presentation of evaluation findings | Present evaluation findings to system partners through the FWCC within three months of completing the report | June 2026 | N/A | N/A |
| <i>Action Step 5 – Protein for All Evaluation</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> WSCCR researchers | Evaluation report of the Protein for All program | Determine if the program is reaching the intended population | June 2026 | Research support from University of | statistical analysis |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • University of Washington research students • Family & Juvenile Court Improvement Program (FJCIP) Coordinators • Local courts | | Evaluate geographic coverage and identify gaps | | Washington graduate students | |
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Priority Area #3: Quality Legal Representation

Copy and paste the portion below the blue line for your activities/projects.

Outcome #3: As a result of statewide, multi-disciplinary creation of resources and training that support the consistent, accurate, and meaningful application of current law in child dependency cases, the quality of legal representation for child and families will be enhanced. Increased quality of legal representation is anticipated to support faster times to permanency, prevention of unnecessary removals, and reduced impacts of system inequities.

Need Driving Activities & Data Source: *How do you know this is a need in your state?* *Description of the need of the court or service population leading to the proposed outcome and activities; in addition, please provide the source describing this need.*

[Washington State Juvenile Non-Offender Benchbook](#): The Washington State Juvenile Non-Offender Benchbook (Benchbook) outlines the state and federal statutory requirements for judicial officers hearing cases involving the welfare of children. The Benchbook contains topical sections as well as statutory and case law citations, including hyperlinks. This is an invaluable resource for judicial officers presiding over cases involving youth. Benchbook chapters are available to read online or download as a PDF. Chapters can be accessed using the navigation side bar on the right. Revisions to the Benchbook are overseen by the Benchbook Advisory Group (BAG). Members of this multi-disciplinary partnership coordinate with subject matter experts to author/revise Benchbook chapter content and take an active role in the editing process. While the Benchbook was originally designed for and is primarily used by judicial officers, many attorneys and other child welfare system partners may also find it to be informative and helpful. The first iteration of the Benchbook was published in 2011 and remains one of the frequently accessed resources on the Family & Youth Justice Programs’ website. While CIP has made updates a priority in recent years, the majority of chapters are still significantly out-of-date. The slow progression in chapter updates is largely due to a lack of legal partner capacity in making these time-intensive proposed revisions.

The following chapters of the Benchbook are anticipated to be updated during the next reporting period:

1. At-Risk Youth (ARY)
2. Best Interest Advocates
3. Children in the Courtroom
4. Dependency Pre-Filing Requirements
5. Educational Needs of Children in Foster Care
6. Review Hearings
7. Permanency Planning
8. Termination of Parental Rights/Adoption
9. Title 13 Guardianships

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Statewide Dependency Trainer Group: CIP staff are a part of a statewide group of training coordinators that includes attorney trainers from the Office of Public Defense, Office of Civil Legal Aid and Attorney General’s Office. The Statewide Dependency Trainer Group meets on a regular basis to discuss overlapping training needs and coordinate joint efforts. This group identified a statewide need for generalized training on the dependency court system and process that contains the same core information that judicial officers receive but can be adapted to meet the needs of specific attorney roles (e.g., parent attorneys). The group created a collaborative process that aims to utilize updated content of Washington State Juvenile Non-Offender Benchbook to create e-course modules for dependency courts and adapted to meet the role-specific training needs of the attorney partners. The attorney trainers bring a plethora of legal experience and knowledge whereas CIP staff contribute advanced expertise in instructional design and e-course creation. The following e-course modules are anticipated to be created during this reporting period:

1. Review Hearings
2. Permanency Planning
3. Termination of Parental Rights/Adoption

Articulate 360: CIP started using Articulate360 Software Suite in 2022 to create online e-courses and tools (e.g., iDecide). Over time, the products created by CIP using Articulate360 became so popular that the Office of Public Defense, Office of Civil Legal Aid, and Akin decided to purchase licenses for their trainers. The cross-system congruency in instructional design platform greatly increases the ability of content sharing among agencies and has furthered the need to create collaborative, defined processes for creating and sharing digital training content. This sharing of content not only increases the efficiency and consolidation of training efforts, it also helps ensure that training content across courts and legal partners is consistent and in alignment with current law.

Theory of Change: *Provide a summary (overview) of how the activities/projects below will lead to the anticipated outcome above.*

Creation of a collaborative process with attorney partners for updating chapters of the Washington State Juvenile Non-Offender Benchbook (“Benchbook”) and creation of corresponding e-course modules.

- SO THAT chapters within key sections of the Benchbook are updated;
- SO THAT judicial officers, attorneys, and other system partners have access to procedural guidance that aligns with current law and practice;
- AND THAT accurate content is available for CIP to create corresponding e-course modules for each chapter;
- SO THAT judicial officers, attorneys, and other system partners have access to high-quality online training on the process and procedures of dependency cases;
- AND THAT CIP shares the raw back-end files for e-course creation with the attorney partners;
- SO THAT attorney partners can adapt the e-course module content to be attorney role-specific;
- SO THAT attorney partners can deploy modified e-course modules on their agencies’ respective internal Learning Management Systems (LMS);
- SO THAT attorneys have access to role-specific training that is in alignment with current law and practice;
- SO THAT attorneys representing parties in dependency cases have the knowledge, understanding, and skills necessary to meaningfully engage in hearing advocacy;
- SO THAT attorneys have increased capacity for providing high quality representation to their clients;
- SO THAT procedural justice is ensured and system efficiency is supported;
- SO THAT children are not unnecessarily removed from their homes;
- AND THAT children achieve timely permanency when they are removed from their home;
- AND THAT systemic inequities are reduced;
- SO THAT families experience improved outcomes in dependency cases.

| Activity or Project Description | Collaborative Partners | Anticipated Outputs of Activity | Goals of Activity (short and/or Long-term) | Timeframe | Resources Needed | Plans for Evaluating Activity |
|---|---|--|---|--|---|--------------------------------------|
| <i>Specific actions or project that will be completed to produce specific outputs</i> | <i>Responsible parties and partners involved in</i> | <i>What the CIP intends to produce, provide or</i> | <i>Where relevant and practical, provide specific, projected change in data</i> | <i>Proposed completion date or, if</i> | <i>Where relevant identify the resources needed</i> | <i>Where relevant, how will you</i> |

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| <i>and demonstrate progress toward the outcome.</i> | <i>implementation of the activity.</i> | <i>accomplish through the activity.</i> | <i>the CIP intends to achieve. Goals should be measurable. Progress toward Outcome</i> | <i>appropriate, "ongoing".</i> | <i>to complete the activity.</i> | <i>measure or monitor change?</i> |
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| Briefly describe the overall activity or project that should help lead to the outcome identified above. | | | | | | |
| <i>Action Step 1 – Collaborate with attorney partners on the Statewide Dependency Trainer Group to update the noted chapters of the Benchbook.</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Office of Public Defense Office of Civil Legal Aid Attorney General's Office | Final updated versions of the following Benchbook chapters: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> At-Risk Youth (ARY) Best Interest Advocates Children in the Courtroom Dependency Pre-Filing Requirements Educational Needs of Children in Foster Care Review Hearings Permanency Planning Termination of Parental Rights/Adoption Title 13 Guardianships | Legal professionals will have access to accurate, up-to-date guidance on the application of the law in child dependency cases. Legal professionals will have increased capacity to effectively and consistently apply the law in child dependency cases. | January 2026 | N/A | Website analytics to track number of views |
| <i>Action Step 2 – Creation of asynchronous e-course modules for identified chapters of the Benchbook.</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Office of Public Defense Office of Civil Legal Aid Attorney General's Office Akin | Three new e-course models to include in the Dependency 101 for Judicial Officers Course : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review Hearings Permanency Planning Termination of Parental Rights/Adoption | Legal professionals will have access to quality, interactive course modules that support the effective application of the law in dependency cases. Legal professionals will have increased capacity to effectively and consistently apply the law in child dependency cases. | June 2026 | Articulate360 | Website analytics to track number of views Knowledge Test within each course module |

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| <i>Action Step 3 – Send back-end LMS files to Statewide Dependency Trainer Group for agency-specific adaptation and use on internal LMS platforms.</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Office of Public Defense Office of Civil Legal Aid Attorney General’s Office | Compressed LMS files containing back-end files for e-course modules | Attorney role-specific adaptations of the core e-course modules created by CIP | June 2026 | N/A | N/A |
| <i>Action Step 6 – Create a curriculum and delivery schedule for training the Statewide Dependency Trainer Group on use of Storyline360 for e-course creation</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Office of Public Defense Office of Civil Legal Aid Akin | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training curriculum and materials Schedule for delivering virtual training sessions | Members of the Statewide Dependency Trainer Group will have a clear understanding of the purpose, content, and delivery mechanism for participating in Storyline360 training | August 2025 | N/A | N/A |
| <i>Action Step 5 – Provide training and support in Articulate360 e-course creation to attorney training coordinators on the Statewide Dependency Trainer Group.</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Office of Public Defense Office of Civil Legal Aid Akin | <p>Bi-monthly Articulate360 training sessions</p> <p>Technical assistance and consultation in e-course creation</p> <p>Creation of role-specific e-course modules</p> | Legal professionals will have access to quality, interactive course modules that support the effective application of the law in dependency cases within the context of their specific attorney role. | Ongoing | N/A | <p>Number of e-courses developed self-reported by attorney trainers</p> <p>Number of views of CIP hosted courses that attorney trainers have directed their users to view</p> |

Priority Area #4: ICWA/Tribal Collaboration

Copy and paste the portion below the blue line for your activities/projects.

Outcome #4: As a result of enhanced efforts, dependency court systems will demonstrate alignment with quality ICWA practices and increased capacity to effectively collaborate with local tribal court systems, including operating ICW courts/dockets

Need Driving Activities & Data Source: *How do you know this is a need in your state?*

[Tribal State Court Consortium \(TSCC\)](#): The TSCC is a joint effort between state and tribal court judicial officers and other judicial branch members to expand communication and collaboration. The TSCC provides an open, transparent forum where state and tribal court judicial officers can come together and discuss jurisdictional issues, gaps in services, and ways to develop lasting partnerships. The TSCC is focusing its efforts on domestic violence and sexual assault issues, dependency cases involving Indian children, and the disproportionate number of Indian youths in the juvenile justice system. CIP staff will continue to attend the Tribal State Court Consortium Roundtable meetings to share trainings and resources created by Washington Court Improvement to better support native families involved in state dependency actions, including recent race/ethnicity data additions to the [Washington State Dependency Timeliness Dashboard](#).

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[DCYF ICWA and Tribal Relations](#): Indian Child Welfare Sub-committee, Tribal Policy Advisory, and Roundtable meetings between the Department of Children Youth and Families, Tribes, and other system partners. These inter-agency committees provide an opportunity to learn more about the needs of tribal families and to share promising court practices. These meetings also provide a preview of any upcoming DCYF and Tribal Court policy changes.

[ICW Dockets](#): There are currently four specialty ICW dockets operating in Washington State in Spokane, Clallam, Yakima, and Pierce counties. These specialized dockets uphold the highest standard of ICWA by ensuring that child welfare cases involving Native American children are handled with respect for tribal sovereignty, cultural identity, and family integrity. These courts foster collaboration between state courts, tribes, and child welfare agencies, improving outcomes through culturally appropriate practices and meaningful tribal engagement. The development and expansion of ICW Courts reflect a driving need to enhance the capacity of dependency courts—ensuring they are better equipped to meet the unique legal, cultural, and relational complexities of cases involving Native children and families.

Despite strong relationships and ongoing efforts, significant gaps remain in consistent identification of ICWA-eligible children, culturally responsive practice, and the ability to partner effectively with tribal courts and communities. The need for enhanced collaboration among State Courts and Tribes has also been prompted by some recent case law decisions issued by the Washington State Supreme Court related to issues of tribal heritage determinations, reason know, and active efforts, which include, but are not limited to, the following:

- [In re Dependency of A.T. \(2024\)](#): In this appellate case, the court clarified that the possibility, and even the probability, of failure to prevent the breakup of the Indian family “does not excuse” the Department from continuing to try to make active efforts. The remedy for failure to make active efforts is to remand the matter to the trial court to return the child home unless doing so “would subject the child to substantial and immediate danger or threat of such danger.
- [In re Dependency of R.D \(2023\)](#): In this appeal of dependency and disposition orders, the court upheld the dependency order, reversed the lower court’s finding that the Department provided active efforts, and remanded the case to the lower court to order a return home unless it found that doing so would subject R.D. to substantial and immediate danger or threat of danger. As to active efforts, the court concluded that Department’s contacts with the mother did not qualify as such, in that they were limited (as opposed to ongoing) and were “designed to obtain information for the State, not to provide remedial services for the mother.” The Court pointed out that the active efforts requirement is not fulfilled simply because a parent is uninterested or that efforts would be futile.
- [In re Dependency of J.M.W. \(2022\)](#): Requires the State to prove it made active efforts to prevent the breakup of an Indian family before a child is brought into emergency foster care where the Department had prior contact with the family and reason to believe the child was at risk of physical damage or harm. Additionally, a trial court is required to make a finding on the record at a shelter care hearing that out-of-home placement is necessary to prevent imminent physical damage or harm and at an interim shelter care hearing.
- [In re Dependency of G.J.A. \(2021\)](#): When a child is removed, the Department must demonstrate that it made active efforts to reunite the family, which must be, at a minimum, thorough, timely, consistent, culturally appropriate, and documented. It must prove that active efforts were in fact unsuccessful; the futility doctrine does not apply. At every hearing when the child is placed out of home, the dependency court must evaluate the Department’s provision of active efforts and ensure this standard is met. The Department must meaningfully engage with the family; the nature of DCYF’s required actions will vary from case to case. A tribe’s lack of response or involvement does not relieve DCYF of its responsibilities.
- [In re Dependency of Z.J.G. \(2020\)](#): “[A] court has ‘reason to know’ that a child is an Indian child when any participant in the proceeding indicates that the child has tribal heritage.” An indication of tribal heritage is sufficient to satisfy the standard. “State courts cannot and should not attempt to determine tribal membership or eligibility. This is the province of each tribe, and we respect it.”

Theory of Change: *Provide a summary (overview) of how the activities/projects below will lead to the anticipated outcome above.*

Strengthen collaboration between state and tribal courts and community partners by enhancing opportunities for joint planning, elevating tribal voices and lived experience in planning and implementation, and building reliable data processes and using what we learn

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SO THAT alignment with quality ICWA practice increases;
 SO THAT ICWA-eligible children are accurately identified;
 SO THAT cooperative efforts improve relationships and resolve jurisdictional issues;
 AND THAT timely, cross-jurisdictional information sharing occurs;
 SO THAT data can be used to assess and improve ICWA practice;
 SO THAT courts can monitor culturally appropriate services and effective safety plans prevent unnecessary family separation;
 SO THAT more Native children can safely remain at home or reunify faster;
 AND THAT courts are better equipped to meet the needs of Native families;
 SO THAT tribal sovereignty is respected and trust is strengthened across systems;
 SO THAT outcomes for Native children and families are improved.

| Activity or Project Description <i>Specific actions or project that will be completed to produce specific outputs and demonstrate progress toward the outcome.</i> | Collaborative Partners <i>Responsible parties and partners involved in implementation of the activity.</i> | Anticipated Outputs of Activity <i>What the CIP intends to produce, provide or accomplish through the activity.</i> | Goals of Activity (short and/or Long-term) <i>Where relevant and practical, provide specific, projected change in data the CIP intends to achieve. Goals should be measurable.</i> Progress toward Outcome | Timeframe <i>Proposed completion date or, if appropriate, "ongoing".</i> | Resources Needed <i>Where relevant identify the resources needed to complete the activity.</i> | Plans for Evaluating Activity <i>Where relevant, how will you measure or monitor change?</i> |
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| Briefly describe the overall activity or project that should help lead to the outcome identified above. | | | | | | |
| <i>Action Step 1 – Establish and strengthen an ICWA Advisory Group</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ICW Court Representatives • University of WA School of Law • Judicial Officers Jurists-in-Residence • Tribal State Court Consortium • Office of Civil Legal Aid • Attorney General’s Office • Office of Public Defense | Cross-system ICWA Advisory Group that includes representation from key partners, including lived experts and tribal partners | Increase alignment of CIP’s ICWA projects with the statutory requirements of ICWA and WICWA, and the evolving needs of Native children and families | Establish group by January 2026 | Stipends for advisory group members (including lived experts and tribal representatives). | Track meeting attendance and participation Collect member feedback after each meeting (short survey or discussion) Review progress on identified priorities annually |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WA Assoc. of Child Advocate Programs • Lived Experts • DCYF Office of Tribal Relations | | | | | |
| <i>Action Step 2 - Develop ICWA Judicial Benchcard</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local court representative • Jurists-in-Residence • Judicial Officers • ICW Court Representatives • Lived Experts • Office of Civil Legal Aid • Attorney General's Office • Office of Public Defense | ICWA Judicial Benchcard that provide judicial officers and system partners with concise guidance on the legal requirements and best practices under the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) and Washington Indian Child Welfare Act (WICWA). | Increased alignment of dependency courts with quality ICWA and WICWA judicial practices | May 2026 | Sample benchcards from other states Design, printing, and distribution costs | Survey judicial officers on benchcard use and usefulness (immediately at post-distribution and at 6 months post-distribution). Number of webpage views |
| <i>Action Step 3: Create & Maintain ICWA/Tribal Collaboration Webpage</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local court representative • Tribal State Court Consortium • Tribal partners • ICW Court Representatives • Lived Experts | Published <i>ICWA/Tribal Collaboration</i> webpage on www.fyjp.org | Average at least 100 views of webpage per month Assess quarterly for webpage updates | October 2026 | Web design and content management Examples from other CIP programs | Number of webpage views and average duration of viewing |
| <i>Action Step 4- ICWA/Tribal Court Virtual Event and development of Community of Practice (CoP) series</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ICWA Advisory Group • Tribal State Court Consortium • Judicial & attorney associations • NICWA • Lived Expert | Training event, including feedback that informs creation of CoP Ongoing CoP sessions | Plan and co-design an ICW court gathering with at least 50 participants Strengthen relationships between state and tribal courts and increase court staff knowledge of local data and best practices | July 2026 | Funding for event hosting, speakers, and lived expert stipends | Event attendance and participation records Pre/post-event surveys on knowledge, confidence, and planned practice changes |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ICW Court Representatives | | Inspire at least three new counties to explore or implement ICW specialty dockets | | | Follow-up with participating courts to track any changes in practice or policy (6–12 months) |
| <p><i>Action Step 5 – Create a process to identify data needed to track Reason to Know the child is or may be an Indian child and ICWA determinations.</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ICWA Advisory WSCCR researchers DCYF CQI/QA Staff Local Court Administrators and Clerks’ Offices Office of Public Defense Office of Civil Legal Aid Attorney General’s Office Family Juvenile Court Improvement Program (FJCIP) Coordinators | <p>Collaborative process to gather Reason to Know and the ICWA determination data</p> <p>Recommendations regarding the feasibility of creating a new court code(s) to identify ICWA related cases</p> | Increased capacity of dependency courts to capture and track the number of children in dependency courts where there is reason to know the child is, or may be an Indian child and cases where it has been determined that ICWA applies | August 2026 | Examples from other states that are collecting Reason to Know and ICWA status in their state data | N/A |

Priority Area #5: Engagement

Copy and paste the portion below the blue line for your activities/projects.

Outcome #5: As a result of building hope-centered leadership and practice, the child welfare court system will demonstrate stronger, more compassionate decision-making and create supportive environments that promote healing and positive outcomes for children and families.

Need Driving Activities & Data Source: *How do you know this is a need in your state?* Description of the need of the court or service population leading to the proposed outcome and activities; in addition, please provide the source describing this need.

The child welfare court process is a reactive and deficit-based system with many system professionals utilizing various practices, processes, and policies to achieve the similar goals for child safety, timely permanency, and overall well-being for children, families, and staff. Families who encounter the child welfare system are faced with multiple requirements, and often lack clarity in the process and the support to achieve the goals set by the court and the child welfare agency. In addition to the child welfare court process being reactive and lacking clarity, many parents and professionals feel increased stress due to additional factors like trauma, secondary trauma, lack of resources, and the high-stake nature of

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dependency court which can reduce their ability to achieve the goals of their work. The science of hope provides a framework with a shared language for court systems to utilize which benefits families and system professionals.

At the individual level, hope can be a coping resource among parents involved with the child welfare system or at risk for child maltreatment. Hopeful parents report higher well-being, and these parents are emotionally, cognitively, and behaviorally better equipped to respond adaptively to the burden of stress. High-hope individuals are able to identify productive paths toward their identified goals, manage and overcome stress easier, and report overall lower levels of daily stress (Chang, 1998; Irving, Snyder, & Crowson, 1998; Ong, Edwards, & Bergeman, 2006; Snyder, 2002).

Like other states nationally, Washington state dependency courts have also been negatively impacted by high rates of turnover among court staff and system partners. The Office of Public Defense has experienced increased challenges finding and retaining qualified parent representation attorneys in multiple counties. Similarly, dependency courts report that they are struggling to fill staff vacancies. In addition to high rates of turnover, court professionals and system partners report increased concerns about a lack of civility among court participants. Incivility has long been an issue in our adversarial system, but with the impact of the pandemic and high rates of turnover among professionals, problems with civility have increased. The science of hope can buffer the impacts of change and increase resilience in a workforce that regularly deals with a lack of resources, high stress, and secondary trauma, and it has been shown to [lower burnout](#) among child welfare workers.

Theory of Change: *Provide a summary (overview) of how the activities/projects below will lead to the anticipated outcome above.*

Build systemwide understanding and utilization of the science of hope:

- SO THAT system leaders, partners, lived experts, providers, and staff are educated on and share a common understanding of the science of hope;
- SO THAT the language, policies, and practices across the child welfare court system become more hope-centered;
- SO THAT families and professionals have better access to supportive, clear, and consistent information;
- SO THAT Hope Navigators lead meaningful, cross-system projects that address barriers and expand access to justice;
- SO THAT courts build a culture of procedural justice, shared learning, and measurable hope;
- SO THAT court staff are better equipped to engage families with consistency, compassion, and effectiveness;
- AND THAT hope science is actively used to support both families and the workforce;
- SO THAT court processes become more accessible, engaging, and responsive to family needs;
- AND THAT the system sees improved family outcomes, staff satisfaction, and retention.

| Activity or Project Description <i>Specific actions or project that will be completed to produce specific outputs and demonstrate progress toward the outcome.</i> | Collaborative Partners <i>Responsible parties and partners involved in implementation of the activity.</i> | Anticipated Outputs of Activity <i>What the CIP intends to produce, provide or accomplish through the activity.</i> | Goals of Activity (short and/or Long-term) <i>Where relevant and practical, provide specific, projected change in data the CIP intends to achieve. Goals should be measurable.</i> Progress toward Outcome | Timeframe <i>Proposed completion date or, if appropriate, "ongoing".</i> | Resources Needed <i>Where relevant identify the resources needed to complete the activity.</i> | Plans for Evaluating Activity <i>Where relevant, how will you measure or monitor change?</i> |
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| Briefly describe the overall activity or project that should help lead to the outcome identified above. | | | | | | |
| Action Step 1 – Hope Leadership & Motivational | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr. Angela Pharris • Dr. Chris Freeze | Virtual workshop for court leaders, including training curriculum, roster of | Increase court leader confidence in hope science | May 2026 | Funding for trainers and materials | Pre/post-evaluations |

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| Interviewing Training (Virtual) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Motivational Interviewing experts • Jurists-in-Residence • Court staff • Family Juvenile Court Improvement Program (FJCIP) | participants, and session materials | & and ability to apply motivational interviewing | | | |
| <i>Action Step 2 - Hope-Centered Benchcard Development</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training participants (see Action Step 1) • Motivational Interviewing experts • Jurists-in-Residence | Hope Benchcard | Benchcard used by training participants and pilot sites within 6 months with the desired outcome of improved consistency in hope-centered practice | June 2026 | Funding for design and printing services | <p>Number of website views</p> <p>Feedback from pilot sites</p> |
| <i>Action 3- Hope Navigation Community of Practice (CoP)</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr. Angela Pharris • Kitsap Strong • Family Juvenile Court Improvement Program (FJCIP) • Hope Navigators • Court staff | Monthly Community of Practice sessions, including development of learning resources to accompany each session | <p>Increase peer support and skill-building among Hope Navigators</p> <p>Increased knowledge of project management, implementation science, and science of hope</p> | Ongoing; Launch January 2026 | N/A | <p>Attendance tracking</p> <p>Post-session feedback evaluations</p> <p>Outcomes of Hope Navigator projects</p> |
| <i>Action 4- Hope-Centered Court Improvement Reports & Feedback Loop</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family Juvenile Court Improvement Program (FJCIP) Coordinators • Local court teams • Hope Navigators | <p>Revised FJCIP report template that includes new feedback action loops focused on hope-centered practice</p> <p>FJCIP Mini Grants to Hope Navigator participants to advance their individual hope science system improvement projects</p> | All 15 FJCIP courts submit hope-centered reports by Dec 2026 | December 2026 | N/A | <p>Number/quality of reports submitted</p> <p>Qualitative feedback from local court teams</p> |

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| <p><i>Action 5-</i> Hope Navigator Training & Mini-Grants</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hope Navigators • Family Juvenile Court Improvement Program (FJCIP) Coordinators • Lived experts | <p>10–15 mini-grant awards to local court projects</p> | <p>Increase number and impact of hope-centered projects in local courts</p> | <p>June 2026</p> | <p>Funds for mini grants</p> | <p>Number of projects funded</p> <p>Progress reports from grant recipients</p> |
| <p><i>Action 6-</i> Engaging Parents at Shelter Care (EPSC) Community Mapping</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lived experts • DCYF • Office of Public Defense • Office of Civil Legal Aid • Attorney General’s Office • Judicial Officers • WA Assoc. of Child Advocate Programs • Hope Navigators • Grief-Informed System Practice Experts | <p>Journey Map that depicts the experience of parents through the Shelter Care process</p> <p>Implementation into pilot sites</p> | <p>Improved engagement strategies by professionals</p> <p>Improved parent engagement, satisfaction, and outcomes at shelter care</p> | <p>June 2027 (ongoing)</p> | <p>Stipends for lived experts</p> | <p>Pre/post-evaluations</p> <p>Feedback from families/professionals</p> |

Child and Family Services Review / Program Improvement Plan (CFSR/PIP) - Overall Infrastructure & Supports

For states that will be participating in round 4 of the CFSR and PIP in your state this reporting year, please briefly describe overall infrastructure or similar supports for the CFSR/PIP process that may have been needed based on your Self-Assessment. As described in the PI, this may include engaging a broad array of legal and judicial stakeholders, working with other leadership, collaborating with other partners, use of data in the process, staging, and feedback loops. For CFSR/PIP related efforts that are farther along and have focused data or outcomes identified, those can be completed on the usual project template above. Copy and paste the portion below the blue line if there are additional CFSR/PIP overall infrastructure and support items.

CFSR/PIP Outcome #1: The change the CIP seeks to support for the CFSR/PIP process

| <p>Activity Description <i>Specific actions that will be completed to produce specific outputs and</i></p> | <p>Collaborative Partners <i>Responsible parties and partners involved in</i></p> | <p>Anticipated Outputs of Activity <i>What the CIP intends to produce, provide or</i></p> | <p>Goals of Activity (short and/or Long-term) <i>Where relevant and practical, provide specific, projected measurable</i></p> | <p>Timeframe <i>Proposed completion date or, if</i></p> | <p>Resources Needed <i>Where relevant identify the resources needed</i></p> | <p>Plans for Evaluating Activity <i>Where relevant, how will you</i></p> |
|---|--|--|--|--|--|---|
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Under the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (P.L. 104-13), an agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Control Number and expiration date. The estimated time to complete the Strategic Plan is 52 hours.

| <i>demonstrate progress toward the outcome.</i> | <i>implementation of the activity.</i> | <i>accomplish through the activity.</i> | <i>change the CIP intends to achieve.</i> Progress toward Outcome | <i>appropriate, "ongoing".</i> | <i>to complete the activity.</i> | <i>measure or monitor change?</i> |
|--|--|--|---|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Briefly describe the overall activity that should help lead to the outcome identified above. | | | | | | |
| <i>Action Step 1 – Participate in monthly CFSR planning meetings led by DCYF</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DCYF CFSR/ PIP staff | Input into creation of final CFSR | <p>Increase CIP’s understanding of the structure, purpose, timing, activities, and expectations of the different activities and stages involved in Round 4.</p> <p>Enhance involvement and investment of CIP in the CFSR process.</p> | June 2026 | N/A | N/A |
| <i>Action Step 2 – Identify CIP’s different participation roles/ levels throughout the CFSR and incorporate CSFR activities into existing staff capacity</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DCYF CFSR/ PIP staff • CLJIA | Strategic plan for CIP’s participation in the CFSR Round 4 process | Increase CIP involvement in CFSR process | January 2026 | Assistance from CLJIA liaison | N/A |
| <i>Action Step 3 – Identify data for use in the CFSR process in absence of a data-sharing agreement</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DCYF CFSR/PIP staff | List of key performance metrics and corresponding data sources | N/A | June 2026 | N/A | N/A |
| <i>Action Step 4 – Convene an appropriate multi-disciplinary group for high-level monitoring of CFSR process and activities</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DCYF Leadership • DCYF CFSR/PIP staff • FWCC | Statewide group of judicial, legal, and system partners with a broad representation of perspectives to receive reports on CFSR activities and monitor progress | Keep courts and system partners informed throughout the process including through decision making and implementation | Ongoing | N/A | N/A |

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