



# Topical Area: Food and financial supports

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# Agency Overview



Washington State  
Department of Social  
& Health Services

Community Services  
Division (CSD)

## State Level Snapshot

1. The priorities of DSHS Community Services Division (CSD) are to serve families whether they are two parent or single parent households, and traditional or non-cohabiting families.
2. CSD's focus is providing stabilization of families and assistance in moving out of poverty; CSD provides statewide programs including TANF<sup>2</sup> and SNAP<sup>1</sup>
3. Relevant partnerships and/or intersectionality include DSHS DCS, DCYF Home Visiting, DOC, ESD's Workforce development, Tribal TANF, and many others<sup>2</sup>
4. TANF is a federal/state funded cash assistance program for very low-income, legally residing WA-state families with children. State Family Assistance (SFA) is a mirror cash assistance program for families with children who are not yet eligible for federal TANF benefits. Both TANF and SFA have an employment and training program (WorkFirst) that assists families in removing barriers, connecting to education and training and developing job skills that will help them move to meaningful employment.
5. Federal law mandates that the state retains support in equal shares to the state and national funds in order to administer the programs for those receiving Child Support collections and TANF<sup>3</sup>
6. CSD and the Division of Child Support (DCS) coordinate efforts such that when a presenting parent applies for TANF, they have the option of establishing parentage and/or opening a child support case to identify the NCP<sup>1</sup>
7. SNAP/FAP provide food assistance, with a voluntary employment & training component; for ABAWDS with no children in the home, or do not have primary custody of child, they must meet continued employment requirements and participate in workforce or vocational trainings; students receiving SNAP must also be working to receive benefits (employment requirements are Federally mandated)
8. A child cannot receive TANF benefits in two households in the same month, the parent who has primary custody or has the child a majority of the time could receive TANF and/or food benefits on behalf of that child. In the case of 50/50 split of custody or shared time, the parent applying first would receive the benefits on behalf of the child.

## Key Metrics & Data Points

1. Our initial hypothesis is that there are demographic (i.e., gender-based) data available in sources (e.g., EMAPS<sup>1</sup>), but there has not been a focus to the experiences of fathers in accessing and utilizing CSD-related services.
2. 12,730 out of 54,896 (23.2%) SNAP/FAP<sup>1</sup> Male Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWDS)<sup>1</sup> Who Are Non-Custodial Parents (NCPs)<sup>1</sup> in the child support system so we categorize them as single adults, this may be an opportunity to increase their needs as a parent.
3. 10,119 out of 17,593 (58%) NCPs<sup>1</sup> with a current support order for the presumptive minimum amount are not receiving SNAP/FAP<sup>1</sup> this may provide an avenue for outreach and engagement.

1. EMAPS is the data system for DSHS, from April 2021; SNAP = Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program; FAP = Food Assistance Program for Legal Immigrants; ABAWDS are clients ages 18-49 who are physically and mentally able to work with no minor children in the household; An NCP is a parent who does not have physical custody of his or her minor child as the result of a court order.
2. Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF); Division of Child Support (DCS), Department of Children Youth and Families (DCYF), Department of Corrections (DOC), Employment Security Department (ESD), Tribal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)
3. There is ongoing WA proposed legislation to passthrough all child support funds to the families, but as of February 1, 2021, DCS sends passthrough payments (e.g., up to \$50/month to custodial parent on TANF with 1 child; up to \$100/month for 2+ children)

### Current State

#### Family Data & Experiences

Context: Refugee & immigrant families can be separated geographically, so a male individual with a family in another country would have **access to different services** than a father with his family in WA state. With intact families, and two-parent households, it is usually the father that is presenting to access services. There is limited data capturing what gender differences are between what services fathers receive versus what mothers receive within the refugee & immigrant population

Key metrics:

- Oct 2023, FY2024, received 993 newly arrived refugee applicants (majority Ukraine & Afghanistan)<sup>1</sup>
- In SFY2023, the LEP Pathway Program served 10,027 clients, of which 67% participated in Employment Services, and 33% successfully entered employment<sup>2</sup>

#### Key barriers & challenges for fathers

#### Agencies, Partners, Systems, Policies, Funding

- [Office of Refugee and Immigrant Assistance \(ORIA\)](#) helps refugee and immigrant families and individuals succeed and thrive in Washington state, providing basic needs, employment & training, health & wellness, immigration & naturalization assistance and whole family supports
- Limited English Proficient (LEP) Pathway – part of WA WorkFirst program, ORIA partners with partner organizations (i.e., skills training, education, job search, etc.); LEP participants can enroll in TANF, State Family Assistance (SFA), or RCA.
- [Refugee Cash Assistance \(RCA\)](#) is a federally-funded program that provides up to 12-months of cash assistance for newly arrived single and married refugees who are ineligible for TANF
- Community partners bright spots, examples include:
  - [South King Healthcare Services](#) provides culturally appropriate and specific health care support for immigrant and refugee families
  - [Afghan Health Initiative](#) provides specific support for families in King County, by promoting community-based public health interventions

### Next Steps & Opportunities

Operational next steps:

- [Collect data] Conduct a provider survey with the (~80) community-based organizations to better understand the demographics, gender split, and number of families they work with; utilize qualitative data to identify any challenges/barriers and bright spots associated with serving fathers within the context of families
- Identify any specific gaps or opportunities associated with serving refugee/immigrant fathers
- Develop an understanding for any key impact outcomes to track and monitor over time that shows the relationship between access to fatherhood-specific services, programs to overall outcomes for families and their resiliency

# Agency Commitments

## Commitments by the (6) Dimensions

Policies	Funding and Resources	Cross-Agency Partnerships
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As the agency works to build a stronger customer voice (i.e. Customer Voice Council) and expansion of LPA<sup>2</sup> work to broaden poverty focus; there is an opportunity to include fathers more specifically</li> <li>Longer term, there is an opportunity to consider expanding TANF E&amp;T<sup>1</sup> programs, conduct targeted outreach to fathers, and support services to NCP<sup>1</sup>/fathers not living in the home where children are on TANF (this requires additional funding)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In order to support the policy changes in expanding TANF E&amp;T programs that conduct targeted outreach to fathers that engages them in services and programs, there needs to be sustainable funding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Opportunity to work collaboratively with CSD, DOC and other agencies to have a cross-functional set of supports for fathers that receive services from CSD and/or DOC</li> <li>Opportunity to work with justice involved parents to proactively provide food &amp; financial benefits (e.g., SNAP or TANF, if eligible), health care coverage, employment and housing options, and supports that enable reunification with families and communities</li> </ul>
Services and Programs	Data and Monitoring	Community-Engagement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Opportunity in SNAP E&amp;T and TANF WorkFirst E&amp;T<sup>1</sup> to conduct targeted outreach and provide services to fathers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Better understand the needs of non-cohabiting families.</li> <li>Opportunity to explore the intersectionality between CSD programs and Child Support as noted above data collected for the study might create space in the future for brainstorming enhanced service for non-cohabiting fathers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>LPAs and CSOs<sup>2</sup> have an opportunity to engage communities, learning alongside them to identify any potential gaps or needs specific to fathers in the local communities, and elevate these needs.</li> <li>Create more awareness of fathers' unique needs within the context of serving families through local partnerships (e.g., CSO, local TANF or SNAP programs).</li> </ul>

1. EMAPS is the data system for DSHS, from April 2021; SNAP = Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program; FAP = Food Assistance Program for Legal Immigrants; Able Body Adults without Dependents (ABAWDS) are clients ages 18-49 who are physically and mentally able to work with no minor children in the household, do not have primary custody in home; A Non-Custodial Parent (NCP) is a parent who does not have physical custody of his or her minor child as the result of a court order. TANF = Temporary Assistance for Needy Families; E&T = Education and Training;

2. LPA = Local Planning Areas, DSHS CSD has about 26 LPAs across the state; CSO = Community Services Offices, DSHS has local office presence in counties

# Levels of Maturity

- Pre-Awareness**
- Awareness**
- Demonstrated Action**
- Integration**

Department of Social and Health Services – Community Services Division (DSHS CSD):

## **Pre-Awareness / Awareness**

- CSD is currently somewhere between Pre-awareness and Awareness
- There is an awareness of the need to look holistically at the whole family, develop supports for co-parenting and supports for parents not living in the assistance unit (family or household enrolling).
- There is also interest in expanding programming for fathers – however there is not currently funding or bandwidth to take this work on.