

State of Fatherhood in Washington

Study Report



Transforming lives



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Executive Summary

This report covers the findings of the State of Fatherhood in Washington Study. Conducted from June 2023-2024, the Study is a first-of-its-kind effort to assess the current state of the Washington fatherhood ecosystem in order to develop a clearer understanding of progress among individual agencies, programs and policies and their contributions toward the Washington Fatherhood Council's goals and vision. The Study considered the national context of fatherhood policies, programs and leadership as well as lessons learned from other states' fatherhood commissions and initiatives. This backdrop was used to evaluate, in detail, the fatherhood landscape in Washington state.



The Study team included the Washington Fatherhood Council, Camber Collective Consulting Group and researchers from the University of Washington. A stakeholder engagement process was also key in developing this report. These stakeholders included key state and local agencies, Council members and fathers with lived experience, who provided valuable insights to shape key focus areas for improvement.

The Study was designed around five core activities that collectively inform findings and recommendations:

1. Review national and state-level data, policies and programmatic context as it relates to fatherhood inclusion, access and belonging efforts.
2. Develop case studies through interviews with statewide and regional fatherhood initiatives in Connecticut, Ohio, Texas and California.
3. Implement a statewide fathers' survey and provide deep-dive interviews to capture additional insights, bright spots and specific needs of fathers in Washington.
4. Implement a provider survey to update the 2019 Washington Fatherhood Council environmental scan.
5. Conduct deep dives with state agency partners to develop a Washington state agency landscape of current data, policies, programs, services, funding and systems related to fatherhood inclusion.

Key Findings:

- Fathers and fatherhood figures experience stigmas and inequities.
- Data and monitoring systems that capture fathers are not fully developed, making it hard to assess and address inequities.
- Policies and approaches to fatherhood inclusion remain inconsistent.
- Representation of fathers in program and policy design is limited.
- Increased cross-agency funding, planning and coordination are needed.
- The Council plays a critical role in shaping solutions to system challenges fathers face.

This Study represents the culmination of a year's worth of work to understand fatherhood in Washington. What we found is that more work must be done to understand the unique experiences of fathers, providers and systems across the state, and the Study provides concrete next steps. Visit the WFC website to find more information about the Study, what commitments state agencies have made and how you can get involved.

Overview

Founded in 2018, the Washington Fatherhood Council is a multi-sector effort that leads change through its efforts to create a more father-friendly culture in Washington state. The current systems serving families in Washington often exclude or create unintended barriers for fathers and families through their lack of intentional focus on equity and access for fathers. The Council works to coordinate and influence alignment of efforts across key state agencies and their funded local programs and community partners that play critical roles in achieving the Council's vision. The Council and its partners work collectively to amplify the voices of fathers and father figures in Washington to promote fatherhood inclusion, equity, diversity and research activity that strengthens families and maximizes children's potential.

A significant body of research shows that children and families experience improved outcomes when fathers are meaningfully and positively engaged in their children's lives.¹ Positive fatherhood involvement benefits children across their lifespan and developmental domains, including healthier birth outcomes, higher academic achievement, school readiness, social emotional development and strong self-esteem. Co-parents also experience less stress and improved maternal or postpartum outcomes.² Despite the unique and vital role that fathers play, many states have not consistently developed and funded targeted services to equitably support fathers. Policies and funding for fatherhood-specific services are limited at the federal and state level, and often narrowly engage fathers as a financial provider rather than more broadly supporting them in a holistic caretaking role. Building on the evidence, Washington and many other states are seeking to transform traditional approaches to support fathers in playing a fully integrated role in the lives of their children, regardless of marital or co-parenting status. Making this shift requires collaboration, bringing a systemic lens and intentional focus in shifting away from policies, practices and programs that often marginalize the role of fathers in the family.

"There's a beauty when plans and projects seem to magically fall into place – when connections made, insights shared and work progress all seem effortless. But we know that behind any meaningful impact lies intentionality, focus and hard work. This Study captures our partners' work to lean into that intentionality and lift up fathers and families in Washington state to change the narrative that surrounds fathers."

*~ Anne Stone,
Washington Fatherhood Council Co-Founder and Director*

¹[Father Facts 9, Ninth Edition.](#)

²[Institute for Research on Poverty](#), June 18, 2021. Links Between Involved Fathers and Positive Effects on Children.

Study Approach

At the federal, state and community levels, public agency partners, community-based providers and father leaders are part of a complex ecosystem that often marginalizes the role of fathers in children's and families' well-being. The Study is an attempt to define and detail that ecosystem within Washington state in a way that creates a launching pad for deeper collaboration and progress across the state. The Study was conducted from June 2023 through June 2024 by a Study team that included the Washington Fatherhood Council, Camber Collective Consulting Group and researchers from the University of Washington.

The Council will use the Study findings, insights and commitments to:

- Create a common understanding and starting point to meet partners where they are.
- Identify, highlight and build upon intentional and effective examples of father-friendly policies and practices within and across key state agencies and local providers.
- Find new ways to engage fathers with lived experience with our systems to shape state policies and practices.



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3. Implement a statewide fathers' survey and provide deep-dive interviews to capture additional insights, bright spots and specific needs of fathers in Washington.
4. Implement a provider survey to update the 2019 Washington Fatherhood Council environmental scan.
5. Conduct deep dives with state agency partners to develop a Washington state agency landscape of current data, policies, programs, services, funding and systems related to fatherhood inclusion.

The landscape analysis evaluated state agencies related to eight topical areas aligned to the Council's values, vision and goals as outlined below.



The Council recognizes that state agencies in Washington have varying levels of understanding and awareness for what fathers need and how that impacts each agency's mission. The Study evaluated selected agency across six key dimensions:



Key Findings

 **Fathers and fatherhood figures experience stigmas and inequities.** While many systems in our state acknowledge racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, gender-based, sexual orientation, gender identification, disparities and discrimination, gender equity rarely focuses on marginalized fathers in our equity work. Few systems or policies acknowledge the disparities, barriers, challenges and biases against fathers. Further, evidence from fathers indicates that they have limited access to family and resources that are tailored to meet their unique needs. Cultural biases, stigmas, negative stereotypes and harmful narratives also limit access and often completely exclude fathers from systems and structures that are meant to support the whole family.



 **Data and monitoring systems that measure fathers' access to services are not fully developed, making it hard to address inequities.** The Study revealed significant gaps in data across a wide array of disciplines. To fully understand the real and perceived inequities that fathers experience, there must be more data and an effective monitoring process to specifically track and measure how fathers receive services and how systems respond. Current data-gathering systems and protocols often categorize unmarried fathers as single adult males or single parents, but miss their co-parenting role. Collecting and analyzing disaggregated data can tell us if and how fathers are eligible, aware, enrolled, accepted, received and if they complete services. At intake, programs and practices should routinely ask all presenting adults if they are parents and if there is a co-parent involved in the child's life. This will help identify opportunities to provide services to all parents, even when one is not in the home, and to begin gathering information about fatherhood involvement and access to services.

 **Policies and approaches to fatherhood inclusion remain inconsistent.** While many agencies and systems in Washington are focused on two-generation or whole-family approaches, they often primarily focus on single mother-child dyads or two-parent households and often miss non-cohabiting parents. Systems are not set up to detect or serve the needs of non-cohabiting parents or single dads with primary custody. This often creates barriers for father-child dyads and misses the complexities of non-cohabiting co-parenting families' unique needs for resources.



Representation of fathers is limited. Provider workforces and parent and community advisory groups across the spectrum of supports rarely have male-presenting members. This limited representation has led to barriers and challenges for fathers' specific needs to be met. It also leads to children missing out on having a positive male role model in services and classrooms. Funding and resources are often directed at scaling existing evidence-based programs, which is needed, but few evidence-based fatherhood programs are considered through that lens. Fathers need to be equitably represented when groups and organizations work to set priorities and policies.



Increased cross-agency funding, planning and coordination are needed. The intersectionality among the unmet needs of fathers must be addressed. This includes needs when reentering the community after a period of incarceration, shelter and housing, financial supports, behavioral health, access to parenting supports, early childhood and K-12 education acceptance, navigating family court and child support. Marginalized parents who are BIPOC, low-income, justice involved, single and young experience additional disparities and have complex unmet needs. Systems, partners and programs need to be more coordinated and inclusive of fathers and create targeted pathways to provide wraparound and holistic supports. Having an integrated father inclusive system requires awareness, action and collaboration among all public and private agencies that support individual fathers and peaceful co-parenting.



The Washington Fatherhood Council plays a unique and critical role in shaping solutions to these challenges. Nationally, in states that have made substantial investments in both capacity and system transformation through legislative action, councils and commissions are beginning to see results. The first step in building an integrated system is to start with acknowledging the inequities experienced by fathers or father figures, and to understand how supporting all parents is mission centric for child and family outcomes. In the six short years since the Council's inception, momentum is growing toward mindsets shifting and agency partners engaging with fathers and inviting this perspective into their work. Incorporating the voices and perspectives of fathers with lived experiences can help identify stigmas, biases and perceptions of their roles and shape policy and practice. The Council's inclusive membership approach has played a unique and impactful role in bringing diverse players into the dialogue to shape collective action across the state. Washington needs to make a commitment to sustain this work as part of its equity efforts and benchmark goals.

Washington State Agency Landscape Key Deliverables

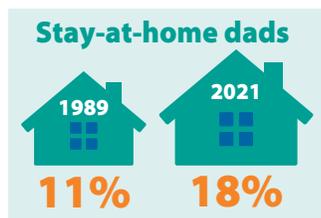
The synthesized findings from the Study are intended to inform a set of key deliverables and serve as the baseline for future Council partners' monitoring of key metrics and measures of success.

- Develop the Washington state agency landscape, which includes topical area and agency-level scorecards so that Council agency partners can share and monitor their commitments.
- Update the Council's [Father Friendly Resources Map](#).
- Develop a refreshed Theory of Change for the Council as well as identify other strategic opportunities to build a case for fatherhood inclusion.
- Conduct and analyze a statewide Fatherhood Survey to capture fathers' voices, assets, needs and potential barriers to services.
- Capture bright spots and learnings from those that have shifted toward a more father inclusive mindset.

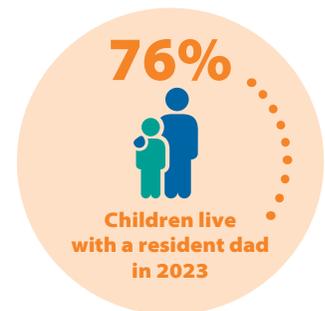
Trends in Fatherhood

Regardless of marital status or collaboratively co-parenting in separate households, having two parents present and positively engaged in the lives of their children is beneficial. Benefits include improvements in financial, social, emotional and physical health and well-being. Studies have shown that father absence puts children at a greater risk for alcohol and substance use, child abuse, criminal behavior, lower educational success, emotional and behavioral problems, poorer physical health, poverty, risky sexual activity, suicide and teen pregnancy,³ and leads to greater stress for the co-parent. Supportive father presence is associated with positive effects, including better newborn and maternal health outcomes, better lactation success and, in children, kindergarten readiness and higher academic achievements, higher self-esteem and fewer behavioral problems.⁴

National Trends

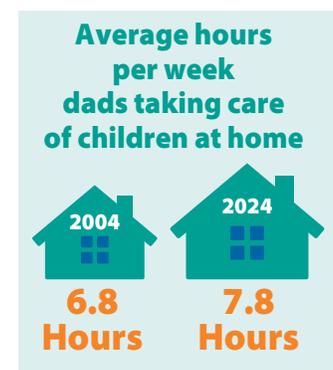


Fathers today are more involved and more present in the lives of their children than they have been in the past three decades. From 1980 to 2012, the percentage of children growing up without a father steadily rose from 20% to 24.4%, but then in the last decade, it dropped to 21.5% in 2022.⁵ The proportion of children growing up with a resident father is now at the highest



since 1989; 76% of children live with a resident dad in 2023.⁶ Fathers are also more engaged in child care; over the last 30 years, the share of stay-at-home dads increased from 11% in 1989 to 18% in 2021.⁷

In aggregate, American fathers are more involved in their children's lives than historic averages, but the positive trend does not apply evenly to all fathers. Fatherhood presence differs when disaggregated by marital status, family structures, father's education, race and other factors. Fathers' time with their children has increased the most among college-educated, partnered, white or Asian fathers.⁸ Today, fathers in America spend an average of 7.8 hours per week taking care of children at home, up by one hour per week in two decades. When looking at the subset of college-educated fathers, that average goes up by 2.3 hours (10.2 hours/week in 2022, 7.9 hours/week in 2003). Whether or not a father lives with his children also has a lot to do with his marital status; 89% of married fathers, 64% of cohabiting fathers, 47% of divorced fathers and 39% of never-married fathers live with their children.⁹



³Father Facts, Eighth Edition. [National Fatherhood Initiative](#), 2019.

⁴[Institute for Research on Poverty](#), June 18, 2021. Links Between Involved Fathers and Positive Effects on Children.

⁵Wang, Wendy R. (2023). [Institute for Family Studies](#), American Dads Are More Involved Than Ever – Especially College-educated or Married Dads.

⁶Brown, Christopher A. (2023). [National Fatherhood Initiative](#), Proportion of Children Living with Resident Dads at 34-year High.

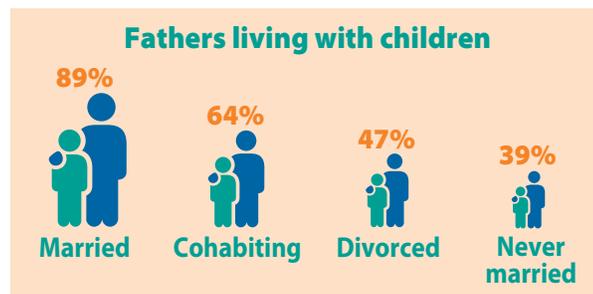
⁷Fry, Richard (2023). Almost 1 in 5 stay-at-home parents in the U.S. are dads. [Pew Research Center](#).

⁸Wang, Wendy R. (2023). [Institute for Family Studies](#), American Dads Are More Involved Than Ever – Especially College-educated or Married Dads.

⁹Wang, Wendy R. (2023). [Institute for Family Studies](#), American Dads Are More Involved Than Ever – Especially College-educated or Married Dads.

Fathers' involvement with children differs across major racial and ethnic groups, with implications for children:

- Overall, Black non-resident fathers were significantly more likely to spend time and engage in activities with their children as compared to Hispanic fathers but not white fathers.
- Black fathers also shared responsibilities more frequently and displayed more effective co-parenting than Hispanic and white fathers.¹⁰



In the United States, family structures have diversified significantly over the past three decades. Historically, when parents separated or divorced, a child usually ended up living with one parent, while the other parent got visitation rights. But recent studies have confirmed a new era of joint physical custody, where a child resides with each parent in two separate households; increased shared custody arrangements have gone up from 13% in 1985 to 34% in 2010–2014.¹¹ There is also a higher proportion of unmarried cohabiting relationships; 20% of unmarried parents cohabited in 1997, which has risen to 35% in 2017.¹² Both of these trends contribute positively to children having more time with both parents; however, many of our current systems for supporting families are not built to support these diverse family structures. Often, fathers have access to fewer system-based resources than mothers, even when they have shared parenting responsibilities, when applying for supports on behalf of a child.

National Funding and Policies for Fatherhood Inclusion¹³

Fatherhood-inclusive practices and policies remain limited and traditional in their focus. At the national level, the political narrative and incentives largely continue to emphasize the historic importance of fathers as the financial provider, promoting marriage and traditional family structures and supporting responsible parenting approaches. Fatherhood programs initially emerged in the 1990s during a time when the country was reducing public welfare programs and expanding child support enforcement. At that time, there was some emphasis on the non-economic role of fathers at the federal level. These efforts included authorizing up to \$10 million/year of child support funds at the state level to be used for access and visitation programs, including employment supports for non-custodial parents who were delinquent with payments, and providing unmarried, low-income NCPs and their children with mediation, parenting education and supervised visitation services. Since 2005, Congress has funded \$150 million/year through the Healthy Marriage and Responsible Fatherhood grants for fatherhood programs that have been shown to be disproportionately distributed across states. Washington has received one grant, some states have received none and one state has received 29 awards. These funds focus on short-term projects and have rarely resulted in building ongoing state and local capacity to serve fathers in families, which benefit all parents in the family.

Most state-level fatherhood initiatives are funded through federal sources such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, Health and Human Services' Federal Office of Child Support Services, the Children's Trust Fund and the Maternal Child Health Block Grant. Across the country, at least 20 states use some TANF funds for "Fatherhood and Two-Parent Family Programs," but the national average across the states is about 0.5% of total TANF spending.

¹⁰Ellerbe, C. Z., Jones, J. B., & Carlson, M. J. (2018). Race/ethnic differences in nonresident fathers' involvement after a nonmarital birth. *Social Science Quarterly*, 99(3), 1158–1182.

¹¹Meyer, Daniel R. (2022). Increases in shared custody after divorce in the United States. [Demographic Research](#)

¹²Livingston, G. (2018). The changing profile of unmarried parents. Washington, D.C.: Pew Research Center.

¹³Pearson, Jessica. (May, 2018). [Fatherhood Research & Practice Network](#). State Approaches to Including Fathers in Programs and Policies Dealing with Children and Families.

An additional nine states (Alabama, California, Colorado, Georgia, Kansas, Maryland, South Carolina, Texas and Washington) have established fatherhood initiatives at the agency level, often funded through TANF or child support waiver funds. While the programs and state-level fatherhood initiatives differ in focus, they typically focus on workforce and job readiness, peer-support or curriculum-based fatherhood parenting, child welfare prevention, co-parenting programs and enhanced child support services with modifications and debt reduction.

Select states (Ohio, Maryland, South Carolina and Florida) have conducted extensive cost-benefit assessments to further make the case for investments in fatherhood programming. All four states have shown that increased investment in fatherhood programs reduces costs. For example, South Carolina reported improvements in parent-child relationships and financial savings realized by keeping delinquent child support obligators out of incarceration. Their Child Support Enforcement Division also reduced childhood poverty through engaging fathers to improve their financial stability. In 2022, Florida passed its first bill of nearly \$70 million in funding to provide a wide spectrum of family and youth support through the Department of Juvenile Justice and the Department of Children and Families for services. This included educational programs, mentorship programs and one-on-one support to encourage responsible and involved fatherhood in Florida.

Interviews with fatherhood councils across states (Connecticut, Ohio, Texas and California) demonstrated the critical importance of cross-sector and integrated approaches. The Study found that while many statewide councils/initiatives started out with funding from child support or public welfare benefits (e.g., TANF), this was not enough. Long-term success and impact come from developing interagency support, integrated systems and a broad range of topical objectives that go beyond financial or economic stability of families. Connecticut and Ohio have the longest-standing commissions and initiatives that are statutorily endowed – both have demonstrated the importance of engaging with fathers on legal and justice supports, fostering emotional and relational health between parent and child and education and employment supports to enable financial stability. See Appendix A: State Case Studies.



Lessons Learned: Highlights of State Case Studies from Ohio, Connecticut, California and Texas

The Council and Study Team were inspired by our partner states, who all generously supported Washington’s efforts over the years. They contributed their lessons learned and guidance.

Stakeholder and Partnership Strategy

 <p>Fathers are a critical component of a multi-level coalition</p>	 <p>Leverage executive and legislative branch support to launch</p>	 <p>Connect fatherhood to child and family outcomes in advocacy</p>	 <p>Foster and formalize agency collaboration with MOUs</p>	 <p>Balance cross-agency initiative and single agency leadership</p>
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Funding Strategies

 <p>Consider how funding source will affect outcome metrics</p>	 <p>Start with a right-sized budget</p>	 <p>Budget for administration and coordination staffing costs</p>	 <p>Be creative to find funding opportunities</p>	 <p>Do not pit resources for fathers vs. women and children</p>
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Direct Service Programming

 <p>Be flexible and accommodating to fathers’ schedules and needs</p>	 <p>Deploy a multi-level approach for services and programs</p>	 <p>Support localization and contextualization of fatherhood programming</p>	 <p>In-agency fatherhood practitioners can shift culture and systemic biases</p>	 <p>Use fatherhood programming to reduce violence</p>
 <p>Use gendered and gender-neutral language intentionally</p>	 <p>Shift away from punitive enforcement of obligations to address multiple needs of fathers</p>	 <p>Conduct outreach and programming with fathers who are incarcerated</p>	 <p>Identify and address biased policies and practices against fathers</p>	 <p>Devote time to educating service providers on the importance of supporting fathers</p>

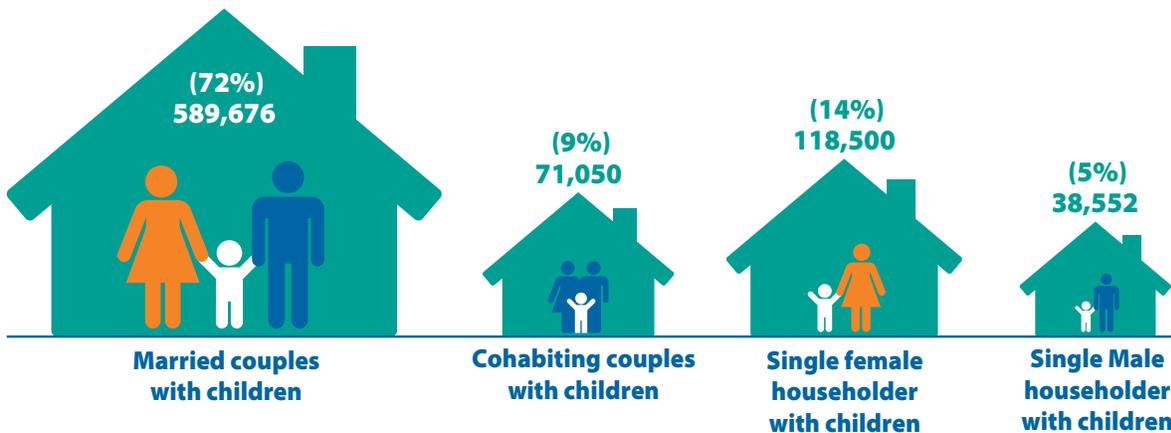
See Appendix A for additional details about these studies.

Key Context on Data Availability

U.S. Census data for Washington provides limited data on basic family composition for the 817,000 households in the state.¹⁵

The Census' data lacks disaggregated data on variables such as race and ethnicity and socioeconomic status within each category. The data also lacks critical nuances such as quantifying fathers who have shared custody of a child with a co-parent living in separate households, fathers who do not have custody but are working toward being a positive presence in their children's lives such as child welfare cases, incarcerated fathers, working toward custody and/or experiencing homelessness.

Total Households with Children in Washington State (817,778)



During this Study, we found that few state agencies have more detailed demographic data about their population than the Census. While the Washington State Department of Corrections and Department of Social and Health Services, along with the DSHS Division of Child Support, track additional data on their populations (outlined further in topical area summaries below), they still do not provide a complete enough picture to understand fatherhood trends and needs across the state.

"I'm trying to change this whole outlook that society has on dads, that dads are only meant to provide and be the financial guy. There are dads—I'm one of them—that want to be more than a provider. They're advisors, counselors, coaches, nurses sometimes. Just like a mom, they wear a lot of different hats, and I want the same respect for dads."

*~ Tui Shelton,
dedicated father of seven children*

¹⁵Estimate based on 72% married couples with children, 8.7% cohabiting parents with children and 4.7% single fathers with children = 85.5%; removing same-sex (female-female) households with children, which was estimated to be 0.3% of households with children based on [UCLA Williams Institute Same-sex Couple Data & Demographics for Washington](#).

Fathers and their families interact with many more agencies and systems than those noted above. During the Study, the research team had in-depth conversations with agencies around the data they would need to provide a more complete picture of where fathers are in our systems of care. While we found significant gaps in the data currently collected, we also found an interest and commitment to defining and tracking new data and indicators. Specific future areas for data tracking include:

- Navigating family court systems, including shared parenting plans.
- Fathers experiencing housing insecurity or homelessness.
- Women, Infant and Children nutrition program.
- Local public health efforts and health improvement plans.
- Working Connections (child care subsidies).
- Tribal fathers and families.
- Community resilience initiatives.
- Immigrant and refugee fathers.
- Fathers experiencing substance use or behavioral health disorders.
- Fathers experiencing mental health challenges, anxiety disorders and symptoms related to postpartum stress.

Some qualitative insights and lived experience narratives were collected, but there was no data available for how fathers show up in these systems. Because these are all systems and services that have a profound impact on child and family well-being, there will be ongoing dialogue around how to increase our data gathering to drive policy and practice. The Study was unable to gather detailed quantitative data from state tracking systems, so this report largely relies upon qualitative data and the voices of fathers collected in the fatherhood survey and stakeholder engagement process.

Washington State Dads Survey and Provider Interviews

Elevating Fathers' Voices: The Washington Father Experiences Survey

The University of Washington partnered with the Council to conduct an online survey of fathers in Washington state. The goals of the survey were to explore fathers' experiences and inform future actions. We had 126 complete, valid responses representing 28 zip codes across the state. Below are some of our key findings.

Fathers who participated had a variety of backgrounds. Their ages ranged from 21-76 years and half of the fathers were married. One-quarter of respondents reported household incomes of \$40,000 or less, though most (77%) were employed at least part-time. While 70% of fathers identified as white, we also reached fathers across a variety of other racial and ethnic groups, including meaningful numbers of fathers who identified as African American; American Indian or Alaska Native; and Mexican, Chicano or other Hispanic/Latinx groups.

Fathers recognized their many strengths as dads, including “patience,” “dependability,” “compassion,” “resilience and love,” “ability to communicate and empathize,” “adventure,” “being a strong role model in my everyday actions” and “providing for family and home.” They shared that they connected with their children in a variety of ways, including “over dinner, meals and shared interests,” “conversation,” “playing games,” “outdoor activity,” “humor,” “texts and emails” and “having fun.”

Social, emotional and mental health support was one of the most pressing needs identified by fathers. One-third of fathers reported having experienced mental health challenges in the past year. When asked how often they were able to get the social or emotional support they needed, most fathers reported that they were only able to obtain this support sometimes, rarely or never (versus usually or always).

Parenting support and food and nutrition services were a bright spot for many fathers. Several fathers were able to access these services and highlighted them as working well. One father shared, for example, that the parenting class he took “was a great resource for myself to be able to meet with other dads ... discussing situations we have gone through and how to get through situations before they come up.” Other fathers specifically called out WIC, SNAP and pandemic food benefits as “amazing” and “helpful.”

Other top desired supports included 1) co-parenting support, 2) housing and 3) child care assistance. These services were highly desired but were inaccessible for many fathers. For example, 39% of fathers



reported experiencing co-parenting challenges in the past year, yet only 8.7% of fathers had received any co-parenting support.

Fathers highlighted **not qualifying for services and mother-oriented service environments as the top two barriers** to obtaining the support that would be most helpful to them. One father stated that “the programs have been quite clear: men ARE NOT welcome.” When asked what the community and government could do to better support them as fathers, they had a number of suggestions, including “better communication and transparency,” “be more progressive toward single fathers,” “better understanding for men when it comes to providing services,” “be willing to hear the father side in child custody court,” “realize low-income fathers are

marginalized and need equitable pathways out of poverty,” “listen to our wants and needs” and “direct more funding to fatherhood specific providers.”

The Council is grateful to all the fathers who shared their experiences. Detailed data from the respondents can be found on the Council website www.wafatherhoodcouncil.org.

Provider Voices: Flipping on their “Dad Switch”

The team at University of Washington interviewed providers in the state who are championing work with fathers to learn about their perspectives on fathers and how they developed those perspectives. They interviewed eight people across eight different counties (five female, three male). Participants held a range of direct service, administrative and leadership roles in government agencies and nonprofits. Here we highlight two important themes that have emerged from our interviews thus far.

“We have to include dads because their voices matter.”

~ Service Provider

Storytelling

Dads’ stories are powerful. Many participants discussed how they were inspired and compelled to action by the stories they heard from dads and father advocates, through webinars, trainings, classes or one-on-one conversations.

“I sat down with him and heard his story, and I was just absolutely stunned and saddened by how much he had to go through to become a parent.”

“Watching those, probably about 25 hours of [Fatherhood Council] webinars made me want to crawl out of my skin because it ignited, [...] everything I have been taught in all of my years. And once I see it, I can’t not do something about it.”

“[One inspiration has been] getting to spend time with our Director of Fatherhood...and getting to hear his stories, like knowing him personally, working with him and getting to hear his perspectives.”

Personal and Family Experiences

Participants also highlighted how their own personal and family experiences with fatherhood and systems impacted their views and work on behalf of fathers.

“My personal and professional positions just have kind of guided me to this spot of making sure there needs to be equitable services.”

“My brother is a single dad now – I want to make sure he has support, he has people who believe in him because he does not feel supported. He thinks everyone is against him. I want dads to know that people want them around and that we care.”

“Nobody acknowledged you [as a father]. I was present but I was not part of the birthing process [of my first child]. I was a spectator. I was watching things happening. I didn’t want to go through that again for nothing in life, so with that motivation, instead of developing anger and bitterness toward the staff and institutional system I said, ‘Let me turn around and use this as a stepping stone. Use this as motivation. Use this as a background to make something better, something higher.’ And that’s how I came into what I do.”

Future Hopes

At the end of the interviews, we asked what motivates people to continue advocating for fathers.

“It’s the little things in daily life that I see that just keeps pushing me ... The stereotypes. Hearing and seeing how it’s [father stereotypes and exclusion] still so pervasive in society. That’s what keeps pushing me. There’s a lot of work to do.”

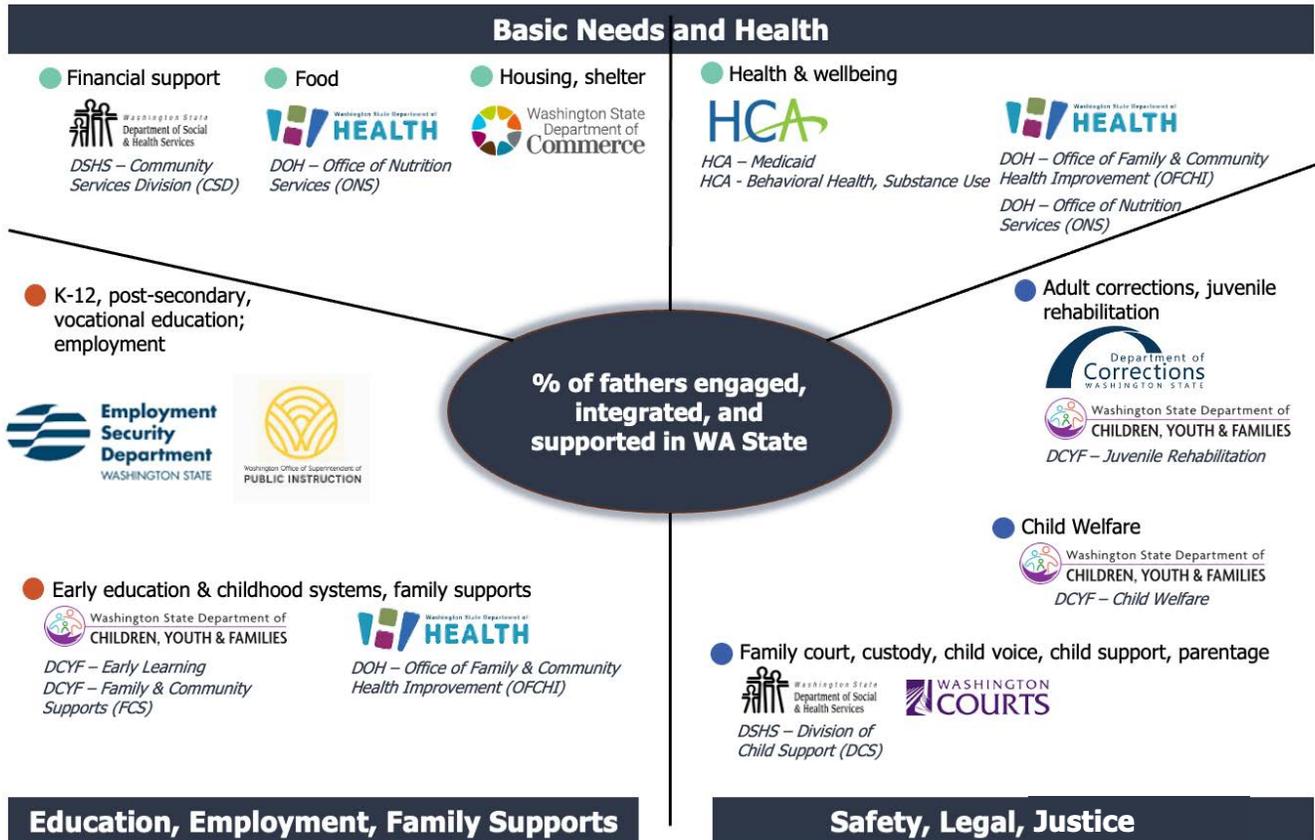
See Appendix H for details.

Washington State Agency Landscape

The Study team worked with state agency partners to assess the current state of programs and services, policies, funding and data related to fatherhood inclusion tied to their mission. State agency partners included the Washington State Department of Children, Youth, and Families; Department of Health; Health Care Authority; Department of Corrections; Department of Social and Health Services and Department of Commerce. The agencies are building upon their commitments expressed in the executed Memorandum of Understanding signed in 2023-24 (Appendix B).

Other partners included the Office of Superintendent Public Instruction, family courts, education systems (early learning, K-12, post-secondary, etc.), Employment Security Department, tribes, policymakers, Poverty Reduction Work Group, Early Learning Coordination Plan, National Fatherhood Roundtable, fathers from the Washington Fatherhood Council and many others.

The Study set out to conduct a comprehensive landscape of all areas that impact how fathers show up for their families, based on engagement with agencies and stakeholder groups that play key roles in supporting father engagement across eight key topical areas, as shown below:

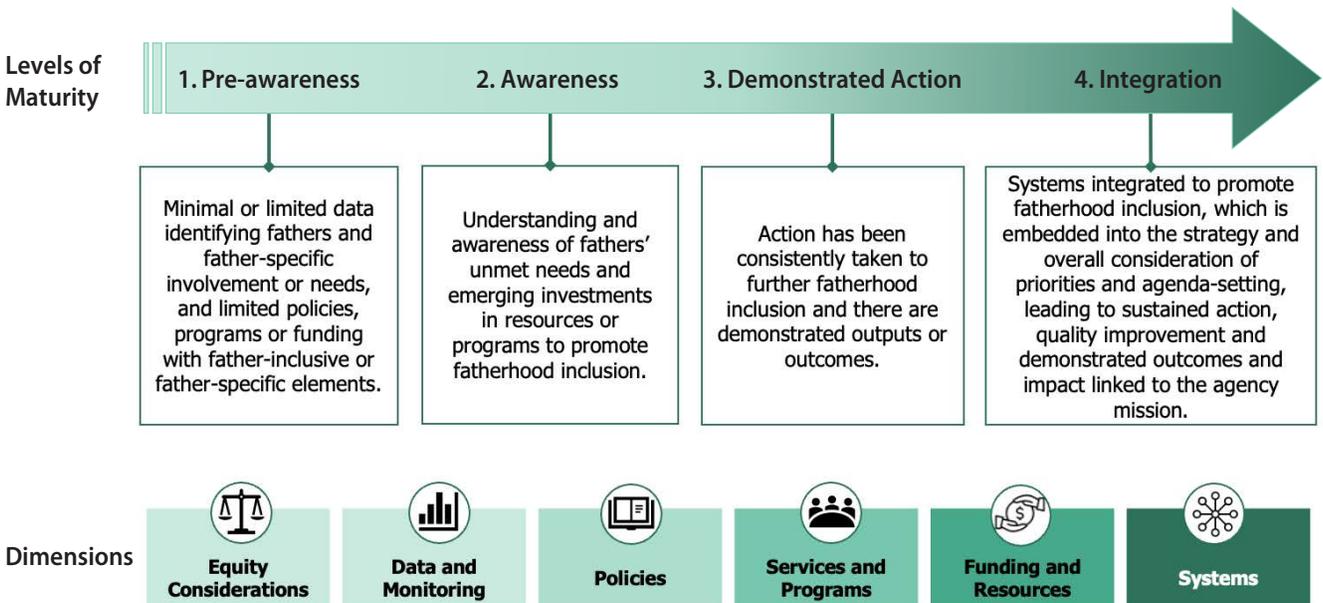


Evaluation Framework

The Study team gathered information through facilitated working sessions and outreach to agencies and key stakeholders, examining if there were father-inclusive or father-specific elements in six dimensions:

Dimensions	Framework Description
Equity Considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Awareness that fathers are often excluded from existing systems and programs. Segments of fathers (e.g., single fathers, those paying child support, low income, young fathers or those with justice/corrections involvement, etc.) may need additional supports.
Data and Monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data related to gender, parental status and family structures is tracked, reported and used for decision-making. Data is needed to understand if/how fathers are equitably eligible and accessing resources.
Policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policies have an awareness for serving whole families and two-generation approaches, and may explicitly call out the importance of equitable access to resources for both parents. Policies are adapting to the needs of diversified family structures, specifically non-cohabiting families.
Services and Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Services and programs are inclusively serving fathers in an equitable and proactive manner. Services and programs are designed or customized to serve the specific needs of fathers and the priority segments.
Funding and Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dedicated and sustainable funding is secured and invested into providing ongoing supports and resources for fathers.
Systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Systems are coordinated, integrated and connected to meet the intersections of needs for fathers. State agencies, community partners, funders, implementers and service providers have embedded policies, priorities and practices that meet the needs of fathers into their mission.

The Study team worked collaboratively with agency partners and the Council to qualify the Levels of Maturity (Pre-awareness, Awareness, Demonstrated Action and Integration) across the topical areas and corresponding agency partners. Across the topical areas, the Study discovered varying Levels of Maturity related to fatherhood inclusion. Father-inclusive programs are those that are open to all parents and are working to welcome and include fathers. Father-specific programs and practices are those that grow out of the evidence based around fathers' unique needs and are often delivered by males (with lived experience) for fathers.



Topical Area Summary Findings – Levels of Maturity

The three topical areas of Corrections, Child Support and Child Welfare, represent the most disruptive systems for fathers and families, and show the most progress toward serving fathers. All of these agencies have Showed Awareness and Demonstrated Action in multiple topical areas because they are collecting relevant father-specific data, implementing policies and strategies to meet the needs of fathers and designing father-specific programs and services.

Across the topical areas of Health and Well-being, Food and Financial Supports, Housing and Shelter and Early Care and Education and Family Supports, the Study identified significant data gaps on how fathers are accessing current services and programs intended to serve whole families. Many legacy systems exist that appear to be hindering data gathering and individual and system biases may exist that are built into structures that further marginalize fathers.

Exploration of the topical areas of Employment and K-12 Education began with potential partnerships (K-12 education systems, the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, Employment Security Department and other stakeholders), but not enough information was collected or developed during the Study to assess Level of Maturity or future commitments. The ESD did join onto the Memorandum of Understanding across the state agency partners (Appendix B) making a commitment to strengthen our collective connection and commitment.

Key stakeholders, examining if there were father-inclusive or father-specific elements in six dimensions:

WA Fatherhood Study: Current State Analysis of Topical Areas

Based on the topical area and agency scorecards, the Study determined a set of key themes that speak to the gaps, opportunities and in some cases bright spots and strengths across the system.

Current State – Dimensional Analysis and Levels of Maturity reflected across Topical Areas										
Dimensions (six)		Topical Areas (eight)								
		Health and Well-being	Food and Financial Supports	Housing and Shelter	Early Education and Family Supports	Employment / Education	Corrections and Juvenile Rehabilitation	Family Court	Child Support	Child Welfare
	Equity Considerations	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green	Light Grey	Dark Green	Light Grey	Dark Green	Light Grey
	Data and Monitoring	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green	Light Grey	Dark Green	Light Grey	Dark Green	Light Grey
	Policies	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green	Light Grey	Dark Green	Light Grey	Dark Green	Light Grey
	Services and Programs	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green	Light Grey	Dark Green	Light Grey	Dark Green	Dark Green
	Funding and Resources	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green	Light Grey	Light Green	Light Grey	Light Green	Light Green
	Systems	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green	Light Grey	Light Green	Light Grey	Light Green	Light Grey

1. Level of Maturity simplified; showed awareness = based on self-assessments of pre-awareness and awareness. Not enough information = during the Study, did not capture enough information with key stakeholders to make an assessment at this time

Legend: Levels of Maturity¹

Light Grey	Light Green	Dark Green	Light Grey
Limited Awareness	Showed Awareness ¹	Demonstrated Action	Not Enough Information ¹

Theory of Change and Logic Model Roadmap

The Council has drawn from the overwhelming body of evidence in this Study to develop a Theory of Change to serve as our strategic road map to achieve the long-term changes from the Study for families in our state. The following image aids in understanding how we all fit in the work and how fathers matter in our quest for the substantial cultural shifts needed to support families in Washington. Indeed many, if not most, of our benchmarks are tied to this redefined holistic view of families. This Theory of Change focuses on key strategies to help us advance the imperatives for improved coordination, greater accountability and the activation of fathers in leading this movement forward in driving improved outcomes for fathers, children and families in our state.

Theory of Change

Values: Diversity of Voice; Equity, Inclusion and Belonging; Family- and Child-Focused, Data-Based Decisions

STRATEGIES

Activities that help achieve Council goals.

Provide education and share fatherhood stories.

Evaluate and shape collective policy and systems agendas.

Work with agencies to identify indicators and co-design measurement frameworks.

Engage with agencies, initiatives and funders to create capacity for fatherhood programs.

Build workforce knowledge and diversity.

Engage fathers as leaders and create pathways for employment.

Create sustainability structure and funding for the WFC.

Convene fathers at the local level to strengthen social connection and advocacy voices.

Promote the importance of co-parenting and intentionally including fathers.

EARLY CHANGES

Knowledge, skills or other changes that are a direct result of initiative activities.

Overarching

- ↑ Culture shift.
- ↑ Integration between and among systems.
- ↑ Funding of father specific work.

State Agencies

- ↑ Opportunities and ↓ barriers for fathers.
- ↑ Indicators in data systems and use of data to drive policy decisions.
- ↑ Father engagement in policy, design and evaluation.

Community Providers and Partners

- ↑ Workforce development opportunities for men in direct service roles.
- ↑ Access for fathers.
- ↑ Training for current workforce about fathers.
- ↑ Father engagement in design work.

Fathers in the Community

- ↑ Social connection, self advocacy and knowledge of tools and resources.
- ↑ Engagement in services.

Fathers on the Council

- ↑ Voice in leadership.
- ↑ Career opportunities.
- ↑ Social and emotional growth.

Private Funders

- ↑ Priorities to intentionally include fathers.

Summary and Next Steps

Moving Forward

The Study has played an instrumental role in shaping the Council’s roadmap for achieving the long-term changes we hope to realize for families in our state. This roadmap aids in understanding how the partners fit in the work, how fathers matter and how we need to make substantial culture shifts to reflect the former for families in Washington. The Study findings, as summarized in this report, lead us to three key strategic areas of focus in moving this work forward. The following key strategies align with Theory of Change strategies:

on Making, Fathers as Leaders, Collaboration

OUTCOMES Ultimate goals.

Fathers

- ↑ Time with children.
- ↑ Parenting confidence and skills.
- ↑ Knowledge of child development.
- ↑ Social-emotional well-being, emotional regulation.
- ↓ Social isolation.

Children

- ↑ Attachment relationship with father.
- ↑ Healthy relationship with both parents.
- ↑ Healthy development across childhood, adolescence and adulthood.

Mothers

- ↓ Stress.
- ↑ Well-being.

Family

- ↑ Cooperative co-parenting.
- ↑ Financial stability.
- ↑ Balance of gender roles in the family.

Community

- ↓ Biases against fathers.
- ↑ Celebrating fathers’ role in family and community.
- ↑ Strengthening community to state partnerships.
- ↑ Strengthening community unity and belonging.

1. **Coordination:** The Council is positioned to play an ongoing and expanded role in providing education; evaluating and shaping policies, program capacity and systems agendas; and supporting coordination and collaboration across state agencies.

2. **Accountability:** The ongoing sustainability of the Council and partner agencies’ commitments rely upon the ability to make data-driven decisions and investments and to establish mechanisms for continuous improvement. To do so, agencies must commit to identifying key indicators and developing measurement frameworks to track and report on key data over time.

3. **Activation:** Most important to the ongoing relevance and impact of the Council’s work is the ability to engage and activate fathers to ensure that their voices and diversity of lived experience are centered in shaping and moving the statewide agenda forward.

The stakeholder engagement process for this report provided valuable insights, created momentum and sparked dialogue across these areas of focus. Our road map and Theory of Change seek to build upon this momentum as well as the individual agency commitments outlined in this report, as we seek to drive toward our desired outcomes of better supporting fathers, improving childhood and strengthening families across the state of Washington.



Long-Term Outcomes

Fathers

- ↑ Time with children.
- ↑ Parenting confidence and skills.
- ↑ Knowledge of child development.
- ↑ Social-emotional well-being, emotional regulation.
- ↓ Social isolation.

Children

- ↑ Attachment relationship with father.
- ↑ Healthy relationship with all parents.
- ↑ Healthy development across childhood, adolescence and adulthood.

Mothers

- ↓ Stress.
- ↑ Well-being.

Family

- ↑ Cooperative co-parenting.
- ↑ Financial stability.
- ↑ Balance of gender roles in the family.

Community

- ↓ Biases against fathers.
- ↑ Celebrating fathers' role in family and community.
- ↑ Strengthening community to state partnerships.
- ↑ Strengthen community unity and father belonging.

The Study represents a critical first step toward building a sustainable approach to creating a fatherhood-friendly ecosystem in Washington. Ensuring that this investment continues to pay dividends will require us to build upon key lessons learned, to take action on several immediate and pressing next steps identified through the process and to put into practice a longer-term strategy centered on our emerging Theory of Change as a Council.



Lessons Learned

The Study presents a point-in-time snapshot of fatherhood experiences and state agency activity within a highly dynamic and evolving ecosystem. The process was iterative and collaborative and, in many cases, fathers and agency partners identified additional opportunities for serving fathers more effectively in each subsequent engagement. In this way, the Study was a catalyst to a conversation and process that can and should yield further and deeper ideas and insights by continuing the inquiry, even after the Study has concluded.

Data availability across agencies is highly fragmented and variable. Because data, monitoring, research and analysis teams often exist in a separate division or even in a different agency than the program or service administrators, along with competing priorities for data tied to external reporting obligations, it takes significant time and resources to collect and assess necessary data on a topic as intersectional as fatherhood. In addition, the Study found risk aversion across several agencies in publicly sharing data that might reflect poorly upon them. As a result, most of the data reported are point-in-time figures based on the very limited current and relevant data available during the course of the Study period. In some cases, available data was not reported in the Study due to limitations in time and resources. In many cases, the Study identified data gaps related to fatherhood experiences and their access to programs and services that are not currently being tracked or reported.

Each agency is on a different path, with a different destination, in supporting the Council's goals.

While creating evaluative frameworks was important for Study purposes, the Council is not prescribing or recommending a common "target maturity level" for each agency. The goal of the Council is to build an integrated system that supports fatherhood inclusion in which many agencies play a role, but all may not need to progress equally in dedicating resources or funding to demonstrate actions toward fatherhood inclusion.

External factors such as team transitions, competing priorities and legislative sessions, to name a few, contributed to the varying levels of details collected and developed for each agency. Inevitably, there are missing data elements, perspectives and content in some areas of the Study. By creating a comprehensive set of topical areas and dimensions for analysis, the Council will be able to systematically and periodically update components of the Study that were not fully captured in this first iteration.

Immediate Next Steps

Given the time-limited nature of the Study, several activities initiated as part of the process have been prioritized to continue building upon the momentum in developing insights and collaboration across agencies and stakeholders. Key areas for ongoing focus include:

1. **Agency Follow-up and Partnership Development:** Due to scheduling challenges, the Study is missing perspectives on employment, education and housing. Perspectives from OSPI, K-12 education, post-secondary education, ESD, WorkSource programs and other key stakeholders will be pursued. The Council also hopes to develop a deeper partnership with the family court system to proactively develop strategies and identify opportunities to better meet the needs of fathers and families.

The Council is working with the Department of Commerce Housing Division to collect relevant information and data, and with the Reentry Council to deepen partnership opportunities. The Council welcomes opportunities to further spotlight and learn from tribal nations and tribal communities focused on fatherhood initiatives or efforts.

2. Council Website Updates – Resource Mapping and Study Findings: The Council has refreshed its website with an updated external scan of fatherhood services that were collected during the Study. The Council conducted its annual Fatherhood Summit in June 2024, where attendees collectively reviewed and discussed the full details of the Study’s topical areas and agency scorecards. The Summit activities provided input into strategic planning efforts as the Council continues to deepen its overall theory of change and the corresponding agency partner commitments and actions needed. The Council has developed an initial set of dashboard metrics that tracks and monitors the inputs, activities and outcomes related to fatherhood inclusion across the system.
3. Data Collection and Dashboard Development: Many of the data issues are nuanced and there are fathers in certain systems and developmental stages of becoming a dad in Washington that are not well-captured or understood through our administrative data. Some examples include fathers of infants and toddlers that are not cohabiting with their mother; BIPOC fathers; fathers navigating family court systems, custody cases and in need of co-parenting plans; fathers experiencing homelessness; low-income fathers who are eligible for and using public benefits such as TANF, SNAP, WIC and Working Connections Child Care; immigrant and refugee fathers; fathers experiencing substance use or behavioral health disorders; and fathers struggling with mental health issues and symptoms related to the postpartum period. To accurately track fatherhood inclusion equitably, significant improvements in data collection and monitoring are necessary.
4. Agency Detailed Data: Each agency’s key data, current state, levels of maturity across the dimensions that were analyzed and confirmed, and aspirational commitments are contained in the appendices of this report.

Conclusion

The State of Fatherhood in Washington Study has been a catalytic investment and important step in galvanizing our statewide ecosystem around a common set of goals, strategies and desired outcomes. While this process has been a large step forward, the long-term work has only just begun. We are hopeful that we can translate the learnings of this Study into statewide action in a way that will make Washington a national model for the fatherhood movement.

“The main thing is I've always had a very open and honest relationship with my children. When they came to visit, I spent hours and hours talking with my children about my choices and what I want for them. We really sat down and had conversations, and I learned how important my [father] role really was.”

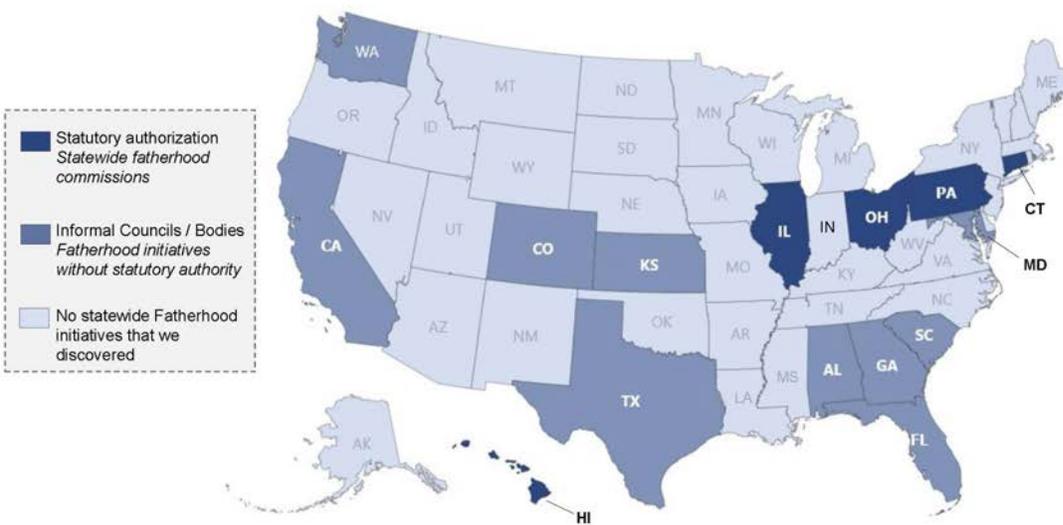
*~ Jim Chambers,
previously incarcerated father*

Appendices

Appendix A – State Case Studies: Lessons Learned, OH, CT, TX and CA

State Case Studies

Map (Editable)



Lessons learned: Stakeholder and Partnership Strategy

As Washington state seeks to formally establish its fatherhood council, its critical to create and sustain buy-in across multiple levels and stakeholder categories.

Recommendation	 Fathers are a critical component of a multi-level coalition	 Leverage executive and legislative branch support to launch	 Connect fatherhood to child and family outcomes in advocacy	 Foster and formalize agency collaboration with MOUs	 Balance cross-agency initiative and single agency leadership
Notes	<p>While decision-makers, agency leaders, service providers, program partners all need to be part of the process and program pieces, involving a diverse group of fathers is critical to developing father-friendly programming.</p> <p>State level examples: <i>CT fatherhood staff directly highlighted that it is critical to include different types of fathers (SES, race, previously/currently incarcerated, sexual and gender identity, immigrants, etc.) and ensure father-figures have a voice and a seat at the table at all stages of development and implementation.</i></p>	<p>Support from legislators and the executive branch can help launch a council or commission and catalyze legislative passage important for establishment and accessing funds. In states with mature fatherhood initiatives, a state representative introduced and sponsored legislation.</p> <p>State level examples: <i>In OH, the governor offered a provision in his budget to set aside funding to help low-income, non-custodial fathers to secure job training and employment at the same time State Representative Peter Lawson Jones was championing the need for fatherhood support. Jones introduced a law to create a Commission on Fatherhood.</i> <i>In CT, State Rep. John Mendez played an integral role in proposing and passing legislation.</i></p>	<p>Many people may not see value in fatherhood support solely for the sake of fathers' wellbeing. Demonstrate connections to child and family wellbeing to help people understand that that fatherhood inclusion and support is central to their mission.</p> <p>State level examples: <i>TX requested a portion of funding from the Department of Family and Protective Services, dedicated to motherhood and children's programs, by demonstrating how the presence of fathers positively impacts child wellbeing, education, poverty, and literacy. Programming then provides supports for fathers to positively parent.</i></p>	<p>Strong cross-agency collaboration is key to a holistic approach that can address multiple interrelated needs and system-level changes. However, cross-agency initiatives may suffer from agency leadership turnover if there isn't a clear designation of role and responsibility within each agency.</p> <p>State level examples: <i>In CT, after facing challenges with agency leadership changes (i.e., confusion on role, lacking knowledge of the need), they developed a Fatherhood Interagency Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) among 15 state agencies, which has helped with continuity, institutionalization of the initiative, and shared language and branding.</i></p>	<p>While inter-agency collaboration is critical to the success of fatherhood inclusion—including a public-facing narrative displaying the collective agency and stakeholder buy-in—the initiative also must have a designated agency/council leader for clear assignment of responsibility, budget management, and administrative operations.</p> <p>State level examples: <i>In CT, the fatherhood website was first part of the DSS site. In an agency-wide streamlining effort, the entire Fatherhood site was lost. They have since created a standalone site for more control and improved access to resources & information.</i> <i>In CA, one challenge in their establishment is lacking a clear agency owner.</i></p>

Sources: key informant interviews with fatherhood initiative administrators in CA, OH, TX, and CT.



Lessons learned: Funding Strategies

States with existing fatherhood councils and initiatives provide insights and pitfalls from efforts to secure funding thus far.

Recommendation	 Consider how funding source will affect outcome metrics	 Start with a right-size budget	 Budget for administration and coordination staffing costs	 Be creative to find funding opportunities	 Do not pit resources for fathers vs. women and children
Notes	<p>The priority goals of federal or state funding sources can dictate how the success of fatherhood programming is measured and tracked.</p> <p>State level examples: <i>In OH, funding comes from TANF and program success is measured in increases in father's child support payments and reductions in families needing TANF support.</i> <i>In TX, funding comes from Community Based Child Abuse Prevention (CBCAP) and program success is measured through child safety and family wellbeing (linked to prevention).</i></p>	<p>Be cognizant of "too much too fast" with a start-up budget, which can lead to reduced quality and oversight and limited outcomes, which could result in disruptions or reduced funding.</p> <p>State level examples: <i>OH started with \$10m, which was too large as an initial budget. They could not demonstrate results as a return on the state's investment, and therefore lost funding. They shifted to "Efforts to Outcomes" to show from fatherhood program involvement increased the father's child support payments, which helped secure future funding and increases.</i></p>	<p>A cross-agency and multi-partner initiative requires administrative and coordination resources (i.e., dedicated and funded personnel) to succeed. It can be hard for just a few leaders to manage the many facets of collaborative work in addition to their other work.</p> <p>State level examples: <i>CT accomplishes a large amount on a small budget, but highlighted the difficulty of operating their initiative without sufficient staffing. They also highlighted the importance of secured staff to help with succession when partnering political or agency leaders step away.</i></p>	<p>Be creative and explore internal and external funding sources. Find alignment with existing opportunities with similar goals. For example, ask for modest funding commitments from family/child initiatives.</p> <p>State level examples: <i>CT found success through their Fatherhood MOUs and state agency solicitation letters to secure funding for Council activities.</i> <i>In CA, they face funding challenges as decision-makers felt there wasn't enough evidence to show positive impacts of fatherhood programs. They are looking for solutions to broaden beyond fatherhood programming alone.</i></p>	<p>Underscore that fatherhood work is linked to working with service providers and advocates for vulnerable women and children for family and child wellbeing to get ahead of the real or perceived tension between the two.</p> <p>State level examples: <i>In CT, it has been important for coalition-building, especially with those focused on women and domestic violence, to consistently message that the goals are about healthy engagement and meeting the needs of mothers, children and families broadly. It is likely that fatherhood efforts will meet resistance if seen to be reducing resources for other vulnerable populations.</i></p>

Sources: key informant interviews with fatherhood initiative administrators in CA, OH, TX, and CT.



Lessons learned: Direct Service & Programming (i)

There are important considerations for implementation of activities within state agencies and with service provider partners that peer states have shared with Washington.

Recommendation	 Be flexible and accommodating to fathers' schedules and needs	 Deploy a multi-level approach for services and programs	 Support localization and contextualization of fatherhood programming	 In-agency fatherhood practitioners can shift culture and systemic biases	 Use fatherhood programming to reduce violence
Notes	<p>Understand and plan around fathers' work commitments and limitations, which means more flexible hours of operation and increasing virtual support.</p> <p>State level examples: <i>In TX, staff found that fathers often have less flexible time off work to connect with programs and children's service providers. They found more success with virtual meetings to connect with fathers one-on-one: it better accommodated their schedules, allowed for evening meetings, and reduced service provider burden of traveling.</i></p>	<p>Target multiple levels: programs and interventions for individual fathers, advocacy for responsibility at system-level, policy changes to undo barriers that hinder full involvement of fathers.</p> <p>State level examples: <i>In OH, the fatherhood council activities include developing policy recommendations, engaging the community, supporting fatherhood programs, and training professionals to target individual, provider, community and systemic levels.</i> <i>In CA, scoping work shows that barriers need to be overcome at both individual and policy levels for improved father engagement.</i></p>	<p>It is best practice to ground fatherhood programs in local contexts and specific needs that fathers have shared, done well through local partnerships and service providers.</p> <p>State level examples: <i>In OH, they developed the Ohio County Fatherhood Mobilization Initiative to provide \$10,000 grants per county to form local fatherhood councils. These councils conduct local needs assessments, build an action plan, then build out programs.</i> <i>In TX, fatherhood council staff highlighted that innovation comes from grantees tailoring services at the community level.</i></p>	<p>Fatherhood practitioners who work inside agencies can help modify the culture and biases that a majority-female workforce bring from personal experiences.</p> <p>State level examples: <i>In OH, fatherhood practitioners sit inside the state child protective services agency, bringing lived experiences, empathy, and reality checks to staff training, colleague relationships, & direct engagement with fathers.</i> <i>In CA, recruitment processes for case workers in the Office of Child Support have stymied ability to increase number of staff with lived experience as father figures.</i></p>	<p>Engage with commissions / governor's initiatives on women, domestic violence prevention, and men and boys' rights groups for conversations about what fathers need, toxic masculinity, fears, biases, and violence.¹</p> <p>State level examples: <i>In CT, the domestic violence prevention coalition has been involved in the fatherhood council since the beginning. This has helped reduce individuals who use services to assert coercive control over the other parent, resolve high conflict cases, and protect against DV. Messaging is focused on healthy engagement, safety and protection for all household members, and collaboration between parents.</i></p>

Sources: key informant interviews with fatherhood initiative administrators in CA, OH, TX, and CT.

1. Global evidence shows that parenting programs can serve as an excellent entry point for conversations and lessons on norms, gender roles, and positive masculinity, yielding reductions in domestic violence. Prevention Collaborative: [Supporting parents and caregivers](#).



5

Lessons learned: Direct Service & Programming (ii)

There are important considerations for implementation of activities within state agencies and with service provider partners that peer states have shared with Washington.

Recommendation	 Use gendered and gender-neutral language intentionally	 Shift away from punitive enforcement of obligations to address multiple needs of fathers	 Conduct outreach and programming with fathers who are incarcerated	 Identify and address biased policies and practices against fathers	 Devote time to educating service providers on the importance of supporting fathers
Notes	<p>Be intentional and clear in using gender-neutral language to include fathers and inclusive language to support co-parenting households and non-resident parents.</p> <p>State level example: <i>In CT, they ask stakeholders and service providers directly who they mean when they say "parents" to uncover biases and provide definitions where possible. They add clarity: does "parent" mean just one parent in a household, or all parents connected to a child regardless of residence? The subsequent language choices focus on inclusion.</i></p>	<p>Shift from punitive enforcement of financial or legal obligations to addressing fathers' social, emotional, financial and relational needs.</p> <p>State level example: <i>CA Fatherhood Council staff member highlighted the importance of keeping the concept of fatherhood services and child support enforcement separate because of the stigma around this: "You don't want dads to think, could this be a trap, could it be a way for enforcement to learn who I am and determine I need to pay up." The council is intentionally distancing fatherhood activities from Child Support via implementation through other agencies.</i></p>	<p>Fathers in prisons can benefit from efforts to prepare fathers for their legal, financial, emotional, and relational responsibilities in fatherhood during and after incarceration and make correctional facilities family-friendly.</p> <p>State level example: <i>The OH fatherhood council engages in multiple ways: participating on the ODRC Family Engagement Council, providing fatherhood conferences inside prisons, presenting on fatherhood in conjunction with OCS, attending re-entry fairs, and right-size child support payments for fathers in prisons to match their small earnings to limit their debt accrual.</i></p>	<p>Be aware and seek to educate state agencies and service providers that systemic biases and disparate treatment make many resources difficult for fathers to access. Assumptions about fathers' limited parenting involvement hurt fathers.</p> <p>State level example: <i>In CA, equal parenting responsibility (i.e., custody) is often not assumed from the start in co-parenting cases which creates challenges. A low-income mom with 50/50 custody might seek and receive TANF for her and child, which renders the father unable to receive TANF even if also low-income. They are seeking to educate on biases and advocate for policy changes.</i></p>	<p>Many service providers who interact with fathers may not have information about the importance of supporting and encouraging fatherhood.</p> <p>State level examples: <i>In TX, fatherhood initiative staff report facing shocked and confused stakeholders when talking a/service bout serving fathers. They educate service providers on fathers' needs through newsletters and events.</i> <i>In OH, the commission proactively educates service providers on why father involvement is vital to children, and they also provide training materials and facilitators for fatherhood programs.</i></p>

Sources: key informant interviews with fatherhood initiative administrators in CA, OH, TX, and CT.



6

Ohio Commission of Fatherhood (OCF)

Commission for 24 years with statewide implementation, and engagement from all three government branches.



GENERAL INFO	
Year Est	1999
Housed in	Dept of Children and Youth (2023)
Initial Funding	\$10M from TANF
Current Budget	\$2.5M (of \$5.5M request)
State Coverage	88 counties (100%)

SCOPE	
Objectives	The mission is to improve outcomes for children and strengthen families by providing opportunities for fathers to become better parents, partners, and providers .
	Program objectives are to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve economic stability to help fathers prepare for, find, and retain employment, • Foster responsible parenting through skills-based classes and mentoring, and • Promote healthy relationships through conflict resolution and communications skills training.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Ohio has a well-established commission, created with bi-partisan support, that receives TANF funding to focus on prevention-based programs operating in all counties.
- Moved away from primary objective of collecting child support payments towards more holistic support for fathers.
- Grant dollars offered to incentivize local fatherhood councils.
- Extensive corrections programming and supports that can provide example to Washington State.

Components	Description / Details
History & establishment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial legislation HB 195, championed by state representation, passed in the 123rd Ohio General Assembly in 1999 with bipartisan support and budget assistance from the Governor's office with objective to help low-income non-custodial fathers secure job training and employment. • Ohio Commission on Fatherhood included in 2000-2001 biennial budget after establishment Ohio Revised Code section 5101.34. • Funding level fell but was resuscitated following a review and recommendation to reinstate funding in 2006. Budget has ranged from \$1m-\$10m/year, primarily through TANF funding. • The commission has been housed in several different state agencies/offices since inception, starting in the Governor's Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives. As of July 2023, the commission transitioned to the newly formed Department of Children & Youth.
People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 20 commissioners that represent all three branches of government. This includes 4 bipartisan house members, 2 bipartisan senate members, a governor's office appointee, a supreme court appointee, representatives from different state departments—mental health, job & family services, rehabilitation—as well as 5 members of the public.
Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget supports programs and salaries. Activities include developing policy recommendations, engaging the community, supporting fatherhood programs, and training professionals. • Funded programs help fathers prepare for, find, and retain employment; foster responsible parenting through skills-based classes and individualized mentoring, promote healthy relationships through conflict resolution and communications skills training; provide assistance to meet basic needs (food, childcare, cash), encourage child support payment, and reduce mothers' need for TANF support; education to prevent child mortality, abuse and neglect; reduce premature fatherhood, and support two household and co-parenting families. • Dads2B program works on the governor's initiative to Eliminate Racial Disparities in Infant Mortalities. • State prison engagement: Participation on Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction Family Engagement Council, provision of three-day Fatherhood Conferences in prisons, presentations on fatherhood, parenting from prison, resources upon release; paternity establishment support; attendance at re-entry fairs.
Bright spots	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ohio County Fatherhood Mobilization (OCFM) Initiative provides \$10,000 grants to counties forming a local fatherhood council. • Expansion of goals and activities beyond financial support aspect of fatherhood to include social and emotional support for fathers, trauma care, and reflection of system biases that fathers face. • Securing child support payment relief to "right-size" incarcerated fathers' payments, reflective of their real incomes, so they don't accumulate large child support arrears while incarcerated. • Demonstrated to lawmakers "Efforts to Outcomes" by showing program involvement increased the rate of father's child support payments. • Working with Child Protective Services to engage and support fathers with case planning so there are ready supports to place the child with a father and/or his extended family. • Expanding a pre- and post-natal support program established for moms to include dads, who become breastfeeding advocates, supportive partners for pregnant mothers, and better neonatal caretakers.

Sources: <https://fatherhood.ohio.gov/about>
 Interviews with: Kimberly Dent, Executive Director and Ashiko Hudson, Program Administrator 3, Ohio Commission on Fatherhood



Texas Fatherhood EFFECT (Educating Fathers for Empowering Children Tomorrow)

GENERAL INFO	
Year Est	2013
Housed in	Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS)
Initial Funding	CBCAP
Current Budget	\$1.8M (for community contracts) ¹ through Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention
State Coverage	13 counties (5.5%)

SCOPE	
Objectives	Fatherhood programs within the EFFECT initiative: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide parent education and resources to fathers, • collaborate with community coalitions, • encourage organizations to increase the quality of supports targeted at fathers, and • expand support for fathers across multiple programs in an organization or community.



KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Texas DFPS has launched a small number of grants without a formal fatherhood commission or statute authority and has maintained this model for 10 years.
- Partners provide parent education programs and support fathers' basic needs with success outcomes measured as children remaining safe, family functioning and resiliency, social supports, and nurturing/attachment.
- DFPS additionally created a network of service providers, host an Annual Texas Fatherhood Summit, weekly newsletters, and curate a resource hub to advocate for better and more inclusive services for fathers.

Components	Description / Details
History & establishment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First fatherhood grants were made by the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services in 2013, with collaboration from Child Support (AG office) and parent engagement workers. • Grants are funded through federal Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention (CBCAP) funds, which are given to Prevention and Early Intervention Division (PEI) to support military personnel & veterans and fatherhood programs. • Grant funding is on five-year cycles, approaching third cycle (2025-2029).
People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The DFPS is lead agency. • There are service providers DFPS grantees in 13 counties; other service provision programs receive funding from United Way or other non-profits. • Example partner are schools, hospitals—usually labor and delivery units, and detention/corrections facilities.
Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grants given for prevention-focused programming to educate stakeholders and fathers, provide basic supports provided (i.e. transportation), and local systems-building efforts to support fathers. • Creation of statewide network of service providers for fatherhood; DFPS hosts Annual Texas Fatherhood Summit for service providers. • Fatherhood Fridays newsletter to providers. Topic examples: father's mental health, addressing fatherhood bias, and ensuring fathers' equal access to services. • Beginning in FY2020, Fatherhood EFFECT's scope expanded to include collaboration with community coalitions, encouraging organizations to increase the quality of supports targeted specifically at fathers, and explicitly including and supporting fathers across multiple programs in an organization or community. • Partners offer 24/7 Dads classes and counseling and create parent advisory councils (PACs) with dads, serving [MISSING DATA] number of dad since inceptions / on an annual basis. • Resources for service providers and prenatal fathers are curated and made available online.
Bright spots	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grantees have space to innovate and contextualize to deliver best fit programming for their communities. • Use of promising and evidence-based models including 24/7 Dad, Parenting Wisely, Parents as Teachers, and Positive Parenting Program to meet basic needs, counseling, and referral navigation. • 24/7 Dad program published success story of participant exploring his own childhood experiences and commitment to prioritize being a good father and husband.

Footnote 1: This budget estimate comes from the program website which lists 9 counties of operation for this budget amount. However, interviewees highlighted 13 counties; therefore, this may be an under-estimate.
 Sources: https://www.dfas.texas.gov/prevention_and_early_intervention/about_prevention_and_early_intervention/fatherhood_effect.asp
 Interviews with Dallen Bell, PEI Youth and Family Program Specialist, Fatherhood EFFECTS.



California Fatherhood Council (CFC)

The Fatherhood Council is newly formed and seeking buy-in and support.



GENERAL INFO	
Year Est	2022
Housed in	No state agency in charge
Initial Funding	Not currently funded
Current Budget	Not currently funded, proposal ready to be shared (\$25m request was denied)
State Coverage	N/A

SCOPE	
Objectives	<p>The CFC does not have formal objectives yet, though its ambitions are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> learn about services that fathers want and need map out existing resources and programs train state workers and service providers how to more positively and supportively interact with fathers fund fatherhood council work with ready-to-go proposal

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- California's Fatherhood Council is a new initiative that is still establishing a home entity, funding, objectives, partners and more. They do not yet have any published materials.
- The CFC was born from understanding the complex and negative relationships between the Office of Child Support and fathers (and families hoping for support, not just payment enforcement), and key folks recognize the need to reshape how OCS interacts with and supports fathers who would like to provide well for their families.
- There are some existing county-level fatherhood programs; these are not yet at the state level.

Components	Description / Details
History & establishment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting Father Involvement intervention was funded by the California Department of Social Services' Office of Child Abuse Prevention from 2002-2012. This is disconnected from current efforts. Driven by a study that demonstrated that mothers and families wanted positive family supports from the state Child Support office, not just punitive enforcement and collection of fathers' child support payments, the Office of Child Support (OCS) started to explore the need for better services for fathers. Director of OCS and HHS Leaders brought fatherhood entities together to ask what they want to see on the state level for fatherhood support. Stakeholders suggested: 1) fatherhood competence training for all the different departments that engage with fathers, 2) learn about the types of services needed for fathers, and 3) map out father-specific services. In August 2022, the Fatherhood Council meetings started happening every two weeks, organized by OCS. Council has a ready-to-go proposal for the legislature, the governor's office, or HHS, seeking to formalize and requesting funding for fatherhood services and programs.
People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leadership at OCF and HHS have worked together thus far to advance the goal of supporting fatherhood. As of August 2023, there is not state entity in charge of CFC and the work is not yet finalized. This is an identified challenge for the council's ability to progress.
Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initiative to build knowledge and experience around the types of services that fathers want and need. OCS Administrator committed some funds to map out the California's fatherhood resources and programs. Development of materials to train state workers and service providers how to interact with fathers. Partnership with First5 (child <5 program) to add fatherhood to statewide efforts. Some counties have fatherhood programs and resource pages that are similar in objectives and activities to more established state fatherhood council programs, but these are not connected to state efforts at this time. (Examples: All Dads Matter in Merced County, First 5 LA, Fundamentals of Fatherhood in Long Beach).
Bright spots	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Problem identification: Administrators and staff in OCS identified the need to fundamentally change how Child Support interacts with fathers—providing supports to help them be able to pay child support as opposed to just trying to collect payments without providing any help—and change child support's purpose, intent, rules and regulations so it can be more supportive to the fathers. Launch of Fatherhood Council meetings as the early-stage effort to ultimately lead to a funded and formalized Council.

Sources: <https://www.cdss.ca.gov/inforesources/ocaf/about-ocaf/supporting-father-involvement>

Interview conducted with David Nigro, Director and Debra Rice, Administrative Assistant II, California Department of Child Support Services; and Brandon Gutierrez, Case Manager, Lassen County



9

Washington Fatherhood Council

Washington Fatherhood Council



GENERAL INFO	
Year Est	Fall of 2018
Housed in	DSHS Economic Services Administration
Initial Funding	1 FTE – Director – TANF MOE
Current Budget	2 FTE Director and Program Coordinator TANF MOE and Program funding – MCHBG
State Coverage	Statewide and cross cutting

SCOPE	
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase awareness of the essential role fathers play in their children and family's well being Lift up fathers voices to support system transformation to increase father friendly policies, programs and practices to increase access and inclusion Promote equitable resources for fathers so they can be the fathers they aspire to be for their children Support and develop parent leadership, connection, and mentorship

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- It has been incredibly important to focus the work at all levels being intentional around local community awareness and capacity building to build a platform for system transformation
- Always lift up the voices of fathers in the design, delivery, and evaluation of efforts and offer compensation for lived experience time and expertise
- Create, nurture and sustain strong cross agency partnerships at the state and local level to buffer from leadership and staff changes. Help organizations see how this is mission centric for their work.

Components	Description / Details
History & establishment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The WFC was founded by a planning committee of 19 public and private partners who worked for one year to hold an invitational Summit to engage partners. That diverse group of 150 attendees voted to start and sustain a statewide fatherhood Council. The Department of Social and Health Services leadership were instrumental in launching this Council as central to their unifying goal of reducing poverty without race being a predictor. There was a broad cross cutting collective of partners an 45 fathers with lived experience at that first summit and each Summit in subsequent years has grown in number and perspective The first year a Charter was formed and a strategic plan that included a set of values that support the Mission and Vision
People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DSHS funds 2 staff positions Department of Health has funded 3 years of community building and workforce development activity The Council is made up of 30 "members" (self appointed) and there are roughly an additional 20 friends of the Council that stay informed about the work
Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Council maintains a robust speakers bureau made up of staff, partners and fathers who have spoken at 50+ engagements with partner agencies, funders, state and national conferences on a broad variety of topics to raise awareness and shift mindsets to shift the fatherhood narrative Developed and delivered over 25 Dad Allie Provider Learning Series topic with state and national topic experts engaging fathers with lived experience whenever possible Conducted 10 Fathers Matter Community Cafés with approximately 100 attendees made up of providers and fathers in an in-depth conversation to build awareness and capacity at the local level Annual Summit to continue to raise awareness and accelerate the work. Provide technical assistance to organizations who wish to do more for fathers, and staff participate in a broad array of statewide planning and policy efforts in cross cutting disciplines.
Bright spots	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In 2022 the public partners co-generated a Memorandum of Understanding across the relevant agencies to create commitments, guide the work, and increase sustainability of the work. In 2023-24 the WFC completed its first ever State of Fatherhood in Washington study to map the ecosystem and potential commitments and increased traction for the work

Sources:



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Appendix B – Memorandum of Understanding

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DSHS # 2361-47740
2461-47740



STATE OF WASHINGTON DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL AND HEALTH SERVICES

Strengthening the Washington Fatherhood Council

Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

Between

Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS)

AND

Department of Health (DOH)

Health Care Authority (HCA)

Department of Corrections (DOC)

Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF)

Employment Security Department (ESD)

Department of Commerce (COM)

This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) confirms the commitment to the cross-agency collaboration on the Washington Fatherhood Council (WFC) between the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS), the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF), the Health Care Authority (HCA), the Department of Health (DOH), the Department of Corrections (DOC), the Employment Security Department (ESD), the Department of Commerce (COM) and others to be named with expressed interest.

1.1 Purpose

WHEREAS, child and family well-being are improved when fathers are positively engaged in their children's lives;

WHEREAS, when their fathers are positively involved in their lives, children are likely to develop stronger social competence and resiliency, speech and conversational skills, emotion and behavior regulation, and problem solving and cognition, improved school readiness and higher academic achievement including higher grades, less grade retention, fewer preschool and K-12 discipline issues, improved behavioral health, school completion, and less likely to enter the justice system, regardless of parental living situation.

WHEREAS, families and parents are all different and children thrive in many types of family structures. It is critical that fatherhood inclusion and belonging hold a broad view of family and support both fathers and father figures supporting children.

Strengthening the Washington Fatherhood Council
MOU DSHS # ~~2361-47740~~
2461-47740

WHEREAS, we recognize that fathers experience individual and system biases that make it difficult for them to be fully involved in their children's lives. Marginalized Washington fathers must be prioritized and welcomed and we need to create culturally attuned and equitable supports.

WHEREAS, ongoing conversations with fathers, and the Washington Fatherhood Council Environmental Scan (2019), indicate there are few services that meet their unique needs, and they are hard to find and access.

WHEREAS, the Washington Fatherhood Council, a cross cutting collaborative effort works to amplify the diverse voices of fathers in Washington and promote pro-equity fatherhood inclusion, and research activities to strengthen families and maximize children's potential.

NOW, THEREFORE we, the Department of Social and Health Services, the Department of Children, Youth, and Families, the Health Care Authority, the Department of Health, and the Department of Corrections, and Employment Security Department, and the Department of Commerce, agree to further the goals of the Washington Fatherhood Council Strategic Plan through:

- Each agency exploring opportunities to infuse father friendly culture;
- The promotion of fatherhood inclusion in contract language;
- Intentional community partnership building.

2.1 Duration of the MOU

This MOU is effective from June 1, 2024 through May 31, 202⁹~~8~~, regardless of the date signed by the parties. Any party may choose to cease their participation in this MOU, upon mutual agreement, prior to the May 31, 2029 MOU end.

2.2 Agency Liaisons

All parties agree to have specifically named liaisons that regularly attend Council meetings and events. These liaisons also serve as the primary contact to support the implementation of the agreement and the infusion of father friendly culture within their agency and bring those success back to the broader learning community.

2.3 Reporting

The Agencies shall develop a joint annual report prepared by the WFC staff with Council partners input to be disseminated in a variety of audiences that should include:

- Relevant Legislative Committees (i.e. Human Services, Youth, & Early Learning – House, Human Services – Senate) by the Council anniversary of September 30 each year.
- The Health and Human Services Sub Cabinet
- The Children and Youth Behavioral Health Workgroup
- The Council and its broad stakeholder group
- Share excerpts from the findings at the Annual Summit

The intent of these communications is to create stronger partnership opportunities and find areas of synergy toward common goals and how fatherhood inclusion articulates within their work.

Strengthening the Washington Fatherhood Council
MOU DSHS # 2361-47740

2.4 Financial Responsibility

This is a non-financial agreement. Any costs incurred by any party during the performance of the annually identified tasks shall be the responsibility of the individual agency incurring the expense.

The Council Director will be administratively housed within DSHS and is accountable to build and maintain the cross-agency collaboration and support necessary to move the effort forward and refine the focus to achieve our collective goals.

3. Signatures:

The effective date for this MOU is June 1, 2024, regardless of the date signed by any of the parties. In witness whereof, the following officials execute this MOU as follows:

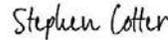
Approved:
Department of Social and Health Services



11/2/23

Terry Redmon, Assistant Secretary
Economic Services Administration

Approved:
Department of Children, Youth, and Families



5/20/2024

Stephen Cotter, Office Chief
Contracts, Procurement and Purchasing Office
DCYF Contract # _____

Approved:
Department Of Health

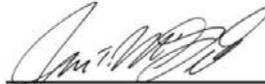


02/05/2024

Lacy M. Fahrenbach (Feb 5, 2024 13:01 PST)

Lacy Fahrenbach, Chief of Prevention
DOH Contract # GVS29168-0

Approved:
Washington Health Care Authority



1/4/2024

Jason McGill, Assistant Director for
Medicaid Programs Division

Approved:
Department of Corrections



4/4/2024

Danielle Armbruster, Assistant Secretary
Reentry Division

Approved:
Washington Health Care Authority



12/12/23

Keri Waterland, Assistant Director for
Division of Behavioral Health and
Recovery

DocuSigned by:
Ismaila Maidadi 1/5/2024
Ismaila Maidadi, Director DATE
Employment Connections Division
Strengthening the Washington Fatherhood Council
MOU DSHS # ~~2361-47740~~
2461-47740

Approved:
Washington State Department of Commerce

Diane Klontz May 14, 2024
Diane Klontz, Deputy Director DATE
Department of Commerce

Strengthening the Washington Fatherhood Council
MOU DSHS # ~~2361-47740~~
2461-47740

Appendix C – Department of Corrections



Topical Area:
Corrections and Juvenile
Rehabilitation

Father Daughter Dance at Cedar Creek March 6, 2024

● Adult Corrections

Community-level Insights from Fathers Matter Cafés



What works for fathers:

- Peer mentors inside and out make a huge difference
- Some dads, like those in Strength in Families get extra support to find housing when many won't rent to felons.
- Getting set up with Medicaid, an ID before release
- SIF, PIO, GRE, Parenting Sentencing Alternative all help dads reunite with their family
- Education supports while inside like trades and GED
- Child Support abatement helps reduce –legal financial obligations
- Currently incarcerated father sharing their stories through Council events
- When dads can visit with their kids while incarcerated it keep the bonds, it keeps them more motivated, and reunification easier.



What doesn't work for fathers:

- Coming out of prison with large debt -fines, fees, costs, restitution, child support
- Experiences of facing stigma upon re-entry – lifetime lack of amnesty
- Need more coordination with outside systems and services
- Placement far from kids so visiting is almost impossible
- Gatekeeping by mom and her family can really shut dad out



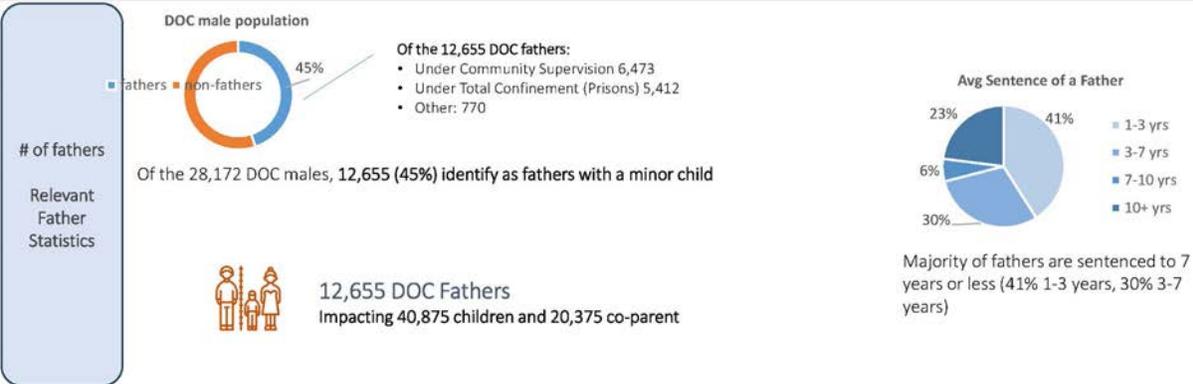
What needs to change:

- Lots of programs in some prisons and in the community but no programs in other prisons need more access in all facilities
- Fathers need support in navigating and scheduling visitation, particularly when co-parenting is difficult
- More SIF, PIO, and Family Navigators in all facilities fully staffed
- See incarcerated individuals as parents and share success stories

Adult Corrections



Current State: Data Summary



While 45% of the male population under the DOC jurisdiction identify as a father with a minor child, **only 7% of the fathers receive visits from a minor across prison and community facilities**

Visitation¹

- Across the 10 prison facilities, 908 men received at least one minor visitor; 1,738 total visits from minors
- Across re-entry centers, 17 men received at least one minor visitor; 6 women received at least one minor visitor; total of 33 minor visitors with 124 total visits
- Minor visitors may be siblings, children, stepchildren, cousins, nephews, nieces, etc. the report is not

Agency Overview – Programmatic Overview (1 of 2)



Program	Parent Sentencing Alternatives (PSA): CPA / FOSA	Strength in Families (SIF)	Parent Navigator Program / Family Reunification
Description	Family and Offender Sentencing Alternative (FOSA) and Community Parenting Alternative (CPA) are alternatives to prison confinement for nonviolent offenders with minor children - reentry planning, community transition, early release via electronic home monitoring, intensive community case management, assistance and resource support to the reentered parent and their children/families.	SIF is a DOC-funded program for incarcerated and recently released parents. Components of this program consist of parenting and relationship skill building, assistance for Child Welfare involved families, reentry planning assistance, community transition, intensive community case management, resource support to the reentered parent and their children/families.	Funded through a legislative proviso, Parent Navigators work with incarcerated parents that have a child(ren) involved in dependency matters. They focus on individualized reunification and/or guardianship plans, identify barriers to parent/child visitation and create new pathways to collaborate with DCYF to achieve service plan goals, identify services, attend dependency court reviews, and deliver Dependency 101 education classes.
Location / Facilities	• Statewide	• (3) Stafford Creek Corrections Center (Aberdeen), Washington Correction Center-Training Center (Shelton), Cedar Creek Corrections Center (Rochester) • (11) Community facilities and related Reentry Centers	• (2) Prison facilities: Airway Heights Corrections Center (Spokane) and Washington Corrections Center for Women (Purdy)
Budget	• \$2.9M per biennium (new 3-year grant for \$750,000)	• \$1.35M FY 2023; \$1.48M FY 2024	• \$300,000 FY 2024
# of participants	• 456 participated (from 2010 – 2023) • 68 currently enrolled (majority in the community) ¹ • Max caseload: 15 per specialist	• 984 enrolled (2016-2023) • 156 currently enrolled ² • Max caseload: 35 per case manager (4 of case managers)	• 38 men currently enrolled (program started in 2023); 88 total participants (men and women) • Reasonable caseload: 25 per parent navigator
# of children	• 169 children in active/current caseload • 92 children for FOSA, and • 77 children for CPA	• Avg 3.2 children per SIF participant • 69 of 156 (44%) active/current Child Welfare cases • 55 of 156 (35%) active/current Child Support orders	• 38 active/current Child Welfare cases for men; 88 total active/current Child Welfare cases (men and women parents)
Staffing	• 1 Administrator • 3 Supervisors/Managers • 8 Case Managers • 1 Administrative Support	• 3 Supervisors/Managers • 4 Case Managers • 1 Administrative Support	• 1 Parent Navigator dedicated to fathers; 1 dedicated to Mother
Recidivism / return to prison rate)	• 10.7% (as compared to male average of 23%); <i>It took 5 years until a father-participant of CPA returned to prison</i>	• TBD	• Not currently tracked, will track it (by 3-year time period, and need to have a large enough comparison group (>1000) to call it recidivism, otherwise called return to prison rates)

¹ PSA data is currently available data that was compiled from all active participants (including those in facilities and in the community) as of 7/17/2022

Agency Overview – Programmatic Overview (2 of 2)



Program	Parenting Inside Out ³	Statewide Visitation Program ²	Family Centered Services
Description	An evidence-based parenting skills training program developed for justice involved parents. PIO has a proven impact on reducing recidivism and criminal behavior while improving family relationships and parenting skills.	DOC has in-person visits at all prisons and Reentry Centers. Prison visits consist of 3 types; regular visits, no contact visits, video visits on Securus. There are also Extended Family Visiting (EFV) are offered at every prison. Most of the Visit Program funding comes from the General Fund and the Incarcerated Individual Betterment Fund.	DOC has a variety of services which assist in maintaining and strengthening family relationships during incarceration, detailed below.
Location / Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two separate pathways: SIF offers PIO at Cedar Creek Corrections Center, Stafford Creek Corrections Center and Washington Corrections Center; other facilities offer as able, through paid DOC staff volunteers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Statewide availability for in-person visits Statewide availability for EFV 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Statewide availability throughout the year
Budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No dedicated funding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facility Visit Programs: Individual DOC facilities are responsible for funding much of their own visit programs Visit Room Photo Program: \$24,000 FY 2024 Extended Family Visiting: \$250,000 FY 2024 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$554,600 FY 2024 (includes programs and events for prisons, reentry centers, criminal justice centers, lodging and transport assistance, Parenting Inside Out) Family Centered Services are funded by the Incarcerated Individual Betterment Fund.
# of participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 968 completed (between 2006-2023)³ 	From 7/1/2023 – 12/31/2023: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All prison facilities, 908 men received at least one minor visitor; 1,738 total visits from minors Re-entry centers, 17 men received at least one minor visitor; 6 women received at least one minor visitor; total of 33 minor visitors with 124 total visits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 521 for FY24 only (July 1-December 31, 2023) incarcerated men participating in family programs

1. Staffing shared across programs: The only dedicated, paid PIO instructors are with the SIF program (3 instructors at 3 facilities), and Parent Navigator program (2 instructors at 2 facilities). The rest of the classes statewide are taught by volunteer DOC staff. Family Friendly events generally coincide with visitation, therefore, extra staffing is not required, however is sometimes provided.
 2. For statewide visitation: minor visitors may be siblings, children, stepchildren, cousins, nephews, nieces, etc. The report isn't limited to immediate family only, the numbers provided are of all minor visitors.
 3. Data is for DOC males who have completed Parenting Inside Out/SIF Parenting Inside Out as of 10/31/2023. Data includes males who have completed PIO or SIF PIO and whose course completion and/or program certificate was entered in OMNI.

Adult Corrections



Current State: Programs Overview

Program Outcomes and Outputs

Parent Sentencing Alternative (PSA): 68 currently enrolled, as of Jan 2024 (456 completed program 2010-2023).

"It was 5 years since the program started before a father (participant of PSA) returned to prison"

- Strength in Families (SIF): 156 currently enrolled, as of Jan 2024 (984 enrolled in program 2016-2023).** Program for incarcerated and recently released parents. Some, but not all, components of this program consist of parenting and relationship skill building, assistance with improving family bonds, and assistance for DCYF involved families (i.e., dependency).
- Parent Navigator / Family Reunification Program: 38 men currently enrolled, as of Jan 2024.** Program that support incarcerated parents with active DCYF cases, in dependency and family reunification upon release; intended to help strengthen the parent/child relationship with the goal of increasing the child's success, reduce intergenerational incarceration and recidivism³.
- Parenting Inside Out (PIO): 968 completed the program (2006-2023).** Parenting skills training program developed for justice-involved parents.

10.7% recidivism

Parent Sentencing Alternative (PSA)
(Compared to 23% recidivism male avg)



There are 291 spots across PSA, SIF, Family Reunification father-inclusive and father-specific specialized programs can serve about **2.3% of the total 12,655 justice-involved fathers** (recognizing not all fathers will qualify for programs). While not all programs have tracked recidivism or return-to-prison rates, PSA has a 10.7% recidivism rate (as compared to the DOC male average of 23%)

Within the state's 10 male-only prison facilities...

Only 3 have the Strength in Families (SIF) program

Only 1 has the Parent Navigator / Family Reunification program

Source: Data provided by Department of Corrections DOC for the Study



● Adult Corrections



Current State: Levels of Maturity Across Areas

Policies

3 Action

Father/family-friendly policies have been updated to improve the experience of parenting while justice involved¹.

- Parent Sentencing Alternative,
- Extended Family Visitation,
- Reduction of child support payments while parents are incarcerated,
- Family Reunification Services,
- Parent Navigators - pilot

Funding and Resources

2 Aware

Only a small percentage of fathers/parents can access family support programs.

Additional sources of funding are required for high-quality and sustainable programming across all facilities and in all communities.

Systems

3 Action

A key strategic **focus across state agencies such as DOC, DCYF, Commerce, DSHS is on the seamless integration of state and local resources** to support justice involved families, reentry readiness and navigational supports.

Services and Programs

3 Action

There are various programs **offered to fathers within the Corrections system** that have proven significant positive impact

DOC has demonstrated action to customizing and adapting programs that support the unique needs of fathers.

Data and Monitoring

3 Action

Program enrollment and associated recidivism data is available.

There are opportunities to collect parenthood status data at intake more systematically

Equity Considerations

3 Action

Intergenerational incarceration rates broken down by racial subgroup highlight the **importance of family-supportive programming** that disrupts these cycles.

DOC is looking at intergeneration impacts, whole family approaches, and racial/ethnic disparities



Agency Successes



State Level Snapshot

The Department of Corrections (DOC) has strong **awareness** for the need of father-inclusive policies, **demonstrated action** in delivering fatherhood intensive programming (e.g., Parenting Sentencing Alternative, Strength in Families, DOC Statewide Visitation Program, Parent Navigators, Family Centered Services, and Parenting Inside Out), and has **integrated** in partnerships with DCYF, DOH, Commerce, DSHS, and other partners.

- Some programs and services are limited such Parent Navigators in only 2 facilities and Strength in Families offered at 3 facilities in Western WA.
- Policies: Parenting Sentencing Alternative (PSA) is a bright spot in maintaining family connection, Extended Family Visitation policy supports families; 61 sons and daughters of incarcerated fathers participated in EFV visits in 2023 (until 12/1/2023; Family Services and Family Council policies
- The DOC Divisions offer support services that are father-inclusive and include:
 - Prisons Division: Parent Navigation which assists parent with Access to court hearings with DCYF, family court, visitation rights, parental rights, access to a public defender, access to parentage establishment services connecting fathers to DNA testing
 - Reentry & Correctional Industries Division: Resource navigation, transitional housing, support obtaining a state ID card

Community Snapshot

Bright spot:

- Projects to improve visitation rooms are underway, including training for correctional staff to support family visitations
- DOC parent program staff (Parenting Sentencing Alternative, Strength in Families, Parent Navigators, Family Centered Services) participate yearly on numerous father/child focused councils/committees and conduct presentation to raise awareness
- DOC parent program staff have participated in ALL Fathers Matter Community Café's sponsored by the Fatherhood Council to support reentry Dad in sharing their voices



Corrections Metrics

Future State: System-Level Recommendations and Outcome Metrics

Recommended Impact Outcomes & Supporting Data Metrics

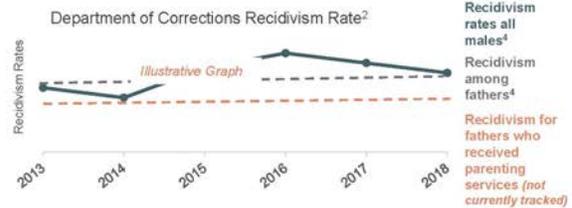


If WA can successfully track the number of fathers in the corrections and rehabilitation systems, those receiving services, and associated recidivism rates, it would be possible to **measure the impact of father-specific and father-supportive services affecting dad's wellbeing, reentry success, and recidivism.**

Metrics to track system-wide



Example Data Outcome to Track & Monitor



Research shows the importance of family connection and reunification in reducing recidivism.³ The positive impact of providing father-supportive programs could be demonstrated in a time series downwards trend of recidivism or return to prison rates for fathers who received parenting services, or a lower recidivism rate as compared to all males or all fathers.

1. In addition to recidivism, other impact metrics could be desistance for the juvenile population, or tracking qualitatively if an individual does return to prison was it on a higher, lower, or equal crime/felony level
 2. Adult recidivism measured by criminal acts that result in a return to a Department prison facility with or without a new sentence during a three-year period (36 months) after being released from prison. Source: <https://www.doc.wa.gov/information/definitions.htm>
 3. US DOJ Office of Justice Programs, "Inmate Social Ties and the Transition to Society: Does Visitation Reduce Recidivism?", 2008 <https://www.ojp.gov/ncjrs/virtual-library/abstracts/inmate-social-ties-and-transition-society-does-visitation-reduce>; Minnesota Department of Corrections, "The Effects of Prisoner Visitation on Offender Recidivism", 2011. https://mn.gov/doc/assets/11-11MNPisonVisitationStudy_tcm1089-272781.pdf
 4. Based on DOC reporting from 1/6/2024, "Request Title: SP5710 Fatherhood Study - Recidivism Rate", Data Source(s) and Date: OMNI data, as of 12/31/2023, the recidivism rate based on those released in 2019, over a 3-year period, for all males was 23.89%, for those who identified as a father was 23.91%

Agency Commitments



Future Commitments

Policies	Funding and Resources	Cross-Agency Partnerships
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhance existing policies to direct staff to increase assistance to parents involved in Child Welfare and Child Support Create more transparency, awareness, and outreach during intake to enable parents to be more comfortable disclosing their parental status Create policies & procedures to support and offer parentage establishment services such as DNA testing for incarcerated fathers in order to support continued engagement and access to their children while incarcerated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhance funding for programs that provide support to parents - Parenting Sentencing Alternative, Strength in Families, Parent Navigators; Enhance and fund a centralized DOC team that provides support and resources to incarcerated fathers and their families. Increase financial visitation assistance to non-custodial parents bringing children to visits regardless of miles traveled. Current policy requires travel to be >150 miles away for an approved visitor to request \$50 a maximum of twice per month. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Family navigators, Community Corrections Officers, reentry case managers connect reentry/released individuals to a wide-variety of community resources. Work on solutions to complicated legal matters - child welfare, child support, and family court matters. DOC has improved housing voucher policy 1) An individual does not have to be homeless to qualify for a voucher, 2) No longer have to show indigence (no money) to qualify for voucher; improving the policy by increasing voucher fund amount to \$700/month up to 6 months Increase so every prison facility has parent navigators Continue partnership with the Statewide Reentry Council
Services and Programs	Data and Monitoring	Community-Engagement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integrate alumni participants from DOC parenting programs or program volunteers to support, and mentor participants in the programs Offer more parenting classes during incarceration and enhance with paid instructors for PIO (or similar parenting program), co-parenting, dependency/child welfare systems, and participation in parent-teacher conferences. Expand parent specific case management support statewide in both facilities and the community. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve process of data collection: DOC attempts to collect parenting demographic data via <i>The WA ONE</i> series of questions. Possible process improvement includes increased consistency of conducting the interview and consistency in quality of recorded answers. At facility reception center intake, create more awareness and transparency for individuals to feel more comfortable on disclosing their parental status and children in their lives. 	<p>DOC parent specific program staff should continue to engage in community and outside DOC organizational committees to support ongoing efforts to support and improve father programs and services.</p> <p>Continue to conduct presentations in the community, to organizations, and other state agencies to build awareness and educate others on the services available, struggles, and needs of incarcerated fathers and their families and to build partnerships/relationships with those entities.</p>

DOC Appendix: Agency Data (1 of 2)



Additional Data Points

Among all incarcerated individuals

Most common community correction violations for men who identify as fathers and are on community supervision ²	% of total violation count	Legal Financial Obligation balance of DOC involved men who identify as fathers on the WA ONE ¹	% of DOC fathers / (% that reported a minor child)
Drug/alcohol	34%	\$500 or less	69% (20%)
Affirmative conduct (Failure to Obey All Laws, Failing to Work/Evaluations/Treatment/Programs as Required, Non-participation in Mental Health Treatment)	17%	Between \$1,000 - \$10,000	22% (41%)
High violation (Absconding, Prohibited Contacts, DV Violations, Search Refusal, Threatening/Assaultive Behavior, DOSA Violation, Weapons/Ammo Possession, Unapproved Residence.	15%	Over \$10,000	9% (9%)
Reporting	10%		
Geographic	10%		
Other	5%		
Financial	3%		
Sex offender	2%		
Alleged new crime	2%		
Contact	1%		
Prohibitions	0.75%		
Offender program	0.6%		
Court revocation	0.01%		

- As of 10/31/2023 OMNI on the WA ONE.
- Data represents all field violations across all time and may have occurred during a different DOC jurisdiction than they are currently serving on.



DOC Appendix: Agency Data (2 of 2)



Additional Data Points

Strength in Families (SIF) program data

- Total # of SIF participants enrolled since 1/1/2016: 984
- Current # of active SIF participants: 156 (1.2% of the 12,655 of males that identify as fathers)
- SIF participants # of children (352 responses): 1,072 children under the age of 25. A total 55% of SIF participants have between 1-3 children, 31% have somewhere between 4-10 children.
- 100% of SIF participants polled had co-parents. 58% had one co-parent, 23% had two co-parents, and 19% had three or more co-parents.

Age of SIF participant	% of SIF participants ¹	Prior employment status	% of SIF participants ¹	Top post-release financial challenges ²	% of SIF participants ¹
18-20	2 (0.6%)	Full time employment	40%	Legal financial obligations	70%
21-24	15 (4%)	Illegal employment	26%	Bad or no credit	68%
25-34	134 (38%)	Not employed, able to work	16%	Finding affordable housing	59%
35-44	155 (44%)	Not employed, unable	4%	Child support payments	46%
45-54	45 (13%)	Part time work	7%	Other debts owed	41%
55-64	4 (1%)	Temporary, seasonal work	7%	Obtaining a bank account	35%
65+	1 (0.3%)			Financial literacy	22%
Living prior to incarceration	% of SIF participants ¹	Marital status prior to incarceration	% of SIF participants ¹	Phone/video chat with your children in the last month	% of SIF participants ¹
Rented	39%	Have no current partner	42%	None	43%
Lived with family/friends	37%	Romantically involved	24%	1-3 times	40%
Lived on streets/car	15%	Married	22%	Daily/almost daily	17%
Have owned a home	6%	On again/off again relationship	12%		
Shelter/transitional housing	3%			Legal order for child support	% of SIF participants ¹
				Yes	50.4%
				No	49.5%

- SIF participant pre-program survey results (Feb 2021-Nov 2023). Between 350-360 participants polled per question.
- Participants asked to pick top three.



Appendix D – Department of Health

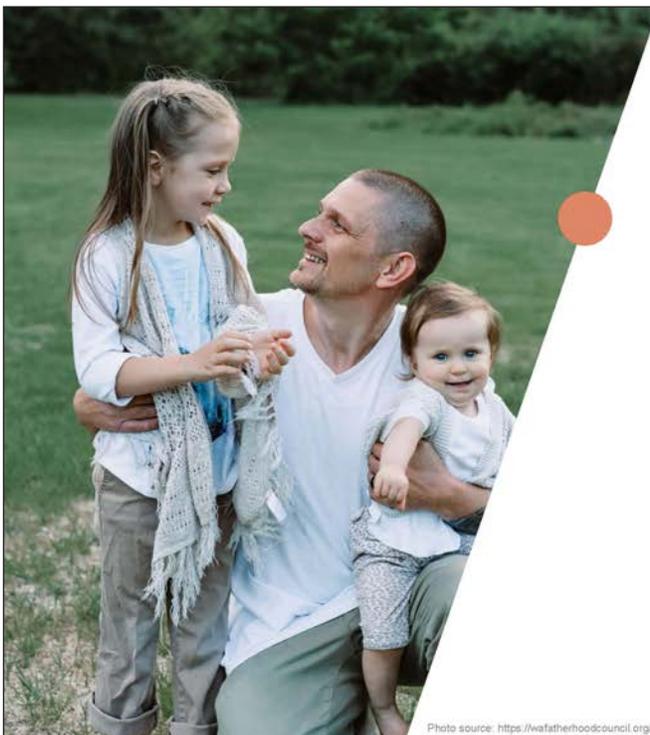


Photo source: <https://wafatherhoodcouncil.org/fatherhood-photo-bank>

Topical Area: Physical, Mental and Behavioral Health



● Physical, Mental and Behavioral Health

Current State

Community-level Insights from Fathers Matter Cafés



What works for fathers:

- Dad doulas are just getting started in WA and they help dads feel connect and valued.
- Sometime Oxford houses are great but other times the make up of the dads make it not place I want to bring my kid.
- Younger generations of fathers are getting more open to ask for help.



What doesn't work for fathers:

- It's hard to ask for help because stigmas still exist, there can be legal consequences with family and dependency courts when fathers admit they need help.
- Men want to talk to other men and especially those that know what I am going through, there are way fewer men counselors.
- During pregnancy and birth I am an afterthought, nobody really pays attention to dad.
- Doctor's office visits are all focused on moms, when I show up with children they ask for mom.
- There are no treatment places for dads where I can bring my kid.
- Employers don't provide insurance and leave for Dads to take care of themselves and their families.
- No post partum screening and support for fathers.



What needs to change:

- More treatment facilities that take dads with their kids.
- More medical providers helping Moms and Dads understand the important role of Dads in early childhood development.
- More skin to skin contact at birth.
- Dads need access to sick leave, paid family leave, and medical insurance.
- More peer to peer supports for Dads



"The only time the medical team talked to me in my wife's long labor what to ask me to sign the form giving permission for her C-Section.

Community Café Father

*"It's really **hard** for men to admit they're struggling with their mental health*

– Steven Thibert, Council Father



Agency Overview



Office of Nutrition Services (ONS)

State Level Snapshot

The Office of Nutrition Services (ONS) includes:

- WIC
- Breastfeeding Peer Counseling (BFPC)
- Farmer's Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) – both WIC & Seniors
- SNAP-ed
- The acronym "WIC" refers to the "Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for **Women, Infants, and Children**" which contributes to a common misperception that WIC is not available to fathers. This misperception persists despite outreach that states "Dad, grandparents, and other caregivers of children under the age of five may also sign kids up for WIC."¹
- Mission "To safeguard the health of low-income women, infants, and children up to age 5 who are at nutrition risk by providing nutritious foods to supplement diets, information on healthy eating, and referrals to health care."² the program was designed to target mothers and young children. This focus led to policies and systems that unintentionally leave out fathers, especially those that do not live with the mother. For example:
 - Only one EBT card to access WIC food benefits is issued per family and given to whomever applies for WIC first. This is often the mother during pregnancy
 - WIC outreach and services are often focused on and tailored to the primary audience of the mother/child dyad

Key Metrics & Data Points

- WIC does not have data around the gender of primary or second caregivers of children participating in the program.
- WIC serves nearly 50% of all infants, 1/3 of pregnant women, and 1/4 of children under 5 in WA State.³



Bright Spots

- WIC has an Outreach Coordinator to build community partnerships & further WIC's reach, including targeted outreach to non-cohabiting families and fathers.
- WIC has an Equity & Partnerships Coordinator to find pathways for more community member participation, inclusive of non-cohabiting families and fathers.
- WIC staff serve on the Washington Fatherhood Council to find pathways for more equitable access for non-cohabiting families and fathers.
- WIC develops and provides education materials, best practices, father-inclusive images and content.

"WIC has taught me how to bond with both of my girls. The WIC program encourages healthier eating options and things to do to keep adults and children active" – WIC Dad

1. Source: <https://doh.wa.gov/you-and-your-family/wic/wic-eligibility>
 2. Source: [About WIC: WIC's Mission | Food and Nutrition Service \(usda.gov\)](#)
 3. Source: [DOH: About WIC](#)

4. Source: [engaging-wic-dads-one-pager.pdf \(nwica.org\)](#)
 5. Source: [2023 state of wic report.pdf \(nwica.org\)](#)



Agency Commitments



Office of Nutrition Services (ONS)

Commitments by the (6) Dimensions

Policies	Funding and Resources	Cross-Agency Partnerships
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate & update WIC Policy to be more inclusive to non-cohabiting families. • Appoint subject matter expert(s) including fathers & non-cohabiting families at Office of Nutritional Services (ONS), to provide policy input. • Historically WIC targeted efforts at the mother/child dyad. Currently there is a focus on serving the needs of non-cohabiting fathers and other non traditional caregivers. These efforts are dependent on staff leadership and need to be institutionalized. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urge National WIC Association and USDA to prioritize and fund larger projects for engaging non-cohabiting families in WIC and SNAP-ed. • Specifically examining how to best include supporters of lactating people in the WIC program. • Engaging fathers at WIC is a priority of the National WIC Association. • As long as WA WIC meets the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) and other required policy updates and regulations USDA has for the program there is flexibility in the funding. • As this effort can be embedded into existing WIC, BFPC, FMNP, and SNAP-ed programing, extra funding would be minimal. 	<p>ONS could benefit from increased partnership with many at Department of Health, including but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PCH Equity and Social Justice (ESJ) Team • Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) • Office of Family & Community Health Improvement (OFCHI) • Office of Health And Safe Communities (OHSC) • Health Systems and Quality Assurance (HSQA)
Services and Programs	Data and Monitoring	Community-Engagement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate and update public facing materials, such as the WA WIC website. • Utilize National WIC Association's toolkit "Engaging Men and Dads at WIC Toolkit" to encourage local partners to engage more fathers • Engage ONS Outreach Coordinator and Equity & Partnerships Coordinator to expand outreach efforts • Bring in SNAP-ed subject matter experts within ONS to see how that program could better include and engage with non-cohabiting fathers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate data sharing agreements to make de-identified, aggregate WA WIC data available to partners. • Urge the National WIC Association to look at men, dads, and other non-cohabiting families when creating their annual "State of WIC report". 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Host training with local agencies around engaging fathers including referring partners to support for the prenatal/postpartum/lactation experience. • Embed these efforts into existing outreach efforts at ONS, including connection to peer support groups and community organizations engaging with fathers. • Embed these efforts into existing efforts to involve community participants more in decision making and discussions about the programs they utilize or would like to see

Source: <https://media.nwica.org/engaging-men-and-dads-at-wic-toolkit.pdf>

Legend ■ Aspirational ■ Possible commitment



Levels of Maturity

- Pre-Awareness
- Awareness
- Demonstrated Action
- Integration

Department of Health, Office of Nutrition Services (DOH ONS): **Awareness**
 Strong awareness, with pockets of demonstration action. Examples of action underway:

- Facing historical and current lack of disaggregated data by gender and family composition, ONS is currently in conversation getting commitment from WIC's data and technology staff to find data on fathers, in-kin caretakers, foster parents, and same sex couples using/applying for WIC
- Development and dissemination of father-inclusive materials and education
- Dedicated engagement in Fatherhood Council has promoted statewide workforce development, and community awareness (e.g. Provider Learning Series, State WIC Conference)
- WIC is working on more inclusive breastfeeding awareness, knowledge, and education for early infancy. WIC was planning on piloting dads-only breastfeeding classes prior to the onset of COVID disruptions



Agency Overview

State Level Snapshot	Key Metrics & Data Points
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Office of Family and Community Health Improvement (OFCHI) works to promote health and well-being of individuals, families maternal and infant health. • DOH has invested in local and statewide fatherhood initiatives through the Maternal Child Health Block Grant (MCHBG), mainly direct services targeted for mother and child. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8 local health jurisdictions (~30%) have MCHBG funded home visiting programs that are inclusive of fathers however the numbers reported by DCYF are low. • 3 local health jurisdictions have included fatherhood inclusion strategies in their 2023-2024 MCHBG workplans. • The Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs (CYSHCN) and Child Health units utilize part of their MCHBG allocations to support fatherhood initiatives. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$49,848 of the CYSHCN annual allocation supports the Washington State Fathers Network.
Community Snapshot	Community Bright Spots
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As of the time of this study, there were not any significant father-specific or father-inclusive programs funded directly by DOH OFCHI at the local community level. • A small number of Local Health Jurisdictions (LHJs) support, engage, promote, fund fatherhood focused efforts. • The Spokane Regional Health District works collaboratively with the Spokane Fatherhood Initiative, Health Justice Alliance, and The Shades of Motherhood / The Learning Project Network to implement fatherhood inclusive and specific programming locally; the Spokane Regional Health District also embeds the HOPE framework in its policies, and promotes outreach and engagement of fathers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WA State Fathers Network: DOH provides funding for the WA State Fathers Network, a network that provides a platform and connects fathers and families of children with a disability or special health care need with each other and with resources and information.



Agency Commitments



Office of Family & Community Health Improvement (OFCHI)

Commitments by the (6) Dimensions		
<p>Policies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess existing OFCHI processes and procedures to determine how to recognize, support, and engage fathers. Coordinate with partners to increase access to mental health/substance use disorder prevention and treatment for pregnant and parenting people. The Washington State Maternal Mortality Review Panel¹ recommends to "Expand definitions for who qualifies for the program (e.g., including fathers, partners, families, more than one child)". 	<p>Funding and Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to provide catalytic funding support to the Washington Fatherhood Council and Washington State Fathers Network that enables Dad Allies Learning Series, Fathers Matter Cafes, and many other local / community efforts 	<p>Cross-Agency Partnerships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to collaborate with DSHS to advance the work of the Washington Fatherhood Council including DOH representation on the Council. Continue to convene cross-sector partnerships to promote family well-being that is inclusive of fathers (e.g., Essentials for Childhood).
<p>Services and Programs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess existing OFCHI programs, practices, and services to determine how effectively they recognize, support, and engage fathers. Coordinate with federal and state partners to promote father-inclusive language and practices. 	<p>Data and Monitoring</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure father-specific questions are included in MCHBG needs assessment. Continue partnership with DCYF to support home visiting data collection and evaluation activities. Continue to explore the feasibility of implementing the Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System (PRAMS) for Dads national co-hort. 	<p>Community-Engagement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify opportunities to strengthen outreach and education for fathers during the perinatal period.

¹ Washington State Maternal Mortality Review Panel: Maternal Deaths 2017-2020

Legend

- Aspirational
- Possible commitment



Levels of Maturity



Office of Family & Community Health Improvement (OFCHI)

- Pre-Awareness
- Awareness
- Demonstrated Action
- Integration

Department of Health, Offices of Family and Community Health Improvement (DOH OFCHI): **Awareness**

While various programs and services with OFCHI range between maturity levels of Pre-awareness, Awareness, and Demonstrated Action, overall, the office's level of father-inclusion lands in the awareness level, with several indications of action being taken (e.g., WA State Father's network, and funding for Fatherhood Council). While some LHJ's include fathers in their MCHBG workplans, currently many direct services funded at the state level are targeted for mother and child. Notably, there is a lack of father-specific data to support further action. To further OFCHI's father-inclusivity, there is a need for more robust and comprehensive data collection on fathers and father-specific needs and services to achieve father-supportive strategic outcomes and outputs.



Appendix E – Department of Children, Youth, and Families



Topical Area:
Early Education and Family Supports

● Early Education and Family Supports

Current State

Community-level & Lived Experience Insights

Taken from 10 local *Fathers Matter Community Café's* attended by 280 fathers, service providers, and dad allies.



What works for fathers:

- Some men in the early childhood classrooms and home visiting
- Growing awareness around needing more male role models.
- ECEAP has dads on the parent advisory councils and das learn how to advocate for their kids
- More Dads are involved in planning and advisory groups



What doesn't work for fathers:

- Community groups to build resilience don't include dads
- Groups often meet when dads can't come
- Parenting facilitator say "parent like mom, have a unified front", "but I parent like me I am a Dads"
- Home visiting doesn't include dads very often
- Child care subsidy is confusing when there are two households so often Dad thinks they don't qualify
- Child care enrollment and recruitment is all sent to moms
- People say they make decisions about what gets funding from community people but dads are not in those groups.



What needs to change:

- More male role models in early care and education services
- More outreach to Dads about child care and how to afford it.
- More awareness of Dads role in early development
- Increase support and training to home visiting on how to work with dads
- Requiring early childhood services to reach all parents
- More male providers in all services.

1. Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study Fact Sheet: <https://fcws.princeton.edu/publications>

Early Education and Family Supports

Current State: Statewide Agencies

Key Agencies Impacting Fathers

Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF)

- Division of Early Learning
- Division of Partnership, Prevention, and Services – Family & Community Supports



Washington State Department of CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILIES

Current Metrics

- 6% of single fathers access Working Connections, as compared to 80% single mothers, and 14% parents from two-parent households
- 213 out of 3,093 slots (6.8%) are fathers enrolled in Home Visiting, as compared to the remaining 93% which are mothers

State of the State Study: What we learned across six dimensions at the agency-level

Policies

1 Pre-Aware

The [Early Learning Coordination Plan \(ELCP\)](#) and the [Preschool Development Grant \(PDG\)](#) are the guiding policies in WA state that drive strategy, equity goals, and key impact outcomes. There is some **emerging awareness** of the unique needs of fathers across these policies and frameworks

Funding and Resources

1 Pre-Aware

There is a combination of national (Head Start, Home Visiting, PDG) and state (ECEAP, HMG, ESIT, Working Connections) funding efforts that support the early learning, education, and childhood systems. There is **minimal dedicated funding** that is fatherhood specific statewide.

Systems

1 Pre-Aware

The early learning, childhood systems in DCYF work closely with DOH, DSHS – CSD/TANF, HCA, and many others. There is **growing awareness** that systems need to focus on both parents in outreach and involvement.

Services and Programs

2 Awareness

Statewide programs include Head Start, ECEAP, Working Connections, ESIT, Strengthening Families, and Help Me Grow (HMG). There are local partnerships with implementing and community-based organizations designing fatherhood specific or inclusive programs.

Data and Monitoring

1 Pre-Aware

DCYF data and monitoring metrics are focused on two-generational impacts of early childhood systems; more parental involvement and impact metrics are being captured, but not consistently. There is an **awareness of the need** to understand father involvement and needs

Equity Considerations

1 Pre-Aware

There are some bright spots in local communities that are developing and implementing fatherhood programs for men of color / communities of color, but a **consistent awareness or emphasis on equity considerations is lacking**, specifically among communities experiencing disparities



Key Takeaway:

Overall, DCYF Early Learning and Family & Community Supports are developing an **awareness** of the importance for involving both parents in the engagement and development of early childhood systems. Historically, these systems engaged primarily with the mother and child. There are opportunities to **better understand the unique needs of fathers**

1. Pre-awareness—limited data, funding, programs or strategy for father-inclusive or –specific elements. Awareness—understanding of fathers’ unmet needs and emerging efforts; Demonstrated Action—Action consistently promoting fatherhood inclusion; Integration—Systems integrated to promote fatherhood inclusion, sustained action and demonstrated outcomes

Early Education and Family Supports

Future State: System-Level Recommendations and Outcome Metrics

System-Level Recommendations



Across early childhood and early learning systems, there is a **need for understanding fatherhood involvement, participation, and specific needs** for culturally specific services. There is an **opportunity to increase awareness, outreach, participation, and increase the percentage of male service providers**, and those with lived experiences in the workforce



There are opportunities to **pilot and fund fatherhood-specific and –inclusive activities** both statewide and locally; build local coalitions and groups to activate fatherhood involvement in early childhood systems, involve more parent voice groups to include both male and female presenting parents, and **fund workforce development** and parent advisory groups to include male presenting service providers and parents

Recommended Impact Outcomes to Build & Monitor

*Nationally, nearly 85% of EHS children had at least one father or father figure involved in their lives, however EHS services only reached a small percentage of men. Home visitors reported that only 19.9% of families they served had a father participate in a recent home visit. Similarly, only 19.3% of families reported that a father had ever attended an event specific to men/ fathers. This finding reveals a **continued missed opportunity for working with fathers and father figures who play important roles in children’s lives.**¹*



Across Early Learning, Family & Community Supports, and early childhood systems, there is an opportunity to measure and track the **number of fathers involved** (i.e., non-cohabiting parents or shared custody) in a child’s life

Impact outcomes (to build & monitor):

- % of fathers involved in child’s life (captured during intake/enrollment into programs)
- % of fathers enrolling or accessing programs, services, or funding
- % of male-presenting service providers in workforce

Hypothetical Data Metric

of dads participating in Home Visiting Programs (currently available) out of the total families that have dad involvement in child’s life (need to track)

1. Schindler, H.S., & Granda, C. (2023). A portrait of fathers in Early Head Start: Two decades later. Paper presented at the American Educational Research Association conference.



Agency Commitments



Washington State Department of
CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILIES

Early Learning

Commitments by the (6) Dimensions

Policies	Funding and Resources	Cross-Agency Partnerships
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create more strategic awareness and explicit call outs for strategies and funding to include dads when engaging, designing, and implementing funding, programs, and services for parents and families. • When creating quality frameworks, family engagement guidance, and performance standards, there are opportunities to call out father and fatherhood figure engagement. • There is an opportunity to clarify eligibility across programs (child support¹, SNAP, TANF, WIC, Working Connections childcare subsidies Paid Family Medical Leave benefits, and others) so that fathers know what they qualify for, especially when the co-parent is accessing the same programs. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential to engage across DCYF's divisions in Family & Community Supports (FCS), Juvenile Rehabilitation (JR), Child Welfare, and Early Learning to develop cross-sectional strategies in engaging fathers within the context of families • Align to PDG, ELCP goals and strategies, infant early mental health workgroup, and coordinate strategies to focus on fatherhood related efforts; specifically, within ELCP, there is an opportunity to call out the unique needs of fathers more explicitly
Service and Programs	Data and Monitoring	Community-Engagement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create more awareness, outreach, recruitment, and engagement with fathers and fatherhood figures • There are opportunities to design/fund fatherhood inclusive or specific initiatives and outreach efforts through Head Start, ECEAP, and Working Connections to engage with this underserved population and better understand the challenges associated with access to early learning and childcare programs for children on behalf of fathers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are opportunities to collect data on gender differences in family engagement & involvement during intake and enrollment of children into Head Start, ECEAP, or parents accessing Working Connections childcare subsidy programs • For Working Connections, where there is a much lower uptake of single fathers (6%) as compared to single mothers (80%), there is an opportunity to better understand the root causes, potential barriers for single fathers and the potential negative impact on children if fathers cannot access affordable child care. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with contractors and community partners to determine how quality and family engagement is implemented across service providers, and how service delivery can be designed to meet the unique needs of fathers. • Partner with Cultivate at University of Washington, to understand if there are evidence-based practices, industry best practices, and disaggregated data analysis to better engage and serve dads.

¹ An example: fathers who are non-custodial parents (NCPs) that have child support orders from the Division of Child Support (DCS) had misperceptions that NCPs are ineligible for Working Connections if the other parent was already accessing child care subsidies through Working Connections; DCYF Early Learning has since clarified that both parents including NCPs are able to apply and access Working Connections



Levels of Maturity



Washington State Department of
CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILIES

Early Learning

Pre-Awareness

Awareness

Demonstrated Action

Integration

Department of Children Youth and Families – Early Learning (DCYF EL): **Pre-Awareness**

- Given that in the early learning world we address the work from a holistic place, we have not specifically focused our efforts on fathers but rather families.
- For our ECEAP programming, we explicitly expect programs to submit written plans to encourage fatherhood involvement.
 - Although we could disaggregate the data to accurately identify the number of fathers that participate in ECEAP, this is not something that a reports develops automatically so with the funding necessary, we would have to automate our software and applications to do this.
- For our subsidy system (Working Connections Child Care) we can accurately identify the number of fathers. However, we do not require father-specific involvements, and our strategy has been focused on ensuring working class and/or income eligible families apply and receive subsidy, so we will continue growing our strategy around father-inclusive elements.



Agency Overview

State Level Snapshot	Key Metrics & Data Points
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ESIT hosts the Parent Institute for Engagement (PIE) – a 12-month training program for parents to engage in leadership & advocacy efforts Strengthening Families and its Home Visiting programs have developed webinars and trainings to engage with fathers through the Fatherhood Provider Learning Series; currently, the Community Based Child Abuse Prevention Grant – community capacity funding went to Tribal fatherhood programs (i.e., Fatherhood is Sacred or Conscious Fathering), Strengthen Families Locally, Child Welfare Early Learning Navigators (CWELNs) and Public Awareness/Primary Prevention HMG WA is a statewide and local system that provides resource navigation for families with young children to access social, health, and basic needs; while funding comes from DCYF, WithinReach is the implementing organization that delivers services (e.g., navigation, resource directory, client intake); HMG WA is building tags for its resource directory for fatherhood specific resources. <p>DCYF Family & Community Supports' priorities in the near term are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase engagement with fathers through parent advisory groups, PIE, and other family facing efforts Provide strategic guidance in community funding to consider both parental figures while engaging families 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Program enrollment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 213/3093 slots of fathers enrolled in Home Visiting¹ 6 out of 40 are fathers in DCYF's Parent Advisory Group TBD # of fathers in PIE (funded by ESIT); TBD TBD # of fathers connected to early intervention services (ESIT; DMS data) Cost/Funding: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$40K per program; 3 tribal communities received community funding for fatherhood programs
Partner or Community Snapshot	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Through Strengthen Families Locally, funded by a five-year federal grant, four communities have developed Strong Community Networks that include using data for Local Prevention Plans: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kitsap Strong is a coalition that builds resiliency for families; through its partnership with Strengthen Families Locally, and the Fatherhood Council, hosted a Community Cafe, and is supporting a fatherhood group (no funding). The Health Justice Recovery Alliance in Spokane is primarily serving communities of color and has focused some efforts on dads of color as priority populations based on high rates of child welfare in black and American Indian populations. Strengthening Families Washington also contracts with Partner Organizations such as Tribal fatherhood programs, Family Resource Centers (FRCs), diaper banks, etc., to meet the needs of local communities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unsung Heroes: Single dad approaches fatherhood with strength, courage and excitement Unsung Hero Seattle's Child (seattleschild.com) Child Welfare Early Learning Navigators (CWELNs) – case management for supporting a dad in setting up child care enrollment after child was reunified with dad Tribal fatherhood programming is in its second year of funding and hopes to be re-funded for one more year.

1. Based on HRSA data for FY 2021, the Washington Home Visiting Program served 2,858 participants and conducted 14,963 home visits using the Nurse-Family Partnership and Parents as Teachers evidence-based models.



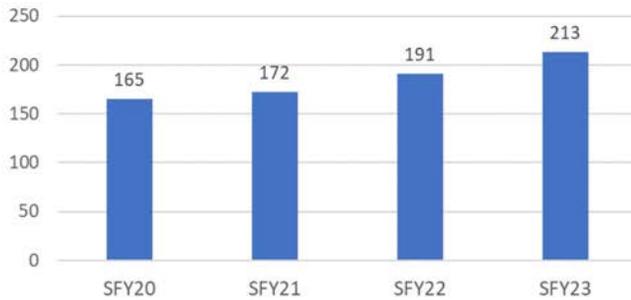
Agency Tribal Dads Overview

Tribal Snapshot
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DCYF funded Tribal Nations Fatherhood Program: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lummi Nation Snoqualmie Indian Tribe United Indians of All Tribes Foundation All three programs chose to use the Fatherhood Is Sacred/Motherhood is Sacred, in some cases are blending with other curricula. The programs focused on areas such as Suicide Prevention, Addressing Family Violence and Abuse, and Strengthening Relationships. They are also building in cultural practices such as drum making, participating in events such as Powwows. # of fathers who participated: From November 1, 2022 – December 31, 2023: 15 fathers participated in the combined 3 programs Duration of the funding: Contracts started November 1, 2022. We expect to renew them through September 30, 2025. Key Activities: The first year included start up work, including recruiting and training program facilitators, and recruiting participants. They have also had to navigate staff turnover and figure out how to recruit and retaining participants. Narrative / father experiences: Fathers who have stayed in the programs have found them beneficial, as evident from this excerpt from a letter from one participant: <p><i>I recently completed the "Fatherhood is Sacred" program. This program was facilitated by Clayton Burley and Wayne Graika. The program was great from my perspective. One of the best aspects was the fact that both Wayne and Clay were very open about their own experiences as well as very accepting of mine. The three of us are from seemingly very different backgrounds, however, as we got to know each other and worked through the sessions, I found that we had much more in common than I thought. Every man has some form of childhood and generational trauma and while ours were drastically different on the surface, I found that we all had the same goal. To be better fathers than those before us, to honor the traditions of the Snoqualmie people (our ancestors), and to help others do the same.</i></p> <p><i>The program was well aligned with my current life situation as it dealt heavily with recovery. While I am not in recovery myself, my spouse is and I have had many friends, past and present, that have experienced recovery in their lives. I believe in the fellowship of AA/NA as it has saved my wife and I found that my learnings from her and her fellowship were closely aligned with the program.</i></p> <p><i>I also strive to be a better father, leader, spouse and community member and the learnings from this program contain some great tools to get there.</i></p> <p><i>Finally, on a personal level, I am newly enrolled in the Snoqualmie Tribe. My great grandfather was basically stolen from his people, and it has been a long road back home from there. Once again, the Snoqualmie People, notably these two gentlemen, have proved that I am welcome, that I belong and that I have come home. I thank them and Ginger from the bottom of my heart for that and I look forward to a long and valuable friendship.</i></p>

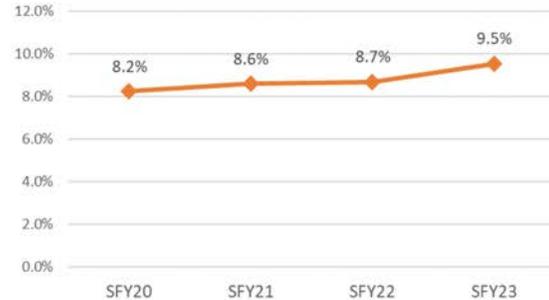


Male Caregivers Enrolled in HVSA SFY2020-2023

Number of male caregivers served as enrolled participants, All HVSA, SFY20-SFY23



% of Male caregivers served by HVSA, excluding pregnant caregivers, SFY20-SFY23



Note: It needs to be clarified as to what is meant by "enrolled participants" (i.e. single dads, non-cohabitating fathers served directly, in-tack couples with fathers present).



Agency Commitments

Commitments by the (6) Dimensions

Policies	Funding and Resources	Cross-Agency Partnerships
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create more strategic awareness and explicit call outs for strategies and funding to include dads when engaging, designing, and implementing funding, programs, and services for parents and families. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create an awareness and feedback loop structure to build a mechanism for more funding and resources at the community level to engage fathers and fund more fatherhood specific activities that meet their needs. Leverage existing local community efforts (e.g., Kitsap dad support group, or Spokane community of color, dads of color group) to learn about bright spots and needs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential to engage across DCYF's divisions in Family & Community Supports (FCS), Juvenile Rehabilitation (JR), Child Welfare, and Early Learning to develop cross-sectional strategies in engaging fathers within the context of families Align to ELCP goals and strategies, and coordinate strategies to focus on fatherhood related efforts Continue to strengthen partnerships with other agencies, such as DOC to support parents and families -Parenting Inside Out, DOC navigators working with CWELNs.
Services and Programs	Data and Monitoring	Community-Engagement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create more awareness, outreach, recruitment, and engagement with fathers and fatherhood figures in Parent Advocacy / Advisory and capacity building to increase male service providers through workforce development. Create processes (e.g., HMG resource navigation intake) and trainings that explicitly ask about father and father figure participation, involvement and understands the dynamic between parents; develop customized referral pathways (via HMG system) for fathers to access specific resources. Consider opportunities to engage male providers, or those with father experiences in the workforce; diversify gender representation of service providers in early childhood systems. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue or further expand data collection at the funding and programmatic levels to capture how often dads or male-presenting parent are receiving, participating in programs/services (e.g., Home Visiting programs, ESIT's early intervention services, HMG WA resource navigation) Utilizing data to understand the potential barriers and challenges associated with accessing programs (e.g., ESIT, Home Visiting) when the child goes from mom's care to dad's care 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify any best practices or local community bright spots in serving dads or convening parent advisory groups that engage all parents, employ male service providers with lived experiences Identify community organizations or groups outreach and recruitment of fathers to join and engage in parent advisory or advocacy groups (e.g., DCYF Parent Advisory Group, ESIT PIE, or HMG Family Voice Group); support & utilize advisory structures to engage individuals with lived experiences to inform policies and programs for fathers Continue to leverage regional and local coalitions or community engagement structures (e.g., WCFC, SF Locally (locales), DCYF regions for Child Welfare) to identify needs and gaps

Levels of Maturity

● Pre-Awareness

- Awareness
- Demonstrated Action
- Integration

Department of Children Youth and Families – Family & Community Supports (DCYF FCS): **Pre-Awareness**

- Currently there is limited data being collected across family & community supports to fully understand the unique needs of fathers and how they engage or would want to participate in programs such as ESIT and home visiting programs, or how they may need specialized resource navigation support from HMG WA.
- While there are limited funding, programs and strategies that are explicitly targeting fatherhood initiatives or promotion, there are existing structures like the Parent Advisory Group, and Parent Institute for Engagement (PIE), and HMG WA is in process of forming a Family Voice Group, that can be leveraged to identify the unique needs of fathers, and to better understand systemic or structural barriers for engagement.
- To move to an awareness stage, the focus is to collect father-specific data and engage with diverse fatherhood voices



● Child Welfare

Lived Experience Insights

Taken from 10 local *Fathers Matter Community Café*'s attended by 280 fathers, service providers, and dad allies.

What works for fathers:

- When dads understand it is not about us, but about the kids the resources really help
- When fathers' families are found in a relative search and are part of the process it is better for Dads and children
- Engaging dads and their extended family in the process doubles the resources for the child
- Having a family navigator (in DOC) has finally put someone on my side in the CPS process- helped me reach my caseworker and attorney.
- Peer to peer supports with someone who has gone through the system

What doesn't work for fathers:

- Dads have to work extra hard to be seen as a fit parent-the bar is set lower for moms and higher for dads.
- Dads have to pay for mandated services- classes, supervised visitation, and they may not be able to pay for it.
- Each situation is different and not all parents have the same issues but often may have the same requirement
- Burden of proof – when mom accuses dad of something he has to prove he didn't do it, if dad accuses mom of something he has to prove she did.
- Difficult finding jobs that supports mandated activities – court, classes, random UAs
- Sometime the GAL/ CASA doesn't talk to dads or hear their side

What needs to change:

- Need more collaboration with child welfare and all the other folks who work with families
- Still missing Dad's family as possible placement and that reduces the chance that Dads will be a permanent choice.
- Many dads say they can't reach their caseworker and don't get court date notices or call outs.
- Need more training for GAL/CASAs to realize the important role of fathers and how to engage them

“ I had to go through 19 programs to have the court see me as an option for my daughter and I had to pay for all of them.
Fatherhood Council Dad

Lots of stigma around dads as a “fit parent” why don't we start off the process in court thinking both parents are an equal option.
Fatherhood Council Dad ”

1. Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study Fact Sheet: <https://fcws.princeton.edu/publications>

Agency Overview

State Level Snapshot	Key Metrics & Data Points
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overview: DCYF Child Welfare has the Child Protective Services (CPS), foster and kinship care, child welfare providers, and related areas that focus on protecting and ensuring the safety of children HB 1227 Keeping Families Together is an important and recent policy enacted with the intention of reducing number of children placed into care; it has increased the removal standards, and led to longer periods of evaluation, when more services and supports can be provided to families. The Families First Prevention Services Act focused on improving well-being of children and families already experiencing DCYF involvement. The evidence-based supportive services and programs focus on families; currently the plan does not have fatherhood specific programs Child Welfare working with family navigators at DOC to support incarcerated fathers in access to their children and their case; Dad can access Securus services allowing money transfers and access to electronic media services to call children, co-parent, social workers. DCYF Child Welfare teams have a long and extensive history with the Fatherhood Council, including Engaging Fathers website, award, leading Dad Allies meetings on safety planning and CPS, and permanency; attending the Fatherhood Summit, and Parent Allies groups that train foster care parents with a focus on dads. 	<p>Prospective Data –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Program enrollment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> # of fathers served, participating child welfare programs # of fathers that attend Child Welfare meetings (data on participation or involvement) – this is currently tracked Gender differences on return to parents (disposition data) Increased relative search #'s (e.g., increased ability to reach dad's family for placement with relatives) Cost/Funding: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$ Funding that's inclusive or specific for fatherhood programs \$ Funding – court ordered treatment plans that go to male parent
Partner or Community Snapshot	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Child Welfare liaisons in all 6 regions focused on fatherhood inclusion activities, attend the Fatherhood Council meetings, and seek resources to reduce barriers for fathers. Service providers for parent education are including fatherhood specific and culturally appropriate curriculum such as Nurturing Fatherhood and 24/7 Dad Amara – Brave Conversations, provides local support for parents, foster care parents, and kinship care support, partners with fathers with lived experiences, speak to foster care families about the importance of fatherhood involvement. Focus program – works with parents with lived experiences, and has specifically recruited fathers, to work with parents/families that are undergoing investigation, in order to prevent removal of children. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CW Dad Award in June 2023 – father receiving award have a powerful narrative.



Agency Commitments

Commitments by the (6) Dimensions		
Policies	Funding and Resources	Cross-Agency Partnerships
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Families First Prevention Services Act focused on improving well-being of children and families already experiencing DCYF involvement. The evidence-based supportive services and programs offered to families currently does not have fatherhood specific programs; there is an opportunity to update the programming to include more father-specific services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some barriers and unintended challenges associated with supporting incarcerated parents, fathers face barrier in seeing their families, access to legal and court proceedings, access share planning/parenting meetings. Child welfare and DOC are partnership together to pilot programs and processes, before system-wide expansion takes place Securus services allows money transfers and access to electronic media services to call children, co-parent, social workers is being piloted in Region 2, the intent and goal are to be statewide. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued partnership with DOC to support families, and more specifically incarcerated fathers in accessing resources, programs, and services that enabling ongoing involvement with their families and during re-entry transitions
Services and Programs	Data and Monitoring	Community-Engagement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are currently only 2 DOC family navigators, one in each of the 2 prison facilities - Airway Heights, and Purdy Women's Corrections; there is a need for expansion to all prison facilities. There is a need to fund local workforce providers to teach culturally and regionally specific parenting classes that are inclusive and/or specific to fathers to satisfy court requirements; these classes are often privately funded or volunteer-based. 	<p>Ideally, the key data outcome to track is:</p> <p># of children that are reunified with fathers (% comparison with moms, reunified).</p> <p>This outcome helps us understand how the system is enabling fathers to maintain a relationship with the child after removal</p> <p>Data system: there is an opportunity to leverage the FTDM model to build and track father-specific data.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Child Welfare father liaisons work with community partners to increase access for fathers Child welfare staff have produced 3 Dad Allies Provider Learning sessions that have been attended by over 300 providers across the state.



Levels of Maturity

- Pre-Awareness
- Awareness
- Demonstrated Action
- Integration

Department of Children, Youth and Families – Child Welfare (DCYF CW): Demonstrated Action

- DCYF Child Welfare division has a rich history of programs, services, involvement, and specific roles that focused on fatherhood inclusion and involvement
- The team has demonstrated successes in working directly with fathers through local community child welfare liaisons
- There are opportunities to build more data metrics to track how fathers are navigating and experiencing the system, specifically child reunification with fathers is an important metric to capture



Juvenile Rehabilitation

Current State: Data Summary, Programs, Outcomes, and Dimensional Analysis

- # of fathers**
 - As of Dec 2023, there are currently **30 fathers** in juvenile rehabilitation (7.2%)¹
- Programs Overview**
 - DCYF JR program enrollment: **8 fathers** enrolled in father-specific program - Dynamic Dads / Nurturing Fathers curriculum (27% of known fathers).
 - New program: Community Transition Services program will launch in May 2024. Program will allow young people to go into the community in electronic monitoring up to 18 months before their sentence date. Impact: eligible fathers are able to live at home and bond with their family/children.
- Current Outcome Metrics**
 - DCYF JR tracks recidivism as outcome to monitor but has a different methodology to calculate recidivism amongst juvenile populations.
 - In addition to reducing recidivism, DCYF JR is considering measuring **desistance²** from crime for youth that can show an overall positive trend towards less inhibition and better judgment & decision-making among justice involved populations.

Policies 2 Aware

In recent years, there is awareness for the importance of supporting justice-involved youth who may already be parents or may be parents in the future; policies will need to be developed for fatherhood support programming to be widespread in the DCYF JR system

Funding and Resources 2 Aware

While there is limited funding for father-focused programming (\$8K for 2 groups of Dynamic Dads at Greenhill, as of Oct 2023). **Additional sustainable sources of funding are required** for high-quality and scalable programming to reach the youth population in JR.

Systems 3 Action

There is currently a **strong focus on system level partnerships** across agencies DCYF, DOC, Commerce, DSHS to support justice-involved populations, reentry readiness and navigational supports.

Services and Programs 3 Action

While there is an inconsistent availability of father-supportive programs across DCYF JR residential facilities due to **limited number of fathers (~30 total)**, there has been **action taken** to implement programs for father in JR

Data and Monitoring 2 Aware

DCYF does not currently have a **comprehensive data tracking mechanism**, one current method used is to reach out to all sites monthly to collect data on restitution payments. Ongoing input metrics (e.g., # of fathers) activity-level metrics (e.g., # of participants in father programs), and outcomes (e.g., recidivism for fathers receiving services) need to be built and reported.

Equity Considerations 2 Aware

Intergenerational incarceration rates broken down by racial subgroup highlight the **importance of family-supportive programming** that disrupts these cycles imposed on families due to systemic inequities. Two-generational impacts of a justice involved youth need to be considered when designing programming and supports

1. DCYF Juvenile Rehabilitation 2023 data
 2. Desistance is moving towards adult self-sufficiency (e.g., reduction in impulsivity, improvements in behaviors) Source: [Pathwork Study](#)
 3. Pre-awareness-limited data, funding, programs or strategy for father-inclusive or -specific elements. Awareness-understanding of fathers' unmet needs and emerging efforts; Demonstrated Action-Action consistency promoting fatherhood inclusion; Integration-Systems integrated to promote fatherhood inclusion, sustained action and demonstrated outcomes



Agency Overview

State Level Snapshot	Key Metrics & Data Points
<p>DCYF JR is aware of the unique multifaceted needs of youth parents and has taken action to design family support services and fatherhood specific programming. Current barriers include program scalability across facilities (largely due to low volume of fathers) and capacity.</p> <p>The policies and programs that impact youth fathers at reentry:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> JR Functional Family Parole and Community-Assisted Reentry – not father-specific resources Contract with Team Child for legal support. <p>Current father-specific programs are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nurturing Fathers program/curriculum; Dynamic Dads (began Oct 2023) at Green Hill Parenting University – for the parents of the young people who are incarcerated. <p>DCYF JR's priorities in the near term are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve the family visitation experience Expand Dynamic Dads; currently beginning with a small with a group at Green Hill, then move to Echo Glenn and the 8 community facilities <p>Other programs/partners that DCYF JR works in partnership with: Early learning, Partnership, Prevention and Services Division – which includes Early Support for Youth and Toddlers, Help Me Grow, Strengthening Families.</p>	<p>30 of 416 (7.2%) of those in juvenile rehabilitation are fathers (2020 data)¹</p> <p>Program enrollment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 8 fathers enrolled in Dynamic Dads program (27% of known fathers) 6 parents of incarcerated youth enrolled in Parent University <p>Cost/Funding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Total cost of father-focused programming: \$8,000 for 2 groups of Dynamic Dads No dedicated ongoing funding for father-focused programs <p>Data currently unknown/not collected</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> % of known fathers with child support orders Recidivism rate for incarcerated youth that are fathers <p>DCYF does not currently have a comprehensive data tracking mechanism to collect data on restitution payments</p> <p>Current outcome that DCYF JR focuses on - reduce recidivism;</p> <p>Advocates recommend that another important metric to monitor (not currently being tracked) is an increase in desistance².</p>
Community Snapshot	Barriers and Challenges ³
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community partners want to come in and the support JR population to build relationships with youth so that upon release, they have a team they can reach out to for support. Community transitions: occurs at the regional level, community partners; 50% of young people receive parole aftercare, the other 50% can apply for community assistance support through local community service offices (CSO's) and voluntarily receive support from the JR Community Assisted Reentry Specialists for up to 12 months post-release. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Housing/financial burden: before youth arrive in juvenile rehabilitation they are often living with their parents whereas when they reenter, they sometimes live independently. There can be a significant financial burden to set up living arrangements (furniture, rental deposit, etc.) Need for assistance with accessing resources for their children while incarcerated. Need for support for a smooth transition upon reentry such as financial support and help finding and renting an apartment, transportation, etc. Need for visitation space that is child friendly.

1. Recent policy changes [HB 1646 \(2019\)](#) and [SB 6160 \(2018\)](#) have extended JR facilities to allow youth up to the age of 25; there may be a higher % of fathers in the JR system going forward.
 2. Desistance is moving towards adult self-sufficiency (e.g., reduction in impulsivity, improvements in behaviors) Source: [Pathways Study](#)
 3. Barriers and challenges sourced from DCYF JR staff, leadership, and community members/fathers.



Agency Commitments

Commitments by the (6) Dimensions

Policies	Funding and Resources	Partnerships
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DCYF JR needs headquarters oversight for family engagement; a clear leader to oversee the development of a framework in addition to two coordinators—one for each the east and west sides of WA State. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funding required to attain. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create more and improved visitation rooms that are child friendly and correctional staff training to appropriately engage children/families. Requires capital to invest in two improved visitation spaces and experience. Additional funding required to maintain the spaces. Access funding for Parenting University. Request edits to proviso language for Evidence Based Expansion funds to access broader programming. Currently, funds are restricted for use on an outdated and limited program menu. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Determine how to ensure fathers within DCYF JR have as much access to parenting services as those within DOC. Create linkages with home-visiting through Strengthening Families Pilot with Community Transition Services (CTS). Identify additional partners who can provide services to young people who have the training and built-in curriculum to be able to support youth.
Services and Programs	Data and Monitoring	Community-Engagement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> JR needs a sustainable Pregnancy, Parenting and Fatherhood program, could be tied to education on sexuality, STD and pregnancy prevention (DOH/CARDEA) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sustainable funding required; this is currently grant funded but ends at the end of 2025 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to track recidivism as the common accepted metric but also add in desistance¹ to monitor any trending behaviors (i.e., inhibition control and executive judgment is improving). Short-term: Work within systems already in place, i.e. DCYF does not currently have a comprehensive data tracking mechanism on restitution payments. Opportunity to create a short-list of additional data fields to collect as a part of this monthly solicitation across all sites. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> # of youth who are fathers # of youth fathers having visits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gather information from the community to assist with reentry supports for young people who are parents to access resources. Seek ways to have the community engagement extend to young people while they are still residing in facilities to strengthen linkages and supports.

Legend

■ Aspirational ■ Priority

1. Desistance is moving towards adult self-sufficiency (e.g., reduction in impulsivity, improvements in behaviors) Source: [Pathways Study](#) - <https://ni.ojp.gov/topics/articles/pathways-desistance-crime-among-juveniles-and-adults-a-polications-criminal-justice>



Levels of Maturity

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

Department of Children, Youth and Families – Juvenile Rehabilitation (DCYF JR): **Awareness / Demonstrated Action**

- DCYF Juvenile Rehabilitation **demonstrates a culture of awareness** of the importance of father inclusivity:
 - Commitment to the strategic priority of improving visitation rooms via the family visitation proposal, though additional funding is required.
 - Desire to dedicate a staff member to focus on areas of visitation, family engagement (including parenting/fathers), and leading comprehensive integration of meeting parenting needs across the division's strategy and services.
 - Aware of the importance of partnerships with other DCYF programs (i.e., Strengthening Families) are in process of making connections to further support parents/fathers.
 - Considering the opportunity to seek Social Services Block Grant funding to provide the resources needed to implement the opportunities identified.
 - In the absence of additional funding, Community facilities are considering how to make visitation rooms more child friendly, i.e., in the process of obtaining toys, games, etc.
- **Pockets of demonstrated action** are already being taken:
 - Dynamic Dads program has been implemented in one facility, though the program is facing engagement issues among youth fathers having started with 8 students and now enrollment is down to 4. There is an opportunity to improve implementation strategy with site readiness and preparing youth to receive and engage with these services.
 - Community Transition Services is a program that will launch in May 2024. The program allows young people (eligible through specific criteria) to reside at home with electronic monitoring up to 18 months prior to reaching their sentence date. Impact on fathers: fathers able to live at home and bond with their children; reduces separation time.



Appendix F – Department of Social and Health Services



Photo source: www.unsplash.com

Topical Area: Food and financial supports



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 TANF² and SNAP¹.
3. Relevant partnerships and/or intersectionality include DSHS DCS, DCYF Home Visiting, DOC, ESD's Workforce development, Tribal TANF, and many others².
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 TANF³.
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 NCP¹.
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., EMAPS¹), 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/FAP¹ Male Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWDS) ¹ Who Are Non-Custodial Parents (NCPs)¹ 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%) NCPs¹ with a current support order for the presumptive minimum amount are not receiving SNAP/FAP¹ 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)

Refugee & Immigrant Families



Office of Refugee and Immigrant Assistance (ORIA)

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)¹
- In SFY2023, the LEP Pathway Program served 10,027 clients, of which 67% participated in Employment Services, and 33% successfully entered employment²

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

1. WA DSHS ORIA website; 2. ESA Briefing Book 2023 ORIA

Agency Commitments



Community Services Division (CSD)

Commitments by the (6) Dimensions

Policies	Funding and Resources	Cross-Agency Partnerships
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As the agency works to build a stronger customer voice (i.e. Customer Voice Council) and expansion of LPA² work to broaden poverty focus; there is an opportunity to include fathers more specifically • Longer term, there is an opportunity to consider expanding TANF E&T¹ programs, conduct targeted outreach to fathers, and support services to NCP¹/fathers not living in the home where children are on TANF (this requires additional funding) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In order to support the policy changes in expanding TANF E&T programs that conduct targeted outreach to fathers that engages them in services and programs, there needs to be sustainable funding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 • Opportunity to work with justice involved parents to proactively provide food & 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
Services and Programs	Data and Monitoring	Community-Engagement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunity in SNAP E&T and TANF WorkFirst E&T¹ to conduct targeted outreach and provide services to fathers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better understand the needs of non-cohabiting families. • 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. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LPAs and CSOs² 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. • Create more awareness of fathers' unique needs within the context of serving families through local partnerships (e.g., CSO, local TANF or SNAP programs).

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.

Appendix G – Health Care Authority



Photo source: <https://wafatherhoodcouncil.org/fatherhood-photo-bank>



Topical Area: Physical, Mental and Behavioral Health

Agency Overview



State Level Snapshot

The HCA serves WA state residents across Medicaid health administration services and behavioral health services. HCA's population subgroup focus is primarily on youth, maternal health, and access to maternity and infant/perinatal services, with less of a specific focus on fathers.

There is an opportunity to integrate more father specific strategies when considering funding, policies, services, and practices for families.

- HCA contracts for behavioral health services including substance use, mental health, and problem gambling. HCA also provides funding, training, and technical assistance to community-based providers for prevention, intervention, treatment and recovery support services to people in need.
- The programs and services within the Division of Behavioral Health and Recovery (DBHR) are focused on building up the continuum of care for infants and children (0-6yrs), youth (5-16yrs), young people (16-25yrs), and their families. While this is not currently a specific or targeted focus on fathers.

Key Metrics & Data Points

- Current funding for father-specific or serving men's specific mental or behavioral health needs are unknown and not currently tracked
- In the Division of Behavioral health: data collected on parents is not split out by gender, we do not know the number of fathers enrolled in or using services or programs
- The Family Preservation Model has not been fully implemented, but plans to have gender differences tracked and reported.

Community Brightspots

- HCA is working with DCYF to develop a [substance use disorder \(SUD\) treatment facility in Grays Harbor](#) county (open to all WA State) where children will reside in the facility with their parents receiving treatment. The Family Preservation model has been developed over the last 8 months, has been very intentional to include fathers and their unique needs. Includes services for transitional housing, supports family reunification and bringing families back together.
- [Sun Ray Court](#): in Spokane, is an inpatient residential treatment center that works solely with men, and offers legal support around dependency matters among other father-specific services.

Lived Experience Narratives

- "Mental health support is an area where I think men and fathers need more dedicated support. Having struggled with mental health as a veteran, I know that men are often expected to bottle up their emotions rather than express them in a healthy way. They need extra support during difficult processes like family court, when they may feel like they won't see their kids again." – Tui Shelton interview
- When dads find themselves being included at the doctors' visits, it sets them up on the right path, such as perinatal mood screening from day one, even if they're not cohabitating. The goal is to provide roadmaps to dads; provide tangible things to dads. "It really empowered me when my provider included me" – Fatherhood Council Dad
- "We need [more health care] providers to be more intentional about asking "where is the biological dad?" A lot of dads want to be more involved but don't know how to be, so they need help getting involved" – Council Father
- "It's really hard for men to admit they're struggling with their mental health" "If you're going through a process of trying to get custody of your kid, you can't admit you're struggling with your mental health because that will come back to bite you" – Council Father
- "When me and my son's mom split up, she was going through undiagnosed post-partum depression, so that affected me and my mental health. We worked with a midwife, but she never asked me how I was doing. They never asked "hey, how are you doing? How's your mental health?" I've never heard of someone screening for a partner, of those kind of questions being asked to them." – Council Father

Family Services



Programs and Services Specifically Serving Families

The below programs have notable components of family involvement.

Child/Adolescent Behavioral Health Challenges

- Family Initiated Treatment (FIT)
 - The goals of FIT are to provide parents a way to access services when they feel a youth may need behavioral health treatment (mental health or substance use), and for providers to engage youth in a manner that shows them the benefits of treatment, so they are willing to provide their consent.
- Center of Parent Excellence (COPE)
 - COPE is intended to provide a pathway for WA parents who are accessing and navigating the children’s behavioral health system to have peer support to ease their journey, whenever possible. The project offers one on one support, support groups, and monthly affinity groups. The COPE project is staffed by lead parent support specialists, hired for their lived experience as a parent/caregiver.
- WA State Children’s Behavioral Health Statewide Family Network
 - The Statewide Family Network provides monthly webinars, annual children’s behavioral health summits, annual weekend training to support parents, networking for parents/caregivers, and formal workgroups and committees that meet to discuss system trends and challenges.
- Wraparound Intensive Services (WISe)
 - Wraparound with Intensive Services is an approach to helping children, youth, and their families with intensive mental health care. Services are available in home and community settings and offer a system of care based on the individualized need of the child or youth.
- Family Navigator and Trauma Informed Approach (TIA)
 - Family navigators are provided access to trainings on trauma-informed approach that’s available for staff, supervisors, and agency leaders



Agency Commitments



Commitments by the (6) Dimensions

Policies	Funding and Resources	Cross-Agency Partnerships
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore policy changes to have prenatal and postpartum / mood disorder screening for fathers in family doctor visits, consider including billable codes for specific services for fathers¹ • Consider more father-inclusive paternity leave policies embedded in Apple Health; currently maternity leave is of primary focus. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TBD 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fathers have expressed a need for additional mental health support while going through child custody cases; opportunity to partner mental/behavioral health services with DCS. • Parent conflict and depression are highly correlated¹; opportunity to partner with DOH and DCYF and other agencies to understand the supports needed for peaceful co-parenting supports and improved mental/behavioral health outcomes • Continued partnership with DCYF to develop the Family Preservation Model for facilities that offer substance use disorder care and recovery for families.
Services and Programs	Data and Monitoring	Community-Engagement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TBD 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand how fathers are accessing the services and their outcomes within the new Family Preservation Model in the substance use disorder treatment facility; collect data on referral outcomes and who is using the treatment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TBD

1. Fatherhood gov, Fathers' Mental Health Impact on Child Well-Being, June 2023. [Source link](#)





Survey Overview

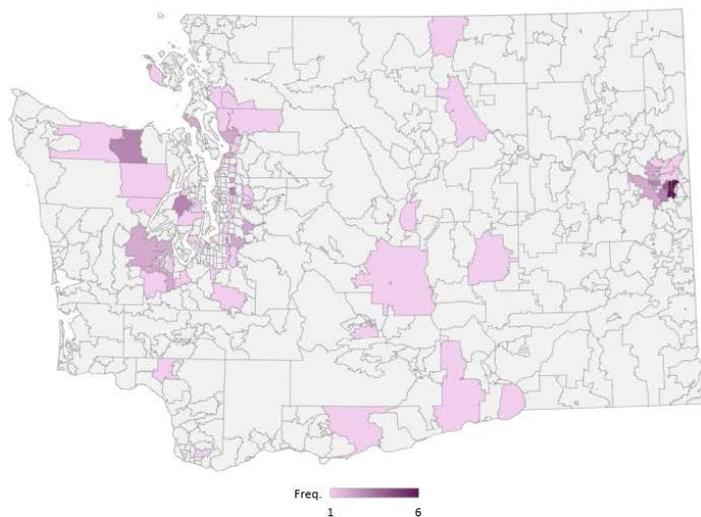
BACKGROUND

Distributed through Council network
Administered online over 3 weeks
Had to identify as father and reside in WA
126 Fathers completed survey
80% engaged in systems/supports in past year

TOPICS

Relationships and Belonging
Supports, Services, and Challenges
Family Structure
Demographics

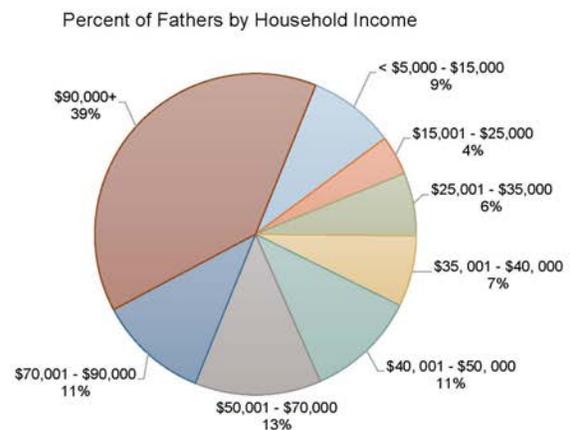
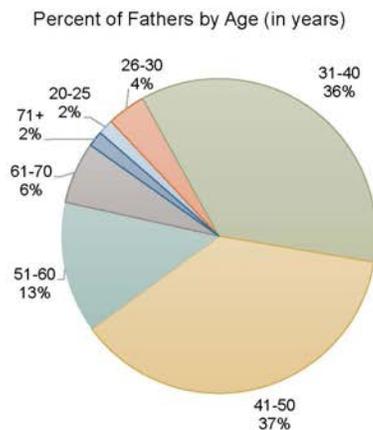
Responses by Zip Code



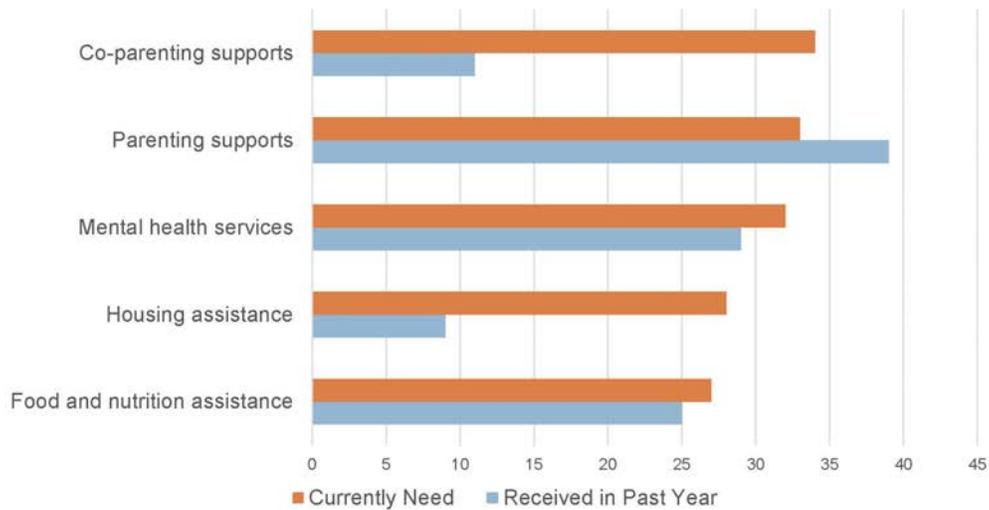
Race and Ethnicity

Response	Frequency
White	88
Latino/x	17
Black, African, African American	13
American Indian or Alaska Native	10
Asian	10
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	1
Middle Eastern or North African	1
Another race, ancestry, or ethnic origin	4
Prefer Not to Answer	12

Father Age and Household Income



Top 5 Supports Needed vs. Received



Top 5 Barriers to Receiving Services

- (1)** Don't qualify for/ can't afford needed services
- (2)** Can't locate needed services
- (3)** Mother-oriented service environments
- (4)** Gender-based discrimination
- (5)** Non-inclusive invitations (unclear if fathers are welcome)

Reducing Barriers to Receiving Services

"It seems like the cutoff for family financial assistance doesn't track with the cost of living. We are over the limit by a few thousand/year and that aid drop off is brutal."

"Make the services more readily available (long waitlists, not available nearby) and affordable."

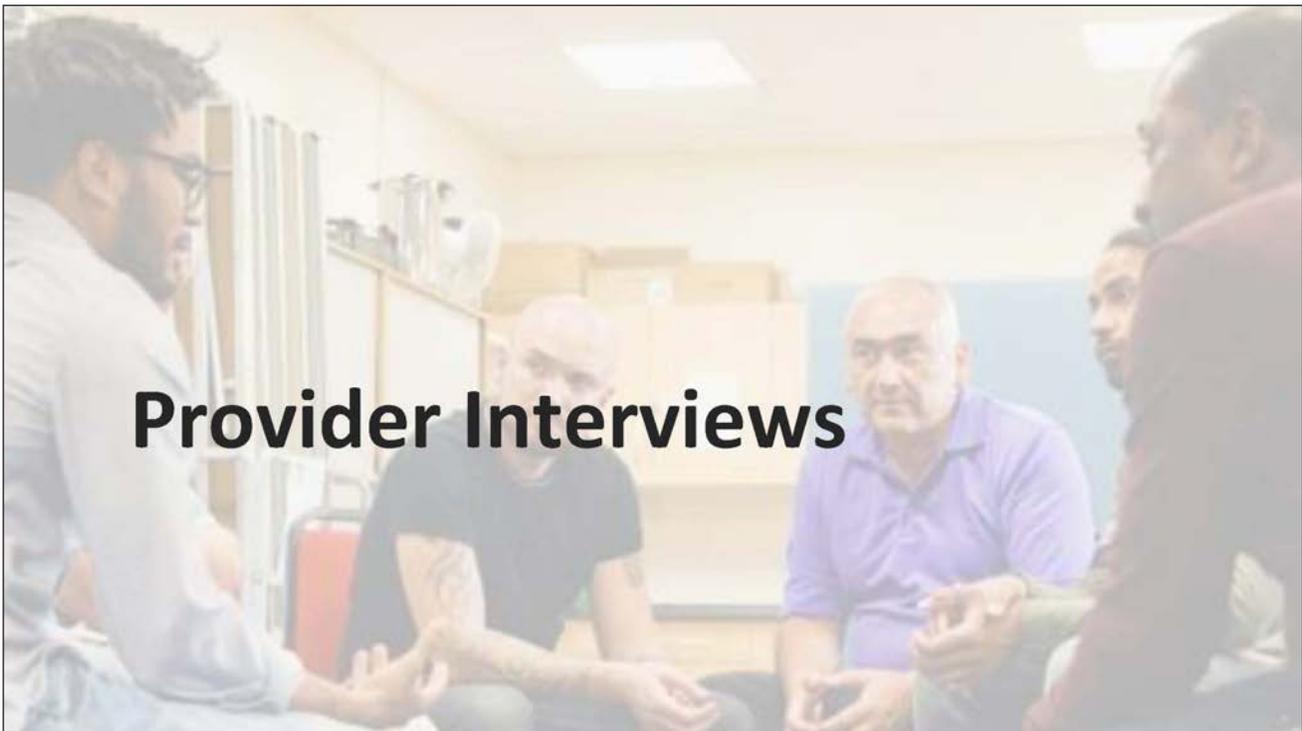
"Make it easier to learn what services are available. I have always had to search and fight on my own. No one has ever volunteered helpful information."

"Provide more direct assistance for fathers specifically."

"Have more services geared towards dads. Everything seems to be geared towards moms."

"Seek to reinforce community programs that invite and encourage fathers to participate for purposes of support, enrichment, and education."

- (1) Don't qualify for/ can't afford needed services
- (2) Can't locate needed services
- (3) Mother-oriented service environments
- (4) Gender-based discrimination
- (5) Non-inclusive invitations (unclear if fathers are welcome)



Overview of Interviews

Interviewed 8 providers (5 female, 3 male) championing work with fathers in WA

Participants held a range of direct service, administrative, and leadership roles in government agencies and nonprofits

Questions about perspectives on fathers and how providers developed those perspectives

Personal and Family Experiences

“My personal and professional positions just have kind of guided me to this spot of making sure there needs to be equitable services.”

“My brother is a single dad now- I want to make sure he has support, he has people who believe in him because he does not feel supported. He thinks everyone is against him. I want dads to know that people want them around and that we care.”

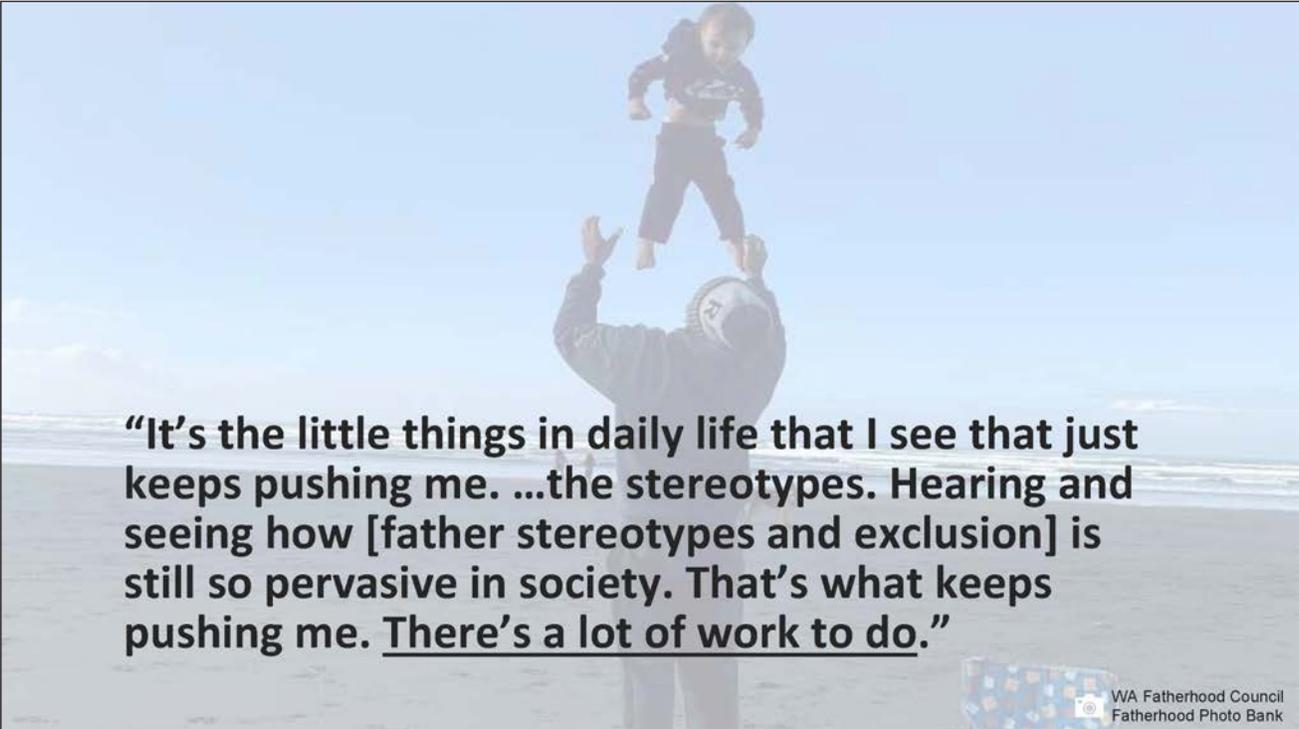
"Nobody acknowledged you [as a father]. I was present but I was not part of the birthing process [of my first child]. I was a spectator. I was watching things happening. I didn't want to go through that again for nothing in life, so with that motivation, instead of developing anger and bitterness toward the staff and institutional system I said 'Let me turn around and use this as a stepping stone. Use this as motivation. Use this as a background to make something better, something higher.' And that's how I came into what I do."

Dads' Stories are Powerful

"I sat down with him and heard his story, and I was just absolutely stunned and saddened by how much he had to go through to become a parent."

"[One inspiration has been] getting to spend time with our Director of Fatherhood...and getting to hear his stories, like knowing him personally, working with him, and getting to hear his perspectives."

"Watching those, probably about 25 hours of [Fatherhood Council] webinars made me want to crawl out of my skin because it ignited, [...] everything I have been taught in all of my years. And once I see it, I can't not do something about it."



"It's the little things in daily life that I see that just keeps pushing me. ...the stereotypes. Hearing and seeing how [father stereotypes and exclusion] is still so pervasive in society. That's what keeps pushing me. There's a lot of work to do."