



Topical Area: Physical, Mental and Behavioral Health

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

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*

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
<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.

Funding and Resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> TBD

Cross-Agency Partnerships
<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
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> TBD

Data and Monitoring
<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

Community-Engagement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> TBD

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

