



Washington Association for Children & Families

WACF LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY—2016 AGENDA

The approved WACF Legislative Agenda for 2016 is broken down into three distinct areas representing those issues most important to the three Divisions of the Association:

Family Preservation and Support Services Division is focused on three areas:

1. Payment of full hourly rate for traveling to client homes
2. Funding to provide Evidence Based Practices training and Quality Assurance activities
3. Tracking and reporting on services to families receiving services through FAR for ongoing evaluation of the effectiveness of the program.

Child Placing Agencies Division is seeking restoration of the Child Placing Agency fee to pre-2011 levels including an inflationary increase.

Behavioral Rehabilitative Services Division is promoting the return of BRS to the Caseload Forecast to cover unanticipated increases to the BRS population.

I.) 2016 LEGISLATIVE SESSION IS A ‘SHORT SESSION’ AND CREATES ONLY A SUPPLEMENTAL BUDGET

The Budget for the 2015-2017 biennium was passed in June, 2015 (odd years.) Supplemental budgets are created in even years and are technically ‘revisions’ to the biennial budget. As such, items not previously included in the regular budget are not generally included, but can be through legislation or the budget negotiation process.

Legislative items with a budget impact (all of our agenda) can be implemented either through specific legislative bills or can be implemented by being included in the budgeting process. Either of these approaches can best be accomplished through the support of a **legislative champion**—someone who is willing to back our cause and put their name on it (bill or no bill.) **WE NEED LEGISLATIVE CHAMPIONS FOR ALL OF OUR WACF LEGISLATIVE ITEMS—FOR NOW AND FOR 2017 BUDGET SESSION.** Legislative Champions usually come from relationships that have been developed or from legislators with specific interests in our areas of focus.

Funding any of WACF’s legislative issues in 2016 will be difficult at best so it is important to **state that our goal is for all rates to be fully restored and early intervention services to be fully funded—and that we will be back next year to continue to promote our agenda if it is not able to be included in this year’s budget.**

II.) PROMOTING THE WACF LEGISLATIVE AGENDA AND OUR DIVISIONAL AGENDAS TOGETHER

We have developed and approved a Legislative Agenda for the Washington Association for Children and Families that includes areas of emphasis for each of our distinct divisions. The WACF Legislative Agenda includes ALL of those items as approved by the membership.

When working with your Agency Board, constituents or legislative staff and legislators, it is important to **communicate that WACF has a comprehensive agenda for the association.** Promotional materials for the complete agenda and divisional focus areas are being created over the next few weeks. Those materials will describe each area in some detail, but you should be knowledgeable enough to briefly discuss them if asked. If you cannot answer a question or are uncomfortable speaking to an issue then assure them that you will get that information to them promptly.

If you or your Agency is working mostly toward your divisions focus area (i.e. CPA rate increase, or BRS forecasting or FPSS reimbursement issues) **it is appropriate to communicate your agency’s support of that area as your priority.** Example: “I have provided you with the full

WACF legislative agenda and today I want to specifically talk with you about restoring reimbursement rates for Child Placing Agencies because that impacts our work at B's Family Services every single day.....” In this way you are communicating and supporting the Association's agenda AND you are advocating for the part of that agenda that most impacts your Agency and your constituents.

III.) HOW WILL THE WACF LEGISLATIVE AGENDA BE BEST PROMOTED?

The Legislative Chair and the Legislative committee will work closely with our lobbyist Seth Dawson and with Laurie Lippold of POC and other child welfare advocates before, during and after the legislative session. Strategies will be developed, refined, revised and implemented based on available information and key relationships. The goal of the Association's efforts is ultimately to **work hard to promote/achieve whatever can be obtained to fulfill our mission and reach our desired goals.** Some years that may be a little—some years a lot. Some year may be in some areas—other years in other areas. Such is the nature of this part of the business.

IV.) HOW CAN YOU BEST HELP?

- Be informed. Know the WACF agenda and how to promote it.
- Communicate the issues to your legislative representative through e-mail, letter, phone, or personal visits.
- Please then COMMUNICATE YOUR ACTIVITIES TO THE WACF Legislative Committee or Chair so we can keep track of our work and explore how to support your work and your relationships.
- Ask for help and Advice when you need it!!!!

It is really easy to get involved in the legislative process at a level that is comfortable for you, your Agency and your staff/Board. It is not as complicated or mysterious as it seems. TOGETHER, we can achieve

success for our Association and for the children and families of Washington State!!!

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