

2024 Legislative Agenda

The Washington Association for Children and Families (WACF) represents nearly 50-member community-based child welfare agencies. WACF works actively alongside our members to help strengthen families and keep families together across Washington State. WACF's work aims to support and stabilize the provider community to ensure positive outcomes for all families.

Family Preservation Services

Washington's Family Preservation Services (FPS) program was set in statute by the legislature in 1996 to protect children's health and safety by providing in-home services that strengthen families and reduce unnecessary out-of-home placement. FPS preserves families to prevent removal, stabilizes placement and supports a successful transition when reunification occurs. Characteristics of the program include:

- Flexibility to tailor services to meet the needs of each family;
- Highly trained counselors to meet the mental health needs of the family;
- Enhance connections with community resources;
- Safety planning to address drug, and alcohol abuse, including fentanyl; and
- 24/7 availability to families.

The most significant barrier to maintaining the availability of FPS is the low vendor rate. Providers cannot pay enough to attract highly trained therapists.

WACF strongly encourages the legislature to fund a **\$2.9 million rate increase for FPS**. Failing to do so limits the ability of community-based agencies to maintain FPS.

Independent Living Services

Independent Living Services (ILS) are designed to assist youth and young adults ages 15 - 23 in making the transition from foster care to self-sufficiency. Independent Living Providers offer essential educational support, employment preparation, financial assistance, help securing housing and life skills training.

In Washington State, youth exiting the foster care system are at higher risk for various adverse outcomes, including homelessness, financial and employment instability, ongoing systems involvement, and recidivism.

WACF strongly encourages the legislature to backfill for declining federal funding for **\$1.9 million**. Failing to do so will reduce the critical services available to young people.

For Additional Information, Please Contact

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