



Partners for Our Children, a research and innovation center at the UW School of Social Work, works to improve the lives of vulnerable children and families in Washington state and nationally, particularly those touched by the child welfare system. We support evidence-informed child welfare policies and practices and provide research and innovations to strengthen the child welfare system.

## Partners for Our Children

Partners for Our Children was founded in 2007 as a unique public-private partnership to improve outcomes for vulnerable children and families in Washington state and nationally, by addressing the urgent need for reform in the overburdened and outmoded child welfare system.

Since that time, we have built a strong track record of success in implementing system-wide changes that already benefit these children and families. We have achieved this by providing research, supporting state and federal policy formation and implementation, and promoting technological advancements and innovative practices.

We were instrumental in the creation of the state's Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF), which combined the functions of the previously separate child welfare, early learning, and juvenile rehabilitation agencies and now emphasizes prevention, measurable outcomes, and authentic engagement with communities.

We are a key partner in the Alliance for Child Welfare Excellence, which manages pre-service and in-service training of child welfare workers and foster caregivers in the state and has freed up the DCYF to focus on its core mission of providing services.

**Our overarching purpose is to effect systems change at the programmatic, state, and national levels, with four key areas of focus: child welfare research, data and analytical support, public policy, and workforce development.**

### Child Welfare Research

As an independent entity with access to the research assets of the University of Washington, we are in a unique position to develop, adapt, and test interventions to improve the health and well-being of children and families involved in the child welfare system and to study and evaluate the effects of policy choices and practice changes on that system. For example, we are evaluating the state's Kinship Navigator program so it can build the infrastructure it needs to be eligible for newly available Title IV-E Family First funding.



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## AT A GLANCE CHILD WELFARE IN WASHINGTON STATE

# 49,000

Reports of child abuse or neglect investigated each year by child welfare workers

# 900

Children living in out-of-home care at any given time

# 18 months

Median length of stay for children placed in foster care or with relatives

# 5.4 per 1,000

Out-of-home placements overall

# 10.3 per 1,000

Out-of-home placements for African-American children

# 11 per 1,000

Out-of-home placements for Native American children

## JOIN US

We need your support to bolster our innovative work and build on our successes. To learn more about how you can help, **please contact School of Social Work Advancement at [sswadvan@uw.edu](mailto:sswadvan@uw.edu)**. *Thank you.*

## Data and Analytical Support

We analyze data from the DCYF to better understand trends and combine those findings with data from related systems (such as the courts and education systems) to get a more complete picture of how the child welfare system is operating. Our findings provide critical decision-making support for lawmakers and agency staff.

## Public Policy

We provide nonpartisan input on proposals and legislation related to children and families in our state. With strong relationships with policymakers, we bolster public policy discussions with solid research evidence and data. We also maintain a strong federal policy presence in Washington, D.C. We collaborate with other organizations on policy advocacy and outreach, both locally and nationally.

## Workforce Development

We conduct evaluation of the Alliance for Child Welfare Excellence. The Alliance trains all child welfare workers and foster and kinship caregivers in the state. We help to define social worker competencies, develop curricula, and evaluate training efforts. We also use current thinking and best practices in training and education to inform new training innovations that improve the skills of child welfare workers as well as foster, relative, and adoptive caregivers.

## MAJOR INNOVATIONS

### Strive

Visitation between parents and their children in out-of-home care offers an important opportunity to strengthen bonds and can lead to improved engagement and outcomes. However, the experience can be stressful and traumatic for all. We created an education program called Strive for parents whose children have been recently placed in foster care or with relatives. Strive orients parents to agency expectations about visits, supports them throughout the visitation process, helps strengthen parent-child bonds, and decreases stress. It may ultimately improve child safety and lead to more timely reunification.

We are delivering Strive to hundreds of Washington families every year and aim to expand its use across the state and beyond. We are currently adapting the program for Native families. Additional funding would enable us to adapt it for military families and incarcerated parents.

### Child Well-Being Data Portal

To address the lack of accessible child welfare data, and with philanthropic funding, we created a powerful web tool that provides free access to current data about child welfare services and outcomes in Washington state.

Launched in 2013, the data portal is a resource for many stakeholders, including policymakers, family court judges, agency staff, and advocacy partners. The data are aggregated from state agencies, national surveys, our own research, and other sources and are presented in customizable visualizations that include interactive maps, tables, lists, and graphs. Topics include placement moves, open investigations, public reports of concern for child safety, and many more. The School of Social Work recently created the Center for Social Sector Analytics & Technology, which will work closely with Partners for Our Children to develop a wider range of portal capabilities and expand its use by the broader social services community.

With additional funding, we could further develop the portal's capabilities and create a marketing campaign to publicize this valuable resource.