



# FOSTER AND ADOPTIVE PARENT DILIGENT RECRUITMENT PLAN 2020-2024 CFSP



WASHINGTON STATE  
Department of  
Children, Youth, and Families



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## Washington State

### Foster and Adoptive Parent Diligent Recruitment Plan

#### Introduction

In partnership with our recruitment and retention contractors, Northwest Resource Associates (NwRA), DCYF's Foster Parent Consultation Team (1624), the Northwest Adoption Exchange, the Alliance for Child Welfare Excellence (Alliance), and Washington's many child placing agencies and Tribes, DCYF endeavors to continuously strengthen, improve, and diversify recruitment efforts to identify potential foster and adoptive families. Under DCYF's [Foster Parent or Unlicensed Caregiver policy](#), DCYF is prohibited from denying any person the opportunity to become a foster or adoptive parent, on the basis of race, creed, color, national origin, sex, honorably discharged veteran or military status, sexual orientation, or the presence of any sensory, mental, or physical disability or the use of a trained dog guide or service animal by a person with a disability or national origin of the foster or adoptive parent, or the child, involved [42 USC 671a](#) and [RCW 49.60.030](#).

Recruitment, Development, and Support (RDS) teams have been developed in each region and also in local offices. These teams bring together a variety of community based agencies and individuals committed to diverse caregiver recruitment and support including DCYF staff, Olive Crest, Eastern Washington University (EWU), tribal partners, caregivers, and representatives from racially and ethnically diverse community groups, and faith communities.

DCYF focuses recruitment efforts on foster and adoptive families who:

- Reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of children and youth in out-of-home care.
- Are committed to the safety and well-being of children and youth placed in their care.
- Celebrate and respond to each child and youth's unique characteristics.
- Care for children of all ages, genders, sexual orientations, sibling groups, and children or youth with special developmental, behavioral, or medical needs.

DCYF's recruitment and retention contracts were reprocured and awarded in July 2018 with an extension until June 30, 2020. These contracts include anti-discrimination language which states *"At all times during the term of this Contract, the Contractor shall comply with all applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations, including but not limited to, nondiscrimination laws and regulations."* The contracts are regionally managed to better align with local communities and focus on the needs identified by the local RDS teams.

EWU's Fostering Washington program provides recruitment and retention services under contract for DCYF Regions 1 and 2. Olive Crest continues to provide recruitment and retention services under contracts for DCYF Regions 3, 4, 5, and 6 through their Fostering Together program. DCYF, Olive Crest, and EWU provide ongoing recruitment efforts supported and tracked by the State Recruitment Information Center (SRIC). The SRIC tracks prospective foster and adoptive families from the point of inquiry through completion of the foster care licensing process. These contracts continue to build on prior work and utilize current or former foster parents as recruiters. Olive Crest Liaisons and EWU Resource Peer Mentors (RPM) work with potential foster and kinship families and provide support for caregivers to complete the required pre-service training, licensure requirements, and assistance understanding and navigating the child welfare system.

All RDS teams utilize FamLink data for their local area, Alliance Caregiver Core Training (CCT), and the SRIC to inform their work and focus efforts to recruit quality, safe foster families able to meet the needs of children and youth placed in out-of-home care in the region and support the existing foster families and caregivers. RDS teams further individualize recruitment planning based on:

- Characteristics of children and youth needing foster homes in the area of focus.
- Greatest numbers of removals occurring in specific neighborhoods/zip codes and placements needed in those neighborhoods/areas.
- Review of data on the current number of open or active foster families and their current capacity/ability to accept children and youth for placement.
- Numbers and demographics on children and youth placed outside the local office and regional area.
- Data on children and youth placed in relative placements versus' licensed foster care.
- Review of data on prospective foster families, including new inquiries, families currently in training, and those who have submitted licensing applications. Review of data to encourage personal follow up support from the Contractor's staff to prospective caregivers navigating the system.
- Identifying the need for and access to resources and activities available to help support foster and kinship caregivers and the children or youth placed in their home.

Based on regional needs, recruitment efforts focus on finding foster parents to care for children and youth who have the following diverse characteristics:

- Male and female children and youth between the ages of 0 to 21-years old; especially youth 13-years of age and older
- Sibling groups
- Racial, cultural, and ethnic diversity – with specific focus on Native American, Hispanic, and African American children and youth
- Children and youth with behavioral/emotional needs and intense supervision needs
- Medically fragile infants and young children
- Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ+) children and youth
- Mono-lingual Spanish speaking
- Deaf and hard of hearing

As part of legislative changes occurring in 2018, the mandatory requirement for DCYF to contract with supervising agencies to increase the number of adoptive and foster families was eliminated. Beginning in July 2018, DCYF was able to review the success of foster parent recruitment and make determinations on how foster parent recruitment should be structured by the new agency. The determination was made to make modifications to the existing contract and continue to contract out recruitment and retention services. The current contract provides a greater emphasis on kinship support in the licensing and home study process.

Over the next year (July 2019-June 2020), DCYF will be exploring the potential of bringing recruitment and retention services in-house. DCYF will assess, evaluate, and develop a plan for implementation that includes policy and procedures for an internal program. If established,

DCYF will implement a successful transition to an internal recruitment and retention organization effective July 1, 2020.

## Characteristics of children and youth needing foster and adoptive homes

Children and youth placed in out-of-home care come from different geographical areas and are diverse with varying ethnicity, race, socioeconomic status, gender, language, religion, and sexual orientation and gender identity. DCYF places children and youth in out-of-home care from birth to 18-years old and provides extended foster care placement and support for youth up to age 21. DCYF affirms the value of placing children and youth with kinship caregivers whenever it is safe and appropriate to do so. With that said, nearly half the children and youth placed in out-of-home care are placed with a relative or person known to the child, youth, and/or family. In circumstances where this is not an option children and youth are placed in licensed foster care. DCYF placement coordinators across the state work toward making every placement a match in terms of keeping siblings together, ensuring the home is culturally appropriate, and knowing that the caregiver has the skills needed to care for the child or youth. However, this does not always occur due to a lack of available caregivers and capacity and a limited amount of information known about the child or youth at the time of placement.

DCYF strives to increase the number of foster homes available to meet the physical, emotional, and cultural needs of children and youth placed in out-of-home care. Efforts continue toward general, targeted, and child specific recruitment strategies to find quality caregivers. DCYF continues to look for ways to increase the pool of licensed foster homes who reflect the population of children and youth in care.

2019 CHILDREN IN OUT-OF-HOME CARE AND CAREGIVER BY RACE/ETHNICITY		
Race/Ethnicity	Children	Caregiver
Native American	1,263	231
Hispanic	1,357	704
Black	1,570	440

*Data Source: DCYF Licensing Division, FamLink*

There is an awareness of the disproportionality regarding children and youth of color and licensed foster homes and caregivers of color. Therefore, a special emphasis has been made in the current recruitment contracts to make concerted efforts towards recruitment of Native American, Hispanic, and Black caregivers throughout all communities.

In addition, recruitment efforts are focused on developing our current pool of licensed foster parents in order to care for children and youth with extensive emotional, behavioral, and physical needs. These are DCYFs most difficult to place children and youth, as they require an extensive skill set, above and beyond what is typically required of a foster parent. A review of the children and youth experiencing night-to-night and hotel placements reveals that DCYF needs additional foster placement resources for children and youth fitting this criteria. FamLink data in 2019 indicates that there are 144 medically fragile children and youth placed in out-of-home care, and only 70 identified medically fragile foster homes. DCYFs Licensing Division (LD) is working with the Office of Innovation, Alignment, & Accountability (OIAA) in order to develop a report that can track identified children and youth who require intensive supervision needs. Presently, unless a child qualifies for Behavior Rehabilitation Services (BRS) or has been

identified as medically fragile or medically complex, there is no easy way to identify that individual child in FamLink. Gathering additional data on children with extensive needs will help to guide and shape recruitment strategies for this specific population. Partnership with the Alliance will continue in order to develop curriculum on enhanced education and techniques specific to caring for high needs children and youth. This curriculum will provide more in-depth information on how to address behaviors outside of what is considered age and developmentally appropriate.

Olive Crest and EWU, have components built into the contract outlining goals to recruit and retain diverse, quality, safe, and nurturing foster families. The contract specifies populations of children and youth who are among the most in need of licensed foster care in Washington State:

- Racially and Ethnically Diverse Children – Native American and African American children and youth are disproportionately represented in the child welfare system. Families who reflect the racial and ethnic diversity of the children, youth, families and communities served by DCYF must be encouraged to apply. Additionally, these families must be supported through the training and application process.
- Various age groups of children and youth who may have experienced child abuse and/or neglect –
  - Ages thirteen (13) and older. These youth may have behavioral, medical, and/or emotional needs, which may include, but are not limited to the following:
    - Behavioral acting out, unmet or unique emotional or mental health needs arising from adverse childhood experiences and childhood trauma;
    - Fluctuating emotions, due to the loss of their parents, siblings, prior caregivers, school, teachers, friends, and community activities;
    - Gender identity issues;
    - Academic and behavioral problems in school;
    - Substance use issues;
    - Complex brain disorders, such as Autism Spectrum Disorders that include social, communication, and behavioral challenges which may be mild to severe;
    - Mobility issues;
    - Running away from care; and
    - Pregnant and/or parenting teens.
  - Children ages six (6) through twelve (12) years. These children may have behavioral, medical, and/or emotional needs displayed through behaviors, which may include, but are not limited to the following:
    - Fluctuating emotions, due to the loss of their parents, siblings, prior caregivers, school, teachers, friends, and community activities;
    - Behavioral acting out, unmet, or unique emotional or mental health needs arising from adverse childhood experiences and childhood trauma;
    - Behavioral acting out with emotional distress, attachment challenges, defying authority, and aggressiveness with siblings;
    - Mobility issues;

- Complex brain disorders, such as Autism Spectrum Disorders that include social, communication, and behavioral challenges which may be mild to severe; and
  - Gender identity confusion.
- Children ages birth (0) through five-years old. Infants and young children may have behavioral, medical, and/or emotional needs displayed through behaviors resulting from:
  - Unmet or unique emotional or mental health needs arising from adverse childhood experiences and childhood trauma;
  - Complex medical needs, due to substance exposure or addiction causing low birth weight, feeding problems, tremors, excessive crying and tight muscle tone;
  - Mobility issues;
  - Failure to thrive and/or learning disabilities;
  - Significant and complicated health care needs that require a high level of nursing skills and/or twenty-four (24) hour supervision to prevent life-threatening complications and deterioration of health status; and
  - These young children require: Assistance in developing healthy attachments with their caregivers and their parents; and strong support in early brain development.
- Extended Foster Care (EFC) –
  - Finding foster parents for youth ages 18 to 21-years old in EFC has been identified as one of the greatest recruitment challenges in Washington State, with every local office in need of targeted attention. DCYF seeks foster parents who can commit long-term to these youth, serving also as a coach or mentor to support them moving to independence.
- Sibling Groups –
  - When children and youth are unable to live with their parents, their strongest ties are often with their siblings. Whenever possible, these children and youth need to live together in families that honor those relationships.
- Children with More Intensive Supervision Needs –
  - Children and youth are in need of caring adults who can patiently work with their significant developmental, behavioral, and psychological challenges. Today many children and youth in DCYFs care are on the Autism spectrum. Concrete recruitment efforts must target prospective foster and adoptive families to apply specifically for this population of children and youth. Prospective foster parents must be able to encourage each child or youth to move past these challenges, when possible and help them achieve their full potential. Additionally, foster parents will understand the need to remain committed to the child or youth, to ensure each child or youth is able to remain in a stable family setting.
- Medically Fragile Children and Youth –
  - Some children and youth have complex medical conditions that require the availability of twenty-four hour skilled care from a health professional or a

specially trained foster family member. Their conditions may be present all the time or occur frequently. The provision of proper technology, support, and service for these children and youth is critical. If interrupted or denied, the failure to provide immediate health care intervention could result in death. Medically fragile children and youth need quality, safe, loving foster parents who have the medical skill and understanding to meet both their vital medical needs and nurture their emotional well-being. Foster parents must also be committed to helping the child or youth's parents understand the special care needs for their children or youth when they return home or move into a permanent placement.

- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning (LGBTQ+) Children and Youth –
  - Children and youth who identify as LGBTQ+ are disproportionately represented in the child welfare system and can have different cultural needs. These children and youth need safe, understanding, and supportive foster parents who will serve as their ally. Additionally, LGBTQ+ children and youth need foster parents who will work with their birth families, schools, and communities to offer support and acceptance in light of the challenges they face due to their sexual orientation, gender identity, and expression (SOGIE).

## **Strategies to reach all parts of the community**

To meet the need for adoptive and foster home placements, DCYF uses three recruitment strategies:

- General recruitment helps build public interest and awareness. Recruitment messages appeal to prospective families and their desire to make a difference for children and youth. This strategy encourages the development of communities that are responsive to the unique experiences of caregivers and children or youth in out-of-home care. Examples of general recruitment include marketing and communication efforts placed in locations that are frequented by a large cross-section of the public.
- Targeted recruitment uses data and demographics of the children and youth in out-of-home care to recruit resources specific to a need. This type of recruitment is culturally responsive and community based. Regional RDS teams guide these efforts and develop regionally based, targeted recruitment strategies with contracted recruiters. Targeted recruitment may include marketing and communication efforts tailored and placed in specific venues. It can also include outreach to organizations that serve particular groups. One example of targeted recruitment is partnering with Special Olympics to generate interest from families who understand and are interested in serving the unique and special needs children and youth.
- Child specific recruitment focuses on recruitment of prospective families for specific children and youth in out-of-home care. Child specific recruitment may include the sharing of biographical sketches of children or youth with specific foster parent groups, brief video vignettes of individual children or youth, or child and youth developed profiles shared with recruitment partners.

DCYFs current contract outlines each recruitment strategy and the individual providers work toward implementing these strategies within designated communities within their catchment area. For generalized recruitment, contractors continue to collaborate with local RDS teams to seek out prospective foster parents from all backgrounds willing to care for children 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The approach is to increase community awareness of the need for diverse,



qualified foster parents to provide safe, temporary care in both urban and rural communities. Consistent messaging is used in marketing and communication by both Olive Crest and EWU that foster parents should be willing to accept placement of children and youth of all ages, backgrounds, needs, support reunification, and engage with the child or youth's parents or guardians and kinship caregivers.

Targeted recruitment efforts are developed by the contractors as to how they will address recruitment for the populations most in need as identified above. Targeted recruitment efforts are data driven and developed in consultation with the local RDS teams. A key data source to track prospective foster parent characteristics is through the SRIC. The SRIC Data Tracker has been a contracted service through NWRA since 2009. This serves as the data management system for DCYFs Recruitment and Retention contractors, DCYF staff, and RDS teams. This system tracks prospective foster parents who inquire about becoming a foster parent via an online inquiry form or from individuals or families who call the state's recruitment phone line at 1-888-KIDS-414. The existing contract with NWRA for the SRIC Data Tracker and call center is effective through 2020.

Data available to the contractors from the SRIC includes:

- General and specific forms of recruitment information that have prompted the family to inquire about foster care and adoption, including families who have responded to AdoptUSKids;
- City and county of prospective foster families;
- The best way to connect with the prospective foster family (phone, cell, email);
- Family's specified area of interest (foster only [temporary care], fostering into adoption, relative care, adoption only, guardianship);
- Numbers of new inquiries made each month (by type), reported by region/local office/source;
- Spanish speaking inquiries and ongoing support for Spanish speaking callers;
- Referrals directed to the contractor;
- Contacts (date, time, type) made by the recruiter or liaison;
- Specific recruitment efforts made by the liaison in their identified area;
- Follow up contacts made with each individual prospective family;
- Group contacts made by the recruiter or liaison; and
- Bulk email messaging to all prospective families in the recruiter or liaisons area or by region.

With the SRIC information, contractors can pin down specific geographical areas and determine what areas have a strong presence of individuals interested in foster care as opposed to those who do not, which can guide recruitment related efforts.

Child specific foster care recruitment efforts include the contractors being asked to find a foster home to meet the specific needs of an individual child or youth. This is done through developing a localized messaging plan, in consultation with the RDS team. When additional assistance is needed, the plan supports DCYF placement staff to share information with foster parents about children or youth with highly unique needs, such as those entering foster care, disrupting from a current placement; when a foster home is not readily available; and where an emergent need for placement exists.

## Olive Crest (Fostering Together)

Olive Crest holds the recruitment and retention contract for regions 3, 4, 5, and 6 effective July 1, 2018 through June 30, 2020. They had previously been awarded the contract for this same area which has allowed them to build upon their established program. Olive Crest implements a wide array of recruitment and retention efforts. Their recruitment liaisons input information into SRIC which allows data tracking of prospective caregivers. They maintain a website to help both prospective and current foster parents learn about DCYF's recruitment needs and efforts. The website can be modified daily, ensuring timely access to updated information. This website provides easy to access information on:

- DCYF's need for foster parents, especially foster parents who could care for children and youth in the identified priority populations;
- Training availability across the state, in the regions and offices Olive Crest serves, providing foster parent training, including a link to the Alliance's caregiver's training page;
- Families' success stories;
- Recruiter/liaison's contact information;
- Adoption services;
- Statewide foster care and adoption service agencies;
- List of events of interest for foster and adoptive parents, including the newly launched [Experience Washington](#) page that lists business and organizations who partner with Olive Crest to provide free or low cost activities and opportunities for children and youth in foster care;
- Caregiver Support:
  - Foster Intervention Retention and Support Services (FIRST Program);
  - Foster Parent Critical Support and Retention Services;
- Support groups including in-person and online via closed Facebook groups:
  - 53 in-person support groups now exist across Western Washington in urban and rural areas and offer wide topics of interest. Foster parents are frequently able to obtain LD-approved training credits at local support groups that are applied to their required individual training plans;
  - 29 Facebook pages remain active to support foster parents, prospective foster parents, military foster parents, foster-adoptive families, adoptive parents, relative caregivers, foster teens and deaf foster parents and foster parents within their local county. The Olive Crest Facebook online groups are utilized and praised by both veteran and new foster parents. New support tools offer information to new or prospective foster parents and secure member groups are available for existing foster parents or relative caregivers. The Facebook pages enable caregivers to connect with other caregivers. Caregivers seek information and support from other caregivers and share information and resources. Online groups also offer DCYF the ability to quickly share information with caregivers;
  - Olive Crest opened an active Twitter page sharing information about the need for foster parents and upcoming recruitment events;

- Olive Crest participates in the 1624 consultation team to offer information on issues of importance, such as foster parent training and challenges encountered by caregivers; and
- Olive Crest is a strong presence in their regional RDS meetings with 100% attendance at all scheduled meetings.

#### *Recruitment Activities*

Olive Crest continues to seek and build new recruitment partnerships with tribal, Hispanic, African American, and LGBTQ+ community partners and stakeholders. They continue to utilize their African American, Hispanic, Native American, sibling groups, and LGBTQ+ recruitment videos effectively in ongoing recruitment. New foster care liaisons within each school district have been invited to participate in recruitment collaborations. African American, Hispanic, and Native American recruitment outreach specialists work to engage these communities to build stronger recruitment collaborations and help address the need for foster parents. Culturally relevant recruitment materials were developed with community stakeholders and are supporting recruitment within the African American, Hispanic, and Native communities.

Outreach to African American communities has included collaboration with local organizations and participation at several events to provide a presence and recruitment materials to community members. A few of the events include the African American Reach for the Stars event, Hilltop Street Fair, Purpose Driven Woman's Luncheon, Building Brighter Futures event, and Back 2 School Community of Color event. An African American recruitment video was created and has been shared via social media platforms to include (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram). The statewide Black Dollar Business Directory was also targeted to help share recruitment messaging with local business. African American foster care community information panels were launched to share information and answer questions about the licensing process.

Outreach to Hispanic/Latino communities has included conducting interviews and marketing with Spanish radio stations. Translation of recruitment materials into Spanish and production of a Spanish recruitment video to support their Spanish speaking community information meetings in areas where the need for Hispanic/Latino homes has been identified. This video has been made available online and administered through various social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram). Presentations where they share recruitment messages and materials were held in each region to include attendance at the Latino Youth Summit, Hispanic Roundtable, Everett School District, and several Spanish speaking organizations including churches. In addition, the Hispanic outreach liaison had a booth at the Annie Production 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue Theatre where recruitment materials were handed out to participating individuals at the venue.

Partnership with local RDS teams to encourage participation by Tribes, collaboration with United Indians to be present when requested to share information at pow wows, and partnership with tribal child welfare agencies to provide Native children, and their caregivers opportunities to participate in traditional cultural events. These partnerships have enhanced building connections with tribal leaders and their respective child welfare agencies.

Outreach to Native American communities has continued by way of relationship building within local tribal communities. The Native American liaison for Region 3 has developed a connection with one school district serving a high population of Native American students. The goal being to establish a cooperative relationship between the school district, tribal child welfare, education departments, and liaison with the shared goal of proving culturally appropriate homes to Native American children and youth placed in foster care. In addition to in person recruitment efforts,

media advertisements related to recruitment has been included in Native American publications, such as the Cowlitz Tribe Newsletter. Recruitment tables are held at several Native American events to include Paddle of Puyallup, Canoe Journey Jamestown Beach, Quileute Days, and Nisqually Resource Dinner.

These efforts continue on behalf of the Fostering Together team. They continue to work toward building new partnerships and enhancing existing relationships in their mission to recruit and retain caregivers.

### Eastern Washington University (EWU) (Fostering Washington)

EWU was awarded the recruitment and retention contract for regions 1 and 2 effective July 1, 2018 and run through June 30, 2020. They had previously been awarded the contract for this same area which has allowed them to build upon their established program. EWU's contract implements a wide array of recruitment and retention efforts developed in conjunction with multiple partners to address recruitment and support of foster parents in Eastern Washington (Regions 1 and 2). The RDS teams in this area develop recruitment guidance based on data driven placement needs. EWU has structured their service delivery to address the need for local mentors (RPM) to help prospective families navigate the system. Thirty-six part-time RPMs now serve the foster and kinship families of eastern Washington. Three regional coordinators, have expanded direct regional recruitment efforts throughout eastern Washington. Regional coordinators share support for local mentors in utilization of the SRIC data system, with the RPMs responding to inquiries within 24 hours. RPMs also provide ongoing support to potential families and veteran foster parents.

EWU has established a strong online presence and growing caregiver participation on their website, as well as four foster parent Facebook pages to support foster parents and relative caregivers. An additional Facebook page serves families interested in applying to become a foster parent. Fourteen foster parent in-person support groups now exist under EWU's contract with the groups supported and facilitated by a recruitment coordinator or RPM. Online Facebook ads targeting specific recruitment efforts continue to reach specific populations in identified communities across Regions 1 and 2.

EWU continues strong participation in each of the local RDS meetings in the various field offices covered in their catchment area. The contractor strives to achieve in-depth reach within the communities that are responsive to recruitment direction and needs. EWU has opened a section on their website to share information about the local CPAs who are partners in recruitment work. EWU is a strong resource in identifying best practices and successful lessons learned through participation in webinars and resources offered through the National Resource Center on Diligent Recruitment and other sources that can inform successful recruitment. EWU's Fostering Washington leadership and their recruitment coordinators participate in 1624 meetings at both the regional and statewide levels.

#### *Recruitment Activities*

EWU partners with faith-based communities, African American, Hispanic, Tribal, and LGBTQ+ organizations and other entities that reflect and understand the demographic, cultural, and ethnic diversity of children and youth entering foster care. These groups offer insight and contribute to local efforts to recruit the diversity of foster families needed for children and youth entering out-of-home care. EWU has begun work to build recruitment materials in language and culturally responsive to the diverse populations located in Regions 1 and 2. They have shifted to a stronger focus on targeted recruitment in response to the needs identified by the local RDS

teams. They are seeking foster parents of color as RPMs. As EWU and the local RDS teams use data to identify the diverse backgrounds of children and youth entering out-of-home care, EWU connects with those communities both personally and online to join with them through social media. This provides opportunities to share information about the need for foster parents within the community. Local communities are matched with an experienced RPM to provide consistency and continuity in meeting their diverse needs.

Media engagement targets diverse communities through radio, television, newspaper, and social media to help build general awareness of the need for foster parents. Partnership with radio station KDNA helps to reach Spanish speaking foster parents across eastern Washington; follow-up activities occur with the station to keep interest alive. EWU has expanded work with Tribal child welfare agencies to support recruitment efforts with the Yakama Nation, Nez Perce Tribe, and the cities of Wapato, Mabton, and Toppenish, all which have high Native and Hispanic/Latino populations.

Cultural events have been identified by the RDS teams for EWU to share information. Ongoing communication with Tribes have assisted both recruitment contractors in building greater cultural humility, competence and stronger tribal partnerships. EWU takes its lead from the Tribes to help develop foster care recruitment opportunities or assist the Tribe in doing so. EWU remains mindful to provide an open invitation for local tribal representatives to participate in RDS meetings held monthly. Native American outreach was conducted by the RPM through presentations on the need for culturally appropriate foster homes at the Yakama Nation Cultural Center, Yakama Behavioral Health, and Wapato and Toppenish School Districts. In order to broaden outreach attempts, recruitment materials were translated to Salish and distributed at a Native American cultural event. A Fostering Washington recruitment ad was published in the Tribal Tribune newspaper which is distributed to approximately 3,400 households and shared via their social media platform.

Because of the smaller population of African Americans living in northeastern and southeastern Washington, EWU has continued to find it challenging to engage this community. Utilization of current African American foster parents in opening recruitment doors has been positive. They have been able to hire one African American RPM to work within the community and have set a goal to hire others. They have expanded visibility within a number of the African American community events to include the MLK Multicultural Fair and Unity in the Community Event. The MLK Day March, Unity in the Community, Black-Owned Business Expo, Juneteenth, and Black History Month event are additional events in the community EWU reaches out to.

EWU's work with the Hispanic community improves each year as they partner with local Hispanic leaders. Most recruitment material is now in both English and Spanish. They have established an approach to understand the needs of the community, listen to their concerns, and establish recruitment efforts that are respectful and share the need of local children and who are in out-of-home care. The RDS teams help focus recruitment on communities with large populations of Hispanic families. LD and SRIC bi-lingual staff respond to individuals who call for more information. Spanish speaking RPMs and bilingual staff from the SRIC offer help and support to Spanish speaking prospective foster parents who begin the process.

These efforts continue on behalf of the Fostering Washington team. They continue to work toward building new partnerships and enhancing existing relationships in their mission to recruit and retain caregivers.

The partnership developed between DCYF and the Office of Deaf and Hard of Hearing (ODHH) continues to offer consultation and resources to benefit families and children across

Washington. Deaf and ASL proficient families are encouraged to submit applications and tell their friends about the need in response to recruitment presentations. Deaf/ASL proficient foster parents connect on line via EWU and Olive Crest’s Deaf/ASL Facebook pages.

## Dissemination of information regarding becoming a foster and adoptive parent

DCYF contracted recruitment staff utilize a variety of methods in order to disseminate information on becoming a licensed foster or adoptive parent. A primary shift in practice has been towards a focus on technology and the use of social media. Both Olive Crest and EWU have built several social media platforms through venues such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, online support groups, and sharing advertisements through Craigslist, online Community Boards, Peach Jar (an online digital distribution system for school districts), and Classified Ads.com. In addition, Olive Crest has developed a mobile application for smartphones that is available at the Google Store, iTunes, and Amazon App Stores. Olive Crest and EWU continue to distribute recruitment materials extensively across their respective regions ensuring resources are available to their RDS teams, in local communities and through their regional recruiters. Olive Crest’s recruitment videos for targeted recruitment related to: sibling groups, African American, Hispanic, Native American, and LGBTQ+ children and youth, and teens, continue to be effectively used.

Other traditional forms of recruitment are done by both contractors. This includes creating publications distributed at community events, placed strategically at businesses, coffee sleeves to churches and business’s, bookmarks to schools and libraries, and rack cards and flyers at organizations, building community awareness and partnerships. Developed materials are submitted for final approval to the DCYF headquarters program manager prior to publication. These materials are developed to ensure a consistency of theme and completed with a professional level of quality. These materials are shared with the local RDS team when a local recruitment campaign is in need of material. DCYF and the local RDS teams continue to consult with Olive Crest and EWU in the development of any new recruitment materials. This partnership improves the quality of each contractors existing and new recruitment materials (see figures 1 and 2).

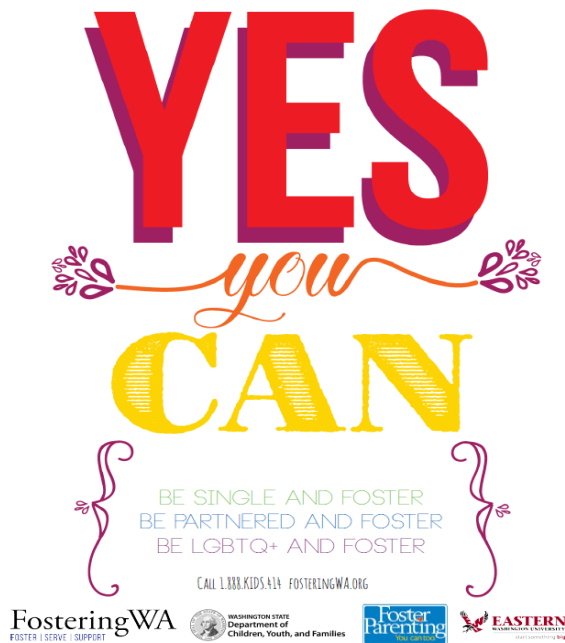
Figure 1.



Fostering Together, 2019 Publication

DCYF continues statewide monthly adoption consortium meetings which were initiated in June 2016. Consortiums are an opportunity for adoption workers, Child and Family Welfare Services (CFWS) workers, LD workers, Guardian ad Litem/Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA), private agency workers, contracted recruiters, and families to present information on children

Figure 2.



Fostering Together, 2019 Publication

and youth who are in need of permanent homes and families with approved home studies who are awaiting placements. Video conference sites are located in offices across the state and a phone-in conference line is available for those private agencies and families residing outside the state of Washington. In June and October 2019, DCYF staff, private agencies, community partners, and families are invited to attend Consortium in-person rather than through a video conferencing site. These events are one to two days in length and in addition to presentations of children, youth, and families, cross-training opportunities are provided for attendees. Training topics included permanency considerations, team building, and best practice ideas when assessing families for placement.

To target adoption homes for children, DCYF contracts with Northwest Adoption Exchange (NWAE) to provide recruitment strategies for

legally free children in need of permanent homes. In calendar year 2018, NWAE served 278 children and youth. All children and youth served were featured on the password-protected Washington Adoption Resource Exchange (WARE), [warekids.org](http://warekids.org), and the majority were also featured on the public NWAE website, [nwae.org](http://nwae.org). Of those children and youth served, 62.91% were aged 12 or older and 46.18% were minority youth. In addition, 61.09% were males, 37.09% were females and 1.82% identified as transgender. In addition, NWAE maintains Wednesday's Child, which provide child or youth specific recruitment videos produced by NWAE and accessible to the public. These videos help maintain the community's awareness about children and youth needing an adoptive family as well as serve as a child or youth specific recruitment tool.

The DCYF website is another avenue for individuals interested in learning more about becoming a foster or adoptive parent. DCYF has a page designated for Foster Parenting & Kinship Care, which a direct link to "Become a Foster Parent". The website provides information specific to the licensing process, training requirements, and an option to complete online Orientation. Contact information is provided for each identified regional LD contact to field questions and/or concerns about becoming licensed. In addition, links are provided to access the recruitment contractors for additional support and the Alliance to sign up for training. DCYF's pages on "Become a Foster Parent" and Foster Parent Training are all within the top ten most visited sites on DCYF's internet pages as of February 2019.

DCYF was created as of July 1, 2018 in accordance with House Bill 1661 signed into law on July 6, 2017. DCYF has restructured how the state serves at-risk children and youth with the goal of producing better outcomes for children, youth, and families in all Washington communities. Beginning July 1, 2019 Juvenile Rehabilitation (JR) and Working Connections Child Care (WCCC) will join the new agency. A benefit of this new agency as it relates to

recruitment and retention efforts is that DCYF has more resources to share information with the addition of a full, dedicated communications team.

## **Assuring prospective foster and adoptive parents have access to licensing agencies**

DCYF has a vested interest in obtaining quality caregivers to provide for children and youth placed in out-of-home care who have experienced child abuse, neglect, and trauma. There are two pathways in which an individual can become a licensed foster parent. The first is by applying through DCYF's LD; and the second is by applying through a private Child Place Agency (CPA) to be certified and then issued a license by the state's LD office. CPA caregivers receive additional oversight and case management services that are not available in state licensed foster homes. There is a strong presence of CPA's throughout the state. There are many agencies available to individuals interested in becoming licensed; all are encouraged and supported. DCYF continues to partner with CPA across the state to recruit and license quality foster parent

In addition to holding the contract for the SRIC database, NWRA provides a comprehensive list of CPA throughout the state via their [website](#). The site also provides information on how to research a prospective CPA and determine what agency will be the best fit. DCYF is taking part in a recently developed foster parent recruitment tool using a Foster Care Funding Collaborative Marketing strategy. This tool was developed by the Washington Association for Children and Families (WACF). This tool uses new age technology to track users through multiple web browsers. Individuals are provided an informative portal where they enter information and are asked to capture their family's motivation and ideal around foster care. The individual is then matched with three agencies (included DCYF as an option). Participating agencies are sent the prospective foster parent's information for an immediate follow up. This recently launched in February 2019 and will continue to be monitored by WACF for efficacy.

Contracted recruiters are there to recruit homes for children and youth placed in out-of-home care. They are an objective party tasked with providing information on the benefits to being licensed by the state or a private agency. During in-person orientations held monthly within the local field offices, recruitment contractors provide a comprehensive list of CPA's in the area and discuss the participants to different tracks available for licensure.

In addition to finding information on becoming a foster parent within DCYF's website, there is a link to obtain more information. This connects you to an online portal to enter contact information, geographical location, race/ethnicity, age, what type of care the potential foster parent is interested in providing, identifying if they a relative or kinship caregiver, what encouraged them to apply, and primary language. This information is then processed into the SRIC database and assigned to one of the contracted providers. Contact occurs with the prospective foster parent within 48 hours. The identified liaison or RPM provide the individual with comprehensive information as it relates to the licensing process, including information on how to access state and private licensing agencies.

Early and ongoing foster parent support through Olive Crest, EWU, and DCYF helps support families. Newly licensed foster families receive support from Olive Crest's foster parent liaisons and the EWU RPMs to ensure a resource of support for the many questions caregivers have during their first placement. This support by the Olive Crest liaison and EWU RPM helps build caregivers skills and confidence. Participation in support groups and online Facebook groups helps create a caregiver support community. Caregivers feel encouraged to consider accepting



placements of children and youth with diverse, unique, and often challenging needs, which promotes ongoing development and helps achieve the right placement for a child or youth the first time.

Through a partnership with LD, prospective foster families learn about:

- Children and youth who enter out-of-home care, trauma they may have experienced, and available services,
- Licensing requirements;
- The application and home study process, background check requirements, and timeframes for licensing;
- Fostering experiences from veteran caregivers at Caregiver Orientation and Caregiver Core Training (CCT);
- Opportunities for direct contact with DCYF contracted and partner agencies and experienced foster parents during the CCT field experience; and
- Ongoing support from either Olive Crest's liaisons or EWU's resource peer mentors when questions arise regarding training, applications, home studies, and licensure process.

Training for prospective and existing foster and adoptive families is available through the Alliance. The Alliance is a comprehensive statewide partnership developed with the University of Washington School of Social Work (UW), the University of Washington – Tacoma (UWT), EWU, DCYF and Partners for our Children (POC) through UW. The Alliance partnership delivers training for DCYF staff as well as caregivers. Cultural competency is a foundational part of the curriculum. DCYF staff, prospective, and existing caregivers receive cultural awareness and competency training in the core curriculum.

The 24 hour CCT curriculum provided to prospective foster families is available in all regions and many communities across the state. A variety of training times and locations, including days, evenings, and weekends, are available to allow prospective foster families access to classes. The Alliance now publishes online class schedules three months in advance. They have also expanded scheduling locations when possible to support better access for potential foster parents.

Legislation passed in Washington State requiring all components of the foster parent preservice training be made available online, allowing individuals to complete as much online preservice training as is practicable while requiring that some preservice training be completed in person. As of September 2, 2018 the Alliance launched an online version of CCT which is now available as a self-paced, e-learning experience. The same content offered in the classroom is now available and can be completed anytime or anywhere there is an internet connection. Powerful, natural voices of youth, caregivers, and birth parents give participants real life perspectives and strategies. Individuals completing the online version are required to participate in one field activity to complete the course. The field activities cover a broad range of items; some examples include attending a local support group or dependency court hearing, volunteering at a fostering event, or having a one on one meeting with an experienced foster parent. Field activities are coordinated and facilitated by the assigned Alliance trainer. After an individual completes the 8 sessions on-line, they receive a coaching session with an Alliance trainers where they have the ability to ask and have questions answered.

DCYF LD staff and other stakeholders participated in the development of the online curriculum. The Alliance is collaborating with POC to evaluate the content and provide feedback on this modality in comparison to the classroom version. As of December 2018, the Alliance reported 245 completions of online CCT since launching in September. Popularity for the online version of CCT continues to grow.

Olive Crest and EWU both carry the CCT schedules and information on how to access online CCT on their web pages and post them frequently on Facebook. The Olive Crest liaisons and EWU's mentors share training dates when families inquire through the SRIC and at other recruitment activities. Olive Crest's liaisons and EWU's mentors are present at all CCT trainings to support and answer questions prospective families may have. Prospective foster families receive the home study application form prior to or at CCT, and many have questions about requirements. Information on how to contact LD, links on how to access LD forms, and how to connect with the recruitment contractor for their area is provided for both online and in-person CCT. DCYF and Alliance staff continue to partner with the recruitment contractors during CCT to assist individuals who need additional support and assistance understanding the licensing process and requirements moving forward.

### **Staff training to work with diverse communities**

DCYF partners with the Alliance to provide training to staff, tribal members, and caregivers across the state. All new DCYF employees are required to participate in Regional Core Training (RCT) in order to prepare social service specialists with the basic knowledge, skills, and understanding to begin their careers in public child welfare. RCT is a comprehensive training and coaching program containing multiple sessions which lay the foundation for continuous on-the-job learning and professional development critical to developing competent, confident, and effective child welfare professionals. Woven throughout RCT are several critical concepts, integral to best practice in child welfare, and designed to maximize learning within context and with relevancy to the work:

- Child safety, permanency, and well-being;
- Critical thinking;
- Trauma-informed practice;
- Disproportionality and racial equity in child welfare;
- Cultural competency/cultural humility;
- Reflection and recognizing bias;
- Documentation skills in FamLink; and
- Program specific job skills.

DCYF staff receive continuous education through the Alliance which provides frequent, accessible in-person and online training based on relevant and current curriculum. In particular, staff are highly encouraged to participate in Racial Microaggressions: Developing Cross Cultural Communication Skills. This seven-hour course is intended to have participants leave the training with a common language and understanding of what is meant by cultural competence and the work they need to do to grow their ability to effectively engage across cultures, an understanding of Racial Microaggressions and why they are problematic, and an increased ability to have courageous conversation about difference and to effectively engage racial tension.

LD staff who conduct home study assessments to assess for character, suitability, and permanency participate in an additional training course entitled Licensing Track Week. This training provides program specific guidance and illustration, and is facilitated by LD staff. In addition to learning the home study guide and assessment tools, there is specific information related to cultural, racial, and socio-economic variations that should be taken into consideration when working within each family. LD staff also receive comprehensive training on LGBTQ+ populations and best practice approaches when assessing caregivers.

Olive Crest and EWU are responsible for providing both existing and new staff training on Cultural Competence and Caring for LGBTQ+ youth. Contractors are to conduct annually trainings on cultural competence in order to support foster parents and kinship caregivers. In addition, the caring for LGBTQ+ youth is also conducted annually so staff can educate families about caring for LGBTQ+ youth. These trainings, as approved by the DCYF HQ Program Manager, must have an emphasis on how to support families during the licensing process through documentation.

## **Strategies for dealing with linguistic barriers**

DCYF policy requires that staff are to provide Limited English Proficiency (LEP) clients access to DCYF programs and services in a timely manner and at no cost. LEP means persons are limited in their ability to read, write or speak English or have a limited ability to speak or read English well enough to understand and communicate effectively. All forms and publications for DCYF are provided in various languages. If there is a specific language in which a form is not translated, DCYF will work diligently to submit the request and provide services in the requested language as soon as possible.

During the home study and licensing process, DCYF offers interpretive services at no cost. In addition, DCYF LD has several staff members state-wide who are certified to interpret in various languages. DCYF staff are required to document LEP clients and services offered to alleviate any communication barriers. The SRIC database captures the primary language of prospective foster parents and provides this information to the respective contractors. In addition, the NWRA has a Spanish speaking staff to cover telephonic inquiry request with Spanish speaking individuals.

Olive Crest and EWU are responsible for providing appropriate, accessible, and culturally relevant services to clients and their families. Service delivery must be culturally competent and responsive to each client's cultural beliefs and values, ethnic norms, language needs, and individual differences. It is encouraged that both programs employ a diverse workforce that reflects the diversity of their clientele and the community. LEP clients are provided with a certified or otherwise qualified interpreter and translated document. Deaf, deaf-blind, or hard of hearing clients are provided a certified sign language interpreter if needed. These services are provided at no cost to the client.

### **1) Non-discriminatory fee structures**

DCYF provides services to all clients at no charge. An individual has access to training, required documents, recruitment materials, a home study assessment, and placement of children and youth with no out-of-pocket expenses. At times there are additional costs for an individual seeking foster care licensure. These costs can include funds spent to prepare the home to meet the minimum licensing requirements (obtaining a fire extinguisher, emergency escape ladder, first aid kit, etc.), fees associated with the required medical physical and TB

tests/immunizations, and obtaining appropriate furniture/bedding. Financial assistance is available to kinship caregivers who are getting licensed to assist in eliminating barriers.

Foster parents who are identified as the permanent placement resource for the child or youth placed in their home have the ability to adopt that child. There are fees associated with adoption through DCYF and the costs of adopting a child from foster care are typically kept to a minimum and adoptive families may be eligible for reimbursement. Incurred costs are generally limited to attorney fees and adoption home studies (if completed by someone other than DCYF). Foster families may apply for a non-recurring adoption expense reimbursement of adoption costs, the maximum reimbursable costs are \$1,500.00 per child or youth.

DCYF requires that CPA's disclose all fees associated with their agency upfront to applicants. Per the Washington Administrative Code 110-147-1680, an agency must advise each applicant in writing about agency fees including: (1) All fees and charges associated with the cost of adoption; (2) A description of each fee including in-state, out-of-state and international expenses and fees; (3) All other miscellaneous expenses associated with the adoption process such as: (a) Home study fees; (b) Childcare expenses prior to adoption; (c) Post-placement and post-adoption reports; (d) Third-party fees; (e) Estimated travel and accommodation expenses; and (f) Non-refundable fees.

### **Timely search efforts for adoptive placements**

Washington's statewide policy requires if a child is not in a potential permanent placement, he or she must be registered with the Washington Adoption Resource Exchange (WARE), within 30 days after a termination of parental rights petition has been filed. The WARE resource is only available to families residing in Washington State.

After a child or youth becomes legally free, recruitment efforts also include registration with Northwest Adoption Exchange (NWAEE), AdoptUSKids, WACAP Waiting Child, and other exchanges. DCYF contracts with Northwest Resources to manage NWAEE, as well as, all exchange registrations for a legally free child and youth. Northwest Resources also provides photographers from across the state to take professional photos of the child for recruitment profiles. Child recruitment efforts also include the Wednesday's Child program (available in Western Washington), Saturday's Child program (available in Eastern Washington), and assignment of a worker from Wendy's Wonderful Kids (WWK) (available statewide).

The understanding of recruitment efforts the exchanges can provide continue to be a barrier for caseworkers and adoption caseworkers. NWAEE has assisted by providing supplemental trainings to DCYF regarding services and how the services can increase timeliness to permanency. This supplemental training will continue to be offered to all of the DCYF offices.

For children and youth placed out-of-state who require contracted services and his or her permanent plan is adoption, DCYF has a Purchase of Services (POS) program. The program and contracts are negotiated and created by the statewide adoption program manager for consistency; funding for services comes from DCYF HQ budget. To apply for POS funds, caseworkers must present a copy of the shared planning meeting notes to support the transition and placement stability of the child. The meeting notes must identify that the matched family is able to meet the child's needs. The caseworker must also include a transition plan, a copy of the family's home study and a list of any necessary services the family and/or child is in need of to support transition and placement stability. Those agencies provide monthly health and safety visits, as well as, reports and adoption finalization services for a fee. The POS program can be used to address barriers to adoption finalization. These include, counseling to stabilize the

placement, completion of home studies and other supports in the adoptive home. Legally free children and youth in cross-jurisdiction placements with POS contract are tracked by the statewide adoption program manager. Monthly supervision reports are received and reviewed as continued assessment of the placement and safety and well-being of the child.

Additional statewide recruitment efforts to assist in the timely facilitation of adoptions include:

- In-Depth Youth Profile Services – Northwest Resources initiated youth engagement work and youth led in-depth profiles. The youth led in-depth profiles allows youth 12-years of age and older to make the decision on how the youth would like themselves presented for potential adoptive families. This includes the use of a variety of media sources such as participating in a podcast about him or herself, directing a video about who the youth is in the youth's own words, and written forms of information specifically directed and written by the youth.
- Reverse Matching Recruitment – Reverse matching recruitment promotes early and continued engagement with youth ages 12 to 17-years old on placement matching and allows the youth to be part of the decision-making process in placement selection.
- Wendy's Wonderful Kids (WWK) – specialized recruitment services that provides for an in-depth review of a youth's file as well as active searches for potential adoptive homes through the review of home studies. The deep dive into the youth's file is employed to identify potential natural supports who may have been previously contacted but were not available to be a resource, and/or to take a fresh look at prior relatives and/or suitable others previously vetted. A new contract between DCYF and WWK is in process with the most current contract expiring in October 2019.
- Statewide Adoption Consortium Meetings – Monthly consortium meetings target legally free children and youth who are not in a permanent placement. Consortia are an opportunity for adoption caseworkers, CFWS caseworkers, Licensing Division licensors, Guardian ad litem, CASA, private agency workers, and families to present information on children and youth who are in need of permanent homes and families with approved home studies who are awaiting placements. Video conference sites are located in offices across the state and a conference line is available for those private agencies and families who reside outside the state of Washington.