

Overview of the Commission's Draft Report

November 8, 2016

**Blue Ribbon Commission on the
Delivery of Services to Children & Families**

Our Journey...

- **Where we started**

- Executive Order – 16 – 03 (Feb. 2016)
 - Formed a commission with 16 members
 - With focused deliverables due by early Nov. 2016

- **Our work**

- Held 7 meetings (May – Nov. 2016)
- Developed 10 guiding principles to set our course
- Engaged 40+ speakers, presenters and key informants
- Received stakeholder input from 1,424 individuals through surveys and focus groups (*themes presented during BRC's Oct. meeting in Spokane*)
- Several work groups formed during the process
- Learned from data, research, and prior efforts
- Building on the strengths and success of departments and administrations currently in place

- **Where we are now**

- Reviewing the draft Commission report

What We Learned

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- Washington should create a new strategy based on the science of brain development that focuses on outcomes for children and youth
 - Build upon, expand and align services that recognize and support caregiving as essential to healthy brain development
 - Incorporate lessons learned from science and research into the practice model related to:
 - Early learning
 - Child welfare
 - Adolescent services
 - Juvenile justice

Lessons Learned - Early Learning

- High-quality early learning opportunities can help children build social, emotional and cognitive skills to get ready for kindergarten and a successful education career
- Early learning experiences also can help children who have experienced adversity return to an optimal developmental pathway
- Research has established that child care can prevent child fatalities for young children involved in child welfare
- Evidence- and research-based home visitation programs help parents build strong, healthy relationships with their children and help prevent child abuse and neglect
- Home visitation is one of the state's most effective programs for preventing child abuse and neglect for parents with young children and is valuable to families who are already engaged with child welfare
- In cooperation with the Center on the Developing Child at Harvard, DEL is participating in science based research through Frontiers of Innovation to improve parent coaching, including teaching skills to protect children from toxic stress

Lessons Learned - Child Welfare

- Child abuse and neglect is an adverse childhood experience (ACE) that puts a child at greater risk of experiencing other challenges
- Children involved with the child welfare system can benefit tremendously from DEL's focus on screening for developmental delays
- The majority of referrals to the child welfare system are for neglect, not abuse
- The child welfare system provides the opportunity to prevent and repair harm to children
- The potential benefit of early prevention programs applies to many families who are not involved in child welfare but are at risk
- Separating child welfare from other early childhood programs unnecessarily stigmatizes families
- The child welfare system serves children and youth of all ages

Lessons Learned – Adolescent Services

- Adolescence is a critical period for brain development. Services, policies, practices and experiences provided through DCYF should support healthy brain development and a positive trajectory into adulthood
- Similarities in service needs between adolescent youth in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems suggest the state should develop stronger connections between these systems and rethink how both systems deliver services to adolescent youth
- The state should develop shared goals and align strategies that support healthy development, strengthen family relationships, and ultimately reduce child welfare and juvenile justice involvement

Lessons Learned – Juvenile Justice

- In Washington, 43 percent of the youth involved with the juvenile justice system are either involved in the child welfare system or have been in the past
- A growing body of research also has documented that child maltreatment is associated with increased risk of delinquency and criminality
- Studies have shown that increased integration of the child welfare and juvenile justice systems can increase opportunities for prevention and improve outcomes for youth in both systems

What We Learned (cont.)

- Alignment of services for children, youth and families is essential
- Disparity impacts children, youth and families across systems and must be addressed as a fundamental underpinning of the new approach
- Washington should create a new department to implement this new approach that builds upon an existing organizational structure — the Department of Early Learning
- A robust data and technology capability is fundamental to improving outcomes for children, youth and families
- Implementation of the new approach focusing on addressing risk factors and intervening early can reduce costs
- Cost savings should be reinvested to address service gaps with evidence- and research-based interventions

Findings and Conclusions

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- State services are not currently organized in a way that achieves the best outcomes for children, youth and families
- We should build on current strengths and successes of the Department of Early Learning (DEL)
- Families who are facing challenges must be offered needed and appropriate services earlier to improve the healthy development of children and youth and protect them from harm
- We should use this opportunity to improve the effectiveness of how and when services are delivered, with a much greater focus on prevention and recognition of the importance of caregiving to healthy brain development

Findings and Conclusions (cont.)

- We should strengthen the collective impact of all services provided by the state to children, youth and families, no matter which agency is the lead for providing them, by making sure they are science-based, have aligned outcomes, share real-time data and create a more cohesive continuum of care
- We should prioritize those children and youth most at risk of neglect, physical harm and other adverse factors most often linked to low rates of kindergarten readiness, dropping out of school, substance abuse, incarceration, homelessness and other negative outcomes later in life
- We should integrate the Children's Administration (CA) with DEL to better ensure that children get access to help and services early in life, when it can give them the foundation they need and put them on a path to healthy development and success in school

Findings and Conclusions (cont.)

- We should ensure focused attention on adolescents, with this new agency having primary responsibility for helping the state achieve better outcomes for youth in this age cohort
- We should ensure that the programs and services of this department are tightly aligned or integrated with essential services such as behavioral health and economic supports
- We should strengthen the linkages to K–12 schools to ensure that children and youth who are struggling or are disengaged from school are identified early and resources in the new department, schools and communities are mobilized and coordinated to support students' continued progress toward graduation

Findings and Conclusions (cont.)

- Disparities impacting children, youth and families across systems must be addressed as a fundamental underpinning of the new model
- A robust data and technology capability is fundamental to improving outcomes for children, youth and families
- Implementation of this new model, focusing on addressing risk factors and intervening early, can reduce costs

Findings and Conclusions (cont.)

- Form a new department, focused squarely on children, youth and families
 - Would use the infrastructure of DEL
 - Would encompass the DSHS programs currently operated by CA, Juvenile Rehabilitation (JR) and the Office of Juvenile Justice

The New Department

New Model



Vision and Mission

Vision

All Washington's children and youth grow up safe and healthy - thriving physically, emotionally and educationally, nurtured by family and community

Mission

The Department of Children, Youth and Families, in partnership with state and local agencies, tribes and communities, protects children and youth from harm and promotes healthy child development and child, youth and family well-being with effective, high-quality prevention, intervention and early education services delivered in an equitable manner

Target Population

The target population includes children and youth (ages birth to 21) and their families who are:

- At highest risk of adverse child and family experiences that often lead to poor academic, social and emotional outcomes, as well as involvement in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems
- Based on data presented to the BRC, six risk factors characterizing children's households - mental health concerns, substance abuse, criminal justice involvement, domestic violence, chronic illness and poverty - are the best predictors of future involvement with state systems

Desired Outcomes

- Improving the cognitive, social, emotional and health outcomes for higher risk children, youth and families
- Preventing child abuse and neglect
- Improving child and youth safety, permanency and well-being
- Improving child development and school readiness through high-quality early learning opportunities
- Improving reconciliation of children and youth with their families
- Promoting more successful transitions of youth to adulthood
- Reducing criminal justice involvement and recidivism
- Promoting successful reintegration with family and community, housing stability, job training and stable employment for youth involved in the juvenile justice system
- Reducing future demand for mental health and substance abuse treatment
- Preventing racial disparity in system involvement and across child and youth outcomes
- Increasing employment and economic self-sufficiency

Structure and Functions

Structure

- Build on the strengths, successes and existing infrastructure of DEL
- Encompass the programs currently operated by DSHS within CA, JR and the Office of Juvenile Justice

Functions

- **Beginning July, 1, 2018 –**
 - DEL's prevention/early intervention services, early learning programs and child care licensing
 - All services in the Children's Administration (CA)
 - Office of Innovation and Alignment
- **In July of 2019 -**
 - Transition JR and the Office of Juvenile Justice
 - Would include juvenile rehabilitation institutions, community facilities and parole

Focus on the entire child/youth age continuum

In this new department:

- A focus on children ages 0-5 will continue to be a priority
- Include an adolescent unit with primary responsibility for achieving better outcomes and prioritizing services to those a highest risk of negative outcomes
- Ensure children and youth of all ages within the target population are served

Fundamentals in the New Agency

- Address equity, disproportionality and disparities
- Address tribal considerations
- Address workforce needs and considerations

An Aligned Environment

- Identification of services for immediate inclusion
 - Criteria and considerations for inclusion
- Alignment and integration across agencies
 - Alignment and Integration Framework
- Develop a Child, Youth and Family budget
 - Identify the collective investment on child, youth, and family services
 - Support decision-making, as well as present a clear picture of those investments
- Data-focused environment across agencies
 - Data dashboard
 - Outcomes reporting to Governor and Legislature
 - Technology investments
 - Data sharing

Additional Recommendations

- Research-focused environment leveraging partners such as WSIPP and WSCCR
- Costs
- Transition

Transition Priorities

- Select leadership
- Create a transition team
- Conduct outcome analyses
- Address personnel and workforce infrastructure issues
- Plan for data transition
- Conduct racial equity impact analyses and use as tool for the agency's work
- Activate advisory body
- Conduct formal consultation with tribes
- Build capacity and an understanding across agencies about the focus and functions of the new department
- Engage court personnel
- Set measureable benchmarks for the transition and the new department

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