

Join Hands for Children
Outcome Advisory Committee Recommendations for
Domains and Indicators used to Measure Outcomes

This document provides an initial list of potential measures to be used to gauge the performance of public and private agencies providing services to Washington children and families in the context of the implementation of 2SHB 2106. It provides measures in the domains of child safety, permanency and stability, and well-being. Certain principles were used in developing these measures. The measures reflect an appreciation of the fact that children's experience of the child welfare system is dynamic; children enter care, move from placement to placement within care, exit, and there is wide variation in the timing of these events. This dynamism calls for measures that allow us to follow children from the beginning of their encounter with the child welfare system while also acknowledging that some important outcomes often take many months or years to occur. In some cases the measures take into account statutory criteria, for example, the 15-month standard for expediting permanency found in the Adoption and Safe Families Act.

The measures listed here are defined in terms of broad child populations, but all of them should be broken down by child age, race/ethnicity, and tribal affiliation. Tracking outcomes by race, ethnicity, and tribal affiliation is an essential aspect of efforts to address disproportionate involvement in the child welfare system of subpopulations defined by these characteristics. Identifying where disparities occur can help identify targets for policy, program, and practice interventions directed towards reducing disparities. Outcomes can then be monitored to see if those interventions are effective in reducing disparities. Moreover, performance contracts should, to the extent feasible, explicitly address reducing disparities in the outcomes agreed upon for the child welfare system as a whole. Outcome measures should be broken down by distinct age groups because the developmental needs of children differ by age and some outcomes (e.g., percentage of children who run away; employment experience) are only relevant to some age groups.

All the Safety, Permanency and Stability, and Well-Being measures listed below are to be measured at 3, 6, 12, 24, and 36 month periods to assist in identifying variation at each period throughout the process. For those outcomes monitored through the National Youth in Transition Database, WA will collect outcomes information at 17, 19, and 21 in a manner consistent with federal regulations.

We recommend that each and every measure listed below be broken down by age, gender, race/ethnicity and tribal affiliation to better understand how Washington State is doing in relation to racial disproportionality.

Safety Outcome: Children involved with child welfare services in Washington will be protected from abuse and neglect.

Measures/Indicators

- Of all children who are subjects of an investigation of child maltreatment who do not receive in-home services or enter out-of-home care, what percentage is the subject of another maltreatment investigation within a specified period of time?
- Of all children who are subjects of an investigation of child maltreatment who do receive in-home services or out-of-home care, what percentage is the subject of another maltreatment investigation within a specified period of time?

- Of all children who receive in-home services, what percentage enters out-of-home care within a specified period of time?
- For all children who receive in-home services or out-of-home care during the reporting period, what is the number of founded and unfounded child abuse reports, by type of perpetrator (out-of-home care provider; parent or other relative not providing care; other adults in the home), per care year (i.e., total number of reports/total number of years in care experienced by all children in care during the reporting period)?
- Of all children experiencing an exit from out-of-home care to permanency, what percentage is the subject of a later founded child maltreatment report within a specified period of time, by permanency type? Permanent exits include reunification with parent(s), discharge to a relative, legal guardianship, and adoption.

Permanency and Stability Outcome: Children in Washington’s child welfare system will experience permanency and stability in their living situations.

Measures/Indicators

- Of all children entering out-of-home care, what percentage experiences an exit to “safe” permanency within a specified period of time, by permanency type? Exits to permanency include reunification with parent(s), discharge to a relative, legal guardianship, and adoption.
- Of all children in out-of-home care for at least 15 months, what percentage experiences an exit to “safe” permanency within a specified period of time by exit type?
- Of all children entering out-of-home care, what percentage experiences an exit that does not lead to “safe” permanency within a specified period of time, by non-permanent exit type? Exits not leading to permanency include running away from care and not returning, emancipation and aging out of care, incarceration leading to exit, hospitalization leading to exit, and death.
- Of all children in out-of-home care for at least 15 months, what percentage experiences an exit that does not lead to “safe” permanency within a specified period of time, by exit type?
- Of all children experiencing an exit from out-of-home care to “safe” permanency, what percentage reenters out-of-home care within a specified period of time (e.g., 3, 6, 12, 24 months), by permanency type?
- Of all children in out-of-home care for whom parental rights have been terminated, what percentage experience a finalized adoption within a specified period of time after termination of parental rights (e.g., 3, 6, 12, 24 months)?
- What percentage of children entering out-of-home care experiences two or more placements within six months of entering care, by nature of the moves (e.g., moves from nonkin care to kinship care; from family-based care to group care, etc.)?
- For children out-of-home care over six months, what is the average number of placement moves per care year, by nature of the moves?
- For what percentage of children in out-of-home care who are members of federally-recognized tribes are all the requirements of the Indian Child Welfare Act and tribal-state agreements being met?

Well-Being Outcome: Children in Washington’s child welfare system will receive care that meets their physical health, mental health, educational, social/emotional, and cultural needs.

Measures/Indicators

- What percentage of children entering out-of-home care is *initially* placed with a relative, kin, or suitable person as defined by law?
- What percentage of children entering out-of-home care is *initially* placed in family foster care?
- What percentage of children in out-of-home care is currently placed in a family setting (i.e., with a relative, kin/suitable person as defined by law, or in family foster care), by time spent in care?
- Of all children in out-of-home care with at least one sibling in care, what percentage is living with 1) none of their siblings in care, 2) some but not all of their siblings in care; or 3) all of their siblings in care?
- Of children in out-of-home care not living with their siblings, what percent have regular visits?
- For youth 12 years and older in out-of-home care, what is the number of 1) psychiatric hospitalizations; 2) episodes of incarceration, 3) episodes of running away from care, and 4) episodes of self harm?
- For what percentage of children entering out-of-home care are required family, health, developmental, and educational assessments completed on a timely basis?
- For outcomes monitored through the National Youth in Transition Database (financial self-sufficiency, experience with homelessness, educational attainment, positive connections with adults, high-risk behavior, and access to health insurance) for youth in out-of-home care at age 17, what are outcomes achieved at ages 17, 19, and 21?
- Of children in out-of-home care that are not placed with relatives, what percentage are placed in family foster care homes that reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of the communities from which the children were removed?
- What percentage of children in out-of-home care is being identified as being tribal members of federally-recognized tribes?
- For what percentage of children in out-of-home care who are identified as tribal members of federally-recognized tribes are all the requirements of the Indian Child Welfare Act and tribal-state agreements being met?

In the area of child well-being in particular, the subcommittee considers the outcome measures/indicators we have proposed to be a work in progress. We believe strongly that well-being should be measured more comprehensively than we have proposed, but we also recognize the obstacles to doing so in the near future. For example, it will be very hard to build these measures into performance-based contracts. Moreover, obtaining data on many potential outcomes of interest will be most efficiently accomplished, and in some cases will only be possible, with much better information sharing between the Children’s Administration and other government and private entities (e.g., schools, health care providers, guardians of vital statistics data). We recommend that part of the 2SHB 2106 implementation process involve bringing together leaders of the institutions that should be involved in this data sharing process to identify and address obstacles to efficient data sharing and whether any legislation is necessary to facilitate data sharing. It is also our belief that the Children’s Administration may be able to begin building additional baselines in the areas of education and health as case managers continue to use FamLink.