

WASHINGTON ASSOCIATION FOR CHILDREN & FAMILIES

FAMILY RECONCILIATION SERVICES

Program Characteristics

In 1978, the Washington State Legislature created Family Reconciliation Services, recognizing that families in conflict have a need for services, and that the state and counties need tools to prevent the costs associated with foster care and juvenile justice system involvement.

FRS has two phases. Phase I is Children's Administration (CA) workers who respond to the initial call from a family, conduct a brief assessment, help the family decide whether to file an At Risk Youth or Child in Need of Supervision petition, and refer the family on to Phase II services. Phase II is family counseling conducted by private agencies contracting with the CA.

Families of adolescents age 13 through 17 are served through FRS. At risk youth, children in need of supervision and families in conflict are eligible to participate.

Strategies of FRS Phase II include:

- In-home sessions
- 24 hour availability to families for crisis intervention
- Time limited (12 hours of counseling over a 45 day period)
- Flexible scheduling (services provided at times convenient to the family)
- Skill building
- Connection to community resources

Outcome Data

Outcome data for families receiving FRS Phase II through the Institute for Family Development in the past two years show that 96% of the 415 youth served avoided out of home placement at the end of services. Of families who needed connection to ongoing services, 73% said that the connection had been made. Ninety percent of families said their family situation was better, and 78% said they were using new skills.

Proposed Budget Reduction

The current biennial budget for FRS Phase I is \$4.42M, including \$3.36M state funds, and \$1.06M in federal match. The Governor's budget proposes eliminating these staff. Without these staff, families will not be referred to services that could improve family functioning and prevent the need for more expensive resources, including out of home placements in foster care, group homes and juvenile detention centers.

Impact of Budget Reduction

Currently 525 families a year are referred to Phase II counseling. Without Phase I workers to do the intakes, assessments, and referrals, families will have a difficult time accessing this counseling. Without this service, more adolescents will become homeless, enter state funded care, live on the streets, or enter the juvenile justice system

Without Phase I workers to gate keep the court petition process, it is anticipated many more families will file a petition, significantly increasing costs to counties.

For more information contact Mary Fischer at the Institute for Family Development.

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