



Washington Association for Children & Families

WACF PUBLIC POLICY AGENDA - 2017 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

IMPLEMENT AND FUND BLUE RIBBON COMMISSION PROPOSAL

On Feb. 18, 2016, Gov. Inslee issued an executive order establishing the Washington State Blue Ribbon Commission on Delivery of Services to Children and Families. His executive order directs the Commission to recommend the organizational structure for a new department focused solely on children and families. The purpose of creating this new agency is to have a cabinet-level department that will align state policies across agencies and have accountability for better using the state's resources to improve the lives of children and families. This new agency will ensure there is a focus on the well-being of children and reduce barriers to improving services so that better outcomes can be achieved. The Commission has created a blueprint for the new agency, including a clear mission and vision based on scientific data, the design of the agency structure, and a funding and implementation plan. WACF endorses the recommendations of the Commission and strongly urges the Legislature to both adopt and fund this critical proposal for strengthening and improving State services to this population.

FULL PAYMENT FOR TRAVEL TIME FOR IN HOME FAMILY SERVICES

The CA funds in home family services to protect child safety, promote reunification of children with their families, and comply with court orders. These contracts do not fully reimburse providers for time traveling to client homes, paying only half time or not at all for travel time. In both rural and urban communities, the travel distance or time spent commuting to clients is often significant. Lack of full reimbursement prohibits many agencies from providing in home services in rural areas, resulting in lack of service availability in too many areas of our state. It is also a serious problem in King and surrounding counties, where distances are not as great, but time spent in traffic is significant.

WACF requests that the legislature provides funding to pay the full hourly rate for all time spent traveling to families. The CA projected annual cost for this would be is \$2.2 million. In addition, we request \$185,000 annually to pay agencies for travel time delivering Parent Child Interaction Therapy; no travel reimbursement at all is currently in the contract for this program.

REINSTATEMENT OF MILEAGE REIMBURSEMENT FOR PARENT-CHILD VISITATION SERVICES

When children are in foster care, parent/child visitation maintains relationships and attachment, reduces a child's sense of abandonment, and preserves the sense of belonging to a family and community. Visitation is a critical, court-ordered service whose value is recognized by courts, CA, and attorneys. Providers ensure that children get safely from foster homes, child care, or school to visitation locations. CA currently uses parent/child visitation services for 60 percent of the children in foster care. Prior to 2008, parent/child visitation providers received mileage reimbursement for any distance traveled. Since then mileage reimbursement has been limited to distances over 60 miles. Many providers are operating at a business loss and others have abandoned these contracts.

WACF asks that the legislature provides funding to reimburse parent/child visitation providers for all mileage incurred. CA estimates that the estimated cost to do so is \$1,522,000 annually.

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

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