

WSCC 2015 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

PRINCIPLES

The “home” represents the most precious human treasures, that of encounter, that of relations among people, different in age, culture and history, but who live together and together help one another to grow. For this reason, the “home” is a crucial place in life, where life grows and can be fulfilled, because it is a place in which every person learns to receive love and to give love. - Pope Francis, address during visit at the homeless shelter, Dono Di Maria, 2013

CHILD WELFARE: Children’s services provided by the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) are designed to protect children and assist families whose children are in danger of entering the child welfare system (foster care). The goals of the system are to ensure that children are placed in safe and stable foster homes or to work with families to create an environment that allows the children to remain safely in their homes. In 2014, system improvements were made requiring family assessments when a report of child abuse or neglect is made, as well as establishing incentives for reducing the number of children in foster homes. The WSCC will work with Catholic Charities staff and other advocates to ensure the goals of stable placements and access to services are met.

BEHAVIOR REHABILITATION SERVICES: Behavior Rehabilitation Services (BRS) is an intensive support and treatment program for youth with extremely high level needs. Service are provided to stabilize youth. These services are provided in an array of settings and are intended to keep youth safely in their own homes with wraparound supports to the family or to secure an alternative permanent placement. The desired outcomes are to increase the child’s behavioral, school and placement stability. BRS funding has been substantially reduced over the past few years, though the number of at-risk youth has increased. The result is higher rates of hospitalization for these vulnerable children. To maintain adequate levels of funding, WSCC will work with advocates to secure methods to maintain funding for BRS.

TANF: Supporting policies and budgets that work to reduce poverty is a priority of the WSCC. Over 37 million people, including 13 million children, continue to live in poverty in our country. In Washington State, more than ten percent of people live below the federal poverty level. More families are seeking shelter, lining up at local food banks, and requesting assistance to meet needs, like clothing, medicine, health care and utilities. Persons who rely on public support, such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), fear cuts in their grants or losing vital services like child care. Maintaining TANF grants and services will be a high priority for the WSCC.

RECOMMENDATIONS

WSCC SUPPORTS:

- Improving the child welfare system
- Establishing means to increase and maintain BRS services for all eligible youth
- Maintaining grants and access to services for TANF recipients