

Parent Navigators & Dependency Support

SB 5693 Section 223

Preliminary Report

June 2023



Publication Number 500-SR006

Introduction

In May 2022, the Department of Corrections was awarded the opportunity to launch a new program utilizing Parent Navigators with “lived experience” to work with incarcerated parents with open child dependency cases. With the goal of reunification where appropriate, Parent Navigators would educate incarcerated parents of the state dependency actions and gain the skills to navigate court actions. Parent Navigators are currently working at the Washington Corrections Center for Women (WCCW) and Airway Heights Corrections Center (AHCC) where they are developing caseloads of parents with active dependency cases with the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF).

Proviso

223(6)(m) \$320,000 of the general fund—state appropriation for fiscal year 2023 is provided solely for two contracted parent navigator positions. One parent navigator must be located at the Washington correction center for women and one parent navigator position must be located at the Airway Heights corrections center or another state correctional facility that houses incarcerated male individuals and is selected by the department of corrections as a more suitable fit for a parent navigator. The parent navigators must have lived experience in navigating the child welfare system. The parent navigators must provide guidance and support to incarcerated individuals towards family reunification, including, but not limited to, how to access services, navigating the court system, assisting with guardianship arrangements, and facilitating visitation with their children. The goal of the parent navigator programs is to assist incarcerated parents involved in dependency or child welfare cases to maintain connections with their children and to assist these individuals in successfully transitioning and reuniting with their families upon release from incarceration. As part of the parent navigation program, the department of corrections must also review and provide a report to the legislature on the effectiveness of the program that includes the number of incarcerated individuals that received assistance from the parent navigators and that tracks outcomes of the parenting navigator program. A preliminary report must be submitted to the legislature by June 30, 2023, with the expectation that a final report be funded in the 2023-2025 fiscal biennium budget and submitted by December 1, 2024. Of the amounts provided in this subsection, \$20,000 of the general fund—state appropriation for fiscal year 2023 is provided solely for the department's review and preliminary report on the effectiveness of the parent navigator program.

Chronology of Events

May 2022 – Notification of Proviso award

June 2022 – Identification of Process Owner for position development

July 2022 – Parent Navigator position description developed; engaged external stakeholders at the Office of Public Defense and Washington Defender’s Association to provide input

August 2022 – Position description moved to Human Resources, Budget Office, and Classification and Compensation Unit to establish position

September 2022 – Initial recruitment for Corrections Specialist 4 – Parent Navigator positions for the Washington Corrections Center for Women (WCCW) and Airway Height Corrections Center (AHCC)

October 2022 – Recruitment filed to produce a qualified pool of applicants with “lived experience”

November 2022 – Met with Rep. Senn to provide update and concerns with initial recruitment

December 2022 – Interviews conducted with only one applicant recommended by the interview panel for the WCCW position

January 2023 – WCCW Parent Navigator starts her position and is scheduled to complete department Correctional Worker CORE Academy and Parenting Inside Out Training for Trainers

February 2023 – Viable candidate for AHCC with “lived experience” applies and is selected for Parent Navigator position

April 2023 – Training requirements completed. Meeting with facility personnel. Family Reunification program under development

May 2023 – Parent Navigators in the facilities, building caseloads and sharing program information with incarcerated parents. Attending new arrival orientations.

June 2023 – Parenting Inside Out classes are initiated. Connection with Children’s Home Society for joint project with Dependency 101 classes. Continuing to build Family Reunification Program

Family Reunification Program

Mission: To provide evidence-based engagement and learning opportunities for families to strengthen the family bond as the incarcerated parent reunites with the family.

Objectives:

- Build confidence through parental education
- Engage in pro-social family activities during and after incarceration
- Understand parent roles and importance of positive co-parenting
- Learn to advocate for self and child(ren) through dependency actions

Parent Navigators

Brenda Lopez, Washington Corrections Center for Women

Terren Beeman, Airway Heights Corrections Center

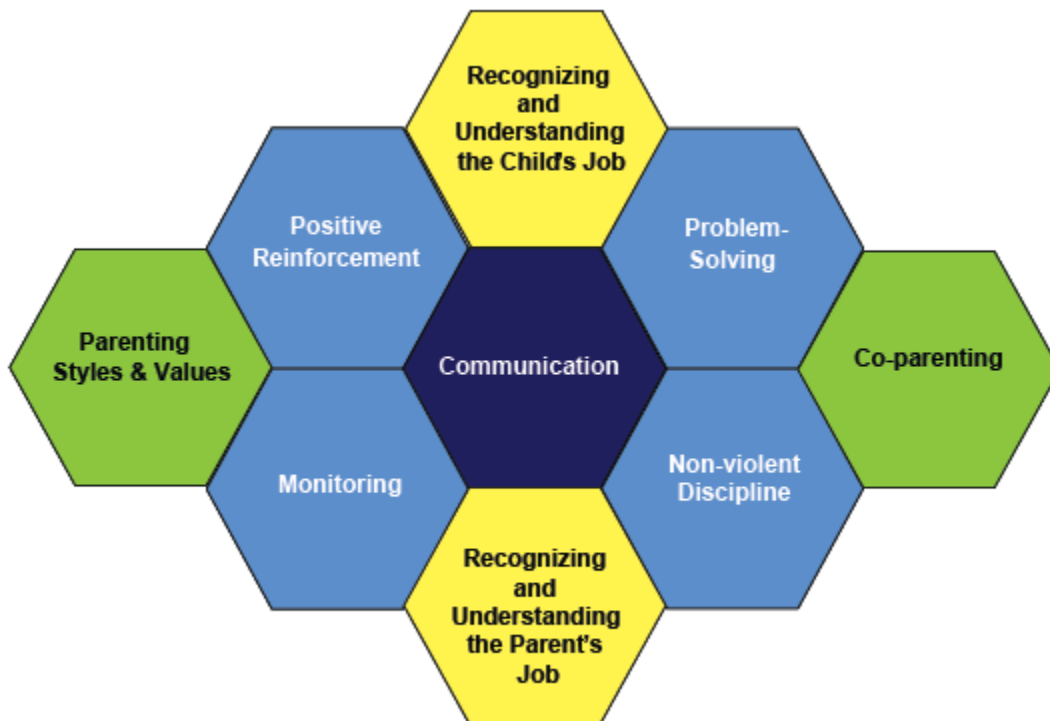
Parent Programming Opportunities

Parenting Inside Out (PIO) is an evidence-based, cognitive-behavioral management skills training program created for incarcerated parents. It addresses the unique situation and issues of justice-involved parents and:

- Is outcomes-based
- Is learner-centered
- Uses social learning theory to teach cooperation and problem-solving in the context of learning parenting skills
- Helps parents promote healthy child adjustment, prevent child problem behavior, and build resilience in children



The Parent Navigators have begun teaching these classes and prioritize enrollment for parents with open dependency cases. In this program, parents develop and refine social interactional skills and citizenship behaviors they can use in all aspects of their lives and that will help them guide their children toward becoming positive, constructive adults (Parenting Inside Out, 2023).



Core Principles; Parenting Inside Out, 2023

Parent-Teacher Conferences (PTC) are available in a renewed program set to launch this fall. Parent Navigators will work with incarcerated parent case managers to assist them in

participating in school conferences. This connects incarcerated parents to their children's academic accomplishments and work with teachers on opportunities for the parent to engage with their child to support educational milestones.

[Parent/Teacher Conferences | Washington State Department of Corrections](#)

Girl Scouts Behind Bars (GSBB) continues to be offered at WCCW for mothers/daughters and is expanding to AHCC for fathers/daughters with the Department's ongoing contract with the Girl Scouts of Western Washington. Parent Navigators will assist in the enrollment of this program for parents with children to participate together in troop activities onsite and virtually, as well as parenting education with troop leaders. The department is researching the opportunity to bring a Boys Scouts Behind Bars program to both pilot locations to work with the Parent Navigators in the reunification process.

Read to Me Daddy/Mommy program is part of the Department's family-centered activities available to parents who get to select a book in their child's age-range and then read the book to them on video. The video is then sent to the child along with the book to read along with their incarcerated parent. This program is open to all incarcerated individuals with young children. Parent Navigators have aligned program participation as part of the Family Reunification Program.



Family Reunification Program (FRP) Overview

This program is designed for Parent Navigators to assist incarcerated parents with open dependency cases to educate them regarding dependency matters. This includes additional learning and child-engagement opportunities to support parental bonding and reunification efforts.

Parent Navigators are conducting outreach to both staff and the incarcerated population to create an awareness of the program and how the navigators can assist incarcerated parents with open dependency activities. This has included:

- Attending counselor meetings to provide program information
- Posting flyers in units and program areas
- Attending new arrival orientation with sign up forms
- Communicating through announcements on kiosks
- Enabling communication through Parent Navigator electronic mailbox
- Conducting walkabouts and speaking with incarcerated individuals
- Scheduling callouts for interested parents
- Broadening awareness through existing family-centered and enrichment programs

The Parent Navigator at WCCW has 22 active cases, with 10 active cases with the Parent Navigator at AHC. This continues to grow as more and more staff and incarcerated parents learn of the new program and support framework. To establish tangible outcome data, the Department will capture data on:

Parent Navigators & Dependency Support

SB 5693 Section 223

June 2023

- Self-referrals
- Offender Management Network Information (OMNI) system referrals (those made by case managers)
- Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF) referrals
- Parenting program completions and family-centered activity participation for those assigned to FRP (comparing number to those not enrolled)

Parent Enrollment

During the initial meeting with the interested parent, the Parent Navigator will go over the program and the dependency education that will be provided. Additionally, the expectations of program participation and recommended parent enrichment opportunities for each case.

- Parent signs Release of Information (DCYF, Attorney, DOC)
- Parent completes the intake form
- Parent and Navigator discuss initial services
- Navigator engages parent in case plan development

Parent Navigator Roles & Responsibilities

Parent Navigators:

- Gets Case Plan from DCYF & original placement date (OPD) (with completed release of information, ROI)
- Reviews Case File
 - ✓ Checks DCYF timeline
 - ✓ Sets schedule
 - ✓ Schedules for Dependency 101
- Collaboration
 - ✓ Works with Classification Counselor/Facility Risk Management Team (FRMT)
 - ✓ Communicates with DCYF team
 - ✓ Communicates with Parent Attorney (policy under development)

I. Parent Plan Development

Parent Navigators will work with parent to develop a case plan related to their individual dependency activities and present level of engagement with their child(ren). This includes identifying what type of plan may be necessary:

- Guardianship Plan (long-term, or have offenses against child – will not be able to reunite with child or want another person to become guardian), or
- Reunification Plan (4 years or less to Expected Release Date (ERD), has parental rights), or
- May be open adoption, may be return to parent, etc.

II. Case Management

- Participates in FRMT

- Makes referrals to PIO, PTC, GSBB, and other family and relationship building programs, Alcoholics/Narcotics Anonymous (AA/NA), Visitation, other services as needed
- Identifies and helps resolve barriers to visitation, and other areas
- Supports communication barriers with DCYF case worker
- Conducts regular reviews
- Reviews and document monthly reviews
- Captures data

III. Preparing for Release

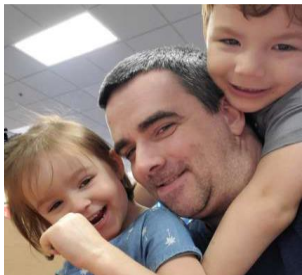
- Connects with Parent Ally prior to release
 - Parent Navigator, releasing individual, DOC Case Manager, and Parent Ally meet within 30 days pre-release
- Shared Planning Meeting occurs (DCYF, Attorney, Parent Support/Ally, Parent Navigator, Incarcerated Individual, etc.) – Set the parent up for success!
 - Two (2) weeks prior to release
 - Addresses visitation with child post release
 - Makes referrals as necessary with DCYF and outside agencies
 - 1 month post release check-in occurs (completed by partnering agency and/or Community Corrections Officer (CCO), if applicable)

Identifying Improvements

Many aspects of the program are under development with the focus being on identifying incarcerated parents early at the two pilot facilities. To increase efficiencies in this area, four main actions are taking place:

1. Creating an enhancement in the individual's electronic file (OMNI) by identifying incarcerated individuals with open DCYF cases upon reception at the Washington Correction Center (WCC) and the Washington Corrections Center for Women (WCCW). The available OMNI report would then be pulled by the parent navigators for two reasons:
 - a. To identify incarcerated parents with open dependency actions being placed at WCCW and AHCC prior to arrival to support Parent Navigator pre-work and immediate connection at orientation.
 - b. To alert AHCC Parent Navigator to work with Reception counselor and Facility Risk Management Team (FRMT) for possible placement at AHCC for services.
2. The Director of Correctional Services, working with the DOC Grants Administrator, have submitted for a new Department of Justice (DOJ) grant that would create a third Parent Navigator position for the Reception Center at WCC and other Incarcerated Parent Program supports. This position would focus on the OMNI enhancement to identify incarcerated parents prior to parent facility assignment to support collaboration with the Strength in Families program and transfer to facilities supported by Parent Navigator services.

3. Establish contractual relationship with DCYF to verify status of dependency cases, connection to assign DCYF case managers, information regarding current case plan requirements and any upcoming hearings or shared planning meetings.
4. Develop a decision package to expand Parent Navigator positions and related services to each major facility to provide opportunity and education for incarcerated parents with dependency cases in the remaining 6 facilities:
 - a. Coyote Ridge Corrections Center
 - b. Clallam Bay Corrections Center
 - c. Stafford Creek Corrections Center
 - d. Monroe Corrections Center
 - e. Washington State Penitentiary
 - f. Washington Corrections Center (given possible grant consideration)



Summary

In summary, the Parent Navigator positions are critical support and education for incarcerated parents engaged with DCYF and the courts in dependency actions. This program will bridge gaps in current process that affords a parent the opportunity to be actively involved and have a voice in matters that impact their children.

Whether incarcerated for a few months or several years, incarcerated parents and their children have a right to fight to be together where appropriate. Family reunification and bonding remains important during incarceration, and with thoughtful participation and supportive activities, incarcerated parents will learn how to advocate for themselves and their children and come away with the knowledge to become a pro-social and supportive parental figure.