



Washington County Children and Youth Service Agency

**Strategic Plan
2021-2026**

Keeping Kids Safe while
Supporting and Preserving
Families.

Letter from the Director

Washington County Children and Youth Service Agency (WCCYS) is committed to the wellbeing of children and families. By empowering and engaging families and the community, safety and permanency can be achieved and all members can thrive. We are dedicated to protecting children from abuse and neglect while preserving families when possible. When children are unable to remain safely at home, we work diligently to achieve safe permanency for children and youth through reunification, adoption, or permanent legal custodianship. WCCYS utilizes teaming and engagement models to build on the strengths of families, engage natural supports, and empower families in developing their plan to address individual needs. To implement this commitment, we have created a strategic plan to hold us accountable in achieving the best outcomes for the children and families in Washington County, PA. Our strategic plan is made up of five goals: Safety, Permanency, Well-being, Workforce, and Prevention. It is important to note that system collaboration is embedded into the goals as our system partners play a key role in prevention, intervention, and overall well-being.

In June 2020, in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, I accepted the offer to lead WCCYS into an innovative, “21st Century” Child Welfare System. Our child welfare system will offer a holistic, integrated approach to proactively support families and help them reach their fullest potential. By addressing the underlying needs of families before there is a crisis, we can work toward the goal of reducing the number of children who enter out-of-home care and families that become involved with child protective services. It is still too early to predict the overall impact this national pandemic will have on family well-being; however, we do know that the current stress families are experiencing is severe. While reports of child abuse and neglect in Washington County were reduced by almost 24% in the last quarter of the 2020 fiscal year, likely due to COVID-19 social isolation, WCCYS is now responding to an increase in serious incidents of child physical and sexual abuse allegations, increases in domestic violence incidents, increases in untreated mental health and drug/alcohol abuse causing deficits in parenting, and increases in families experiencing food insecurities and unstable housing. We must address the current trauma individuals are experiencing in addition to the trauma histories parents and caregivers have which escalate the risk to vulnerable children.

To transform WCCYS into a 21st Century Child Welfare System, I began by building on the strengths of the current system established by my predecessors. A management team had been appointed, focusing on safe case closure, reductions in caseload sizes, and retention of casework staff. Evidence-Based programs were established to provide services targeted to preserving families. Permanency was prioritized, with 90% of the youth exiting care achieving legal permanency through reunification, adoption, or permanent legal custodianship. WCCYS prides itself on maintaining a full annual license from the Department of Human Services, with recognition that child safety remains the first priority of the Agency. As Washington County moves into an integrated Human Service System, we need to look at strategies that build strong, cross-system collaboration within the community. We shall focus on strengthening parents’ ability to cope with their own needs and achieve self-sufficiency. It is essential to understand the impact trauma has on a child, a parent, and the system as a whole. To accomplish our goals, we need to create a culture within the agency where everyone has a voice and where each person feels he or she can openly voice opinions, ask questions, or make a mistake without fear. A trauma informed culture, promoting teamwork and self-care. A culture that will allow us to strengthen and retain a highly skilled workforce, creating opportunities for professional growth and succession planning.

We are committing to using data to inform our practice and policy decisions. Utilizing both quantitative and qualitative data to review our progress is important; therefore, WCCYS is honored to receive the support of Casey Family Programs to assist in the development of a database which we will employ to continuously monitor our involvement and to be transparent and accountable to those that we serve.

I am confident with the support of our system partners, the Human Services Administrator, and the Washington County Board of Commissioners, the implementation of this plan will allow us to achieve our goal of keeping children safely at home by strengthening families.

Anne R. Schlegel
Anne R. Schlegel, MSW
Director



Vision:

Family driven, strengths based approach to keeping children safe in their own home and communities where they have the opportunity to develop to their fullest potential.

Mission:

Washington County Children and Youth Service Agency (WCCYS) is committed to the wellbeing of children and families. By empowering and engaging families and the community, safety and permanency can be achieved and all members can thrive.



About Us

Guiding Principles



Child Safety

Safety of Children is paramount. Our work will focus on preventing maltreatment and preventing out-of-home placements.



Empower Families

Empower families, and help guide them in the development of their plan to achieving self-sufficiency.



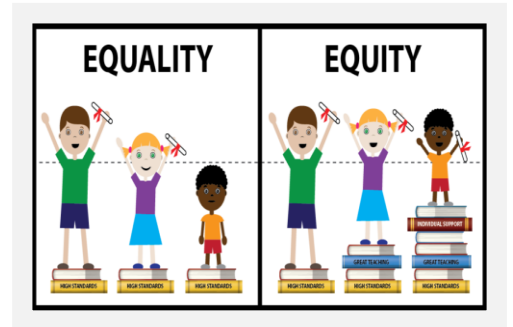
Integrate Services

Utilize an integrated service approach to providing resources and supports to families in the communities in which they reside.



Skilled Workforce

Develop a competent, skilled, workforce led by a strong leadership team that fosters a healthy work environment, encourages critical thinking, models teamwork, and encourages professional growth.



Equity

Confront implicit bias, implement system changes and work to achieve equity within our agency and across systems.



WCCYS Strategic Plan

5 Goals for Transforming into a "21st Century Child Welfare System"



Safety

Recurrence of maltreatment will align with the State performance standard and not exceed 5%

The number of families re-entering the child welfare system will be reduced by 5%



Permanency

Children discharged to permanency within 12 months of entering care will increase by 20% to align with the national performance standard

Children who re-enter care within 12 months of discharge to permanency will decrease by 10% to align with the national performance standard

Children will experience placement stability, with having two or fewer placement settings in a single placement episode



Well-Being

Trauma informed screening and assessment tools will be utilized to support interventions that are focused on the entire family rather than an individual

Following a Plan of Safety, the number of families who are accepted for child welfare services will decrease by 25%

Qualitative and Quantitative data will be used to develop a baseline of current outcomes in meeting the 5 child well-being domains



Workforce

A trauma informed culture promoting teamwork and self-care will be standardized

Uniform decision making and building trust among the leadership team

Developing a highly skilled workforce and providing opportunities for professional growth and succession planning



Prevention

Employ a practice that is fully integrated within the Washington County Human Services Department

Enhance collaboration with community partners, families and youth we serve





Safety

Strategies for Reaching Our Goal



Restructure Intake Department

Prevention and Diversion Unit

Night Intake Team

Teaming Approach to Screening Decisions



Enhance Investigative Practices

Investigative Practice Standards Developed

Training and Field Coaching of Direct Practice Staff

Reliable Training and Coaching Tools for Managers and Supervisors



Culturally Responsive Interventions

Establish Baseline Knowledge of Performance Outcomes Related to Practice, Policy and Procedures

Collaborate Across Systems for Enriched Cultural Competent Practices





Permanency

Strategies for Reaching Our Goal



Timely Permanency

Develop a Permanency Practice Model which integrates child/youth-centered, family-focused planning and decision making for safe permanency

Parents, (Birth, foster, adoptive), family members and other significant adults in the life of a child are actively engaged in permanency planning



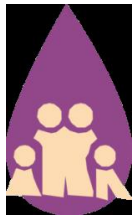
Stability

Develop a Family Search and Engagement Strategy

Build processes into investigative practices for early identification of important supportive adults

Provide opportunities for birth parents and foster parents to develop a relationship

Impact of Childhood Trauma Training for all Foster and Kinship Caregivers



Preservation

Recruitment of diverse and affirming foster families within Washington County

Enhance post permanency support

Utilize child profiles and child prep in case planning

Support for foster and kinship caregivers





Well-Being

Strategies for Reaching Our Goal



Trauma Informed Screening and Assessments

Promoting Well-Being by Addressing Trauma

Providing Evidence-Based Trauma Informed Services and Supports to Families

Integrate work with all child serving systems



Family Engagement in Case Planning and Decision Making

Build Agency Capacity for Family Engagement and Family Partnership in Case Planning

Empower Families to be the Center of their Plan and Leader in Decision Making regarding their Family



Utilize Data to Improve Outcomes for Children and Families

Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI)

Establish Protocols for Collecting and Sharing Information





Workforce

Strategies for Reaching Our Goal



Trauma Informed Culture, Promoting Teamwork and Self-Care

Team Decision Making Practice utilizing Clinical Supervision

Develop a trauma-informed Self-Care practice that promotes a Work-Life Balance

Build processes within the Agency's support teams to assist casework staff in meeting the needs of children and families



Uniform Decision Making among Leadership Team

Utilize training and coaching tools that fosters the development of critical thinking and uniform decision making

Learn how to "manage up" within the Agency



Professional Growth and Development of Staff

Prepare and implement professional development plans for all staff

Provide opportunities to enhance leadership skills

Provide Education and Training Opportunities to enhance Knowledge and Skills





Prevention

Strategies for Reaching Our Goal



Strengthen Community Supports

Develop, enhance, and/or expand on programs and initiatives aimed at improving outcomes for families

Increase utilization of evidence-based and evidence-informed programs



Raising Awareness of Child Abuse

Develop an integrated monitoring system which reviews trends and health and human service needs

Utilizing Geo-mapping to provide knowledge of communities at greatest risk of child welfare involvement

Integration of data and transparency of community needs



Elevate Family and Youth Voice

Develop a forum that encourages family and youth to provide feedback on initiatives and advocate for their needs



Timeline

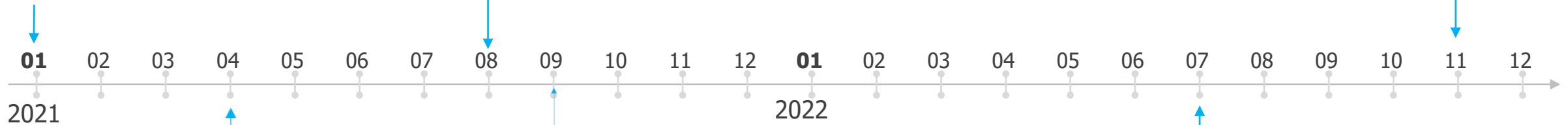
Our First Year Action Plan

Build Team Capacity

Strengthen Leadership Team

Develop Agency Culture and Climate

Develop Baseline Data



Identify a planning and implementation team. Develop a communication plan

Training and field coaching
Prevention/Diversion and Investigative Practices

Adjust plan
Integration with Human Service Department

Training and Development of trauma-informed practices
Building Relationships and Begin Collaboration with System Partners
Reallocation of Resources, Supports and Services to match needs of the families we serve

Implementation of our Practice Model
Engagement with the Community (Family and Youth Voice)

Stakeholder Feedback

Operationalize (internal) Database





Thank You

