

## Frequently Asked Questions



Please read about the database before searching to maximize the database's benefits and learn its limitations.

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## 1. What is the database's purpose?

The database aims to provide a quick and convenient way for child welfare and dependency court staff to determine what **community-based** early learning and development programs are available and which of the services have current openings to meet the early learning and development needs of King County's young children prenatal to age 5 and their caregivers.

The programs in the database can supplement or be sequenced with services for which Children's Administration contracts or governmental services such as substance abuse and mental health treatment.

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## 2. In what circumstances is the database useful to child welfare or dependency court staff?

- CPS investigation
- Voluntary services
- For children and their parents/caregivers in foster or kinship care, or in-home dependencies
- Leading up to and after reunification
- Conclusion of dependency cases when most other services and supports stop
- As follow-up to short-term therapeutic programs
- As part of Family Assessment Response (FAR)
- Option to consider at Family Team Decision-Making Meetings (FTDMs)
- To assist parents' attorneys, Parent to Parent staff, Family Treatment Court staff, and other court staff in identifying positive, effective, and long-term supports for parents and caregivers

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## 3. Who created the database?

Children's Home Society of Washington, in partnership with the Washington State Children's Administration and many other organizations developed the database. Development of the database was funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Youth, as part of a larger system change project to ensure that our communities' most vulnerable children are connected to high quality early learning and development opportunities critical to their life trajectories. For more information, contact Nancy Ashley at [NancyA@chs-wa.org](mailto:NancyA@chs-wa.org).

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## 4. What are the database's desired outcomes?

- Provide easy-to-use information to King County child welfare and dependency court staff about the value and availability of community-based high quality early learning and development programs and how to access them.
- Develop an increasing interest and demand by these groups that generates a robust use of the database.
- Provide information on which programs currently have openings.

- Increase referrals and enrollment of children involved in the child welfare system in these programs. Most are free to families with low incomes.
- Mitigate the effects of maltreatment; reduce the risk of additional maltreatment, and improve the early developmental, socio-emotional, and behavioral well-being of young children involved in the child welfare system.

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## 5. How do children benefit from early learning and development programs and services?

What happens in early childhood can matter for a lifetime. From the prenatal period through the first years of life, the brain undergoes its most rapid development. These early experiences determine whether or not the brain's architecture is sturdy or fragile.

Programs in the database can change the otherwise likely dismal trajectory of children aged birth to 5 and their caregivers involved in the child welfare system. Significant harm can occur unless we pay close attention to critical windows of brain development

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## 6. What are the criteria for programs included in the database?

- Address critical developmental needs of children involved in the child welfare system, including enhancing the child's development; improving school readiness; increasing attachment and increasing parenting/caregiving ability and enjoyment.
- Focus on science-based, high quality, longer-term programs
- Free to low-income families
- No cost to Children's Administration
- Help connect families to other community resources
- Available to families involved at any level in the child welfare system
- Can be helpful with open cases and cases that are being closed.
- Serve parents, foster/kinship caregivers or a combination.

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## 7. What types of programs are in the database?

There are three general types of programs/services that are included in the database: **Early Intervention**, **Infant/Early Childhood Mental Health** and **Early Learning**. A short description is provided below. You can find more detailed descriptions by clicking on the heading for each category listed above.

### a. What are the Early Learning programs/services?

Early Learning programs and services fall within three categories: Home Visiting, Center-Based Programs (research- and evidence-based) and Licensed Child Care (family child care, child care centers). For more detailed information, [click here](#).

## **Early Learning: Home Visiting**

Early childhood home visiting programs connect expectant parents and parents of young children with trained staff who visit the family's home on a regular basis. They also provide families with linkages to other services offered in the community. The goals for these programs include teaching or modeling parenting skills to help parents set realistic expectations for children's behavior; increasing parental knowledge of child development and possible developmental and health issues; and helping parents provide a stable and nurturing environment that prepares children for success in school and life.

There are four national models identified as evidenced-based that operate in King County: Early Head Start, Nurse Family Partnership, Parents as Teachers and the Parent-Child Home Program.

### **ii. Early Learning: Center-Based programs (Research- or Evidence-based)**

These programs provide a learning environment that supports children's growth in language, literacy, cognition, general knowledge, social-emotional development, learning and physical health and development. At varying levels, the programs also build relationships with families that support peer and community connections; family engagement and well-being; positive parent-child relationships; and families as learners, advocates, and leaders.

National program models include Head Start and Early Head Start. Washington State funds a high quality preschool, Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP). The City of Seattle funds a high quality preschool called Step Ahead.

### **iii. Early Learning: Licensed Child Care**

Washington has a licensing system to set basic standards in child care. This licensing system applies to two types of child care: centers and family child care homes. The Department of Early Learning (DEL) licenses nearly 2,100 child care centers and family home child care providers in King County. Licensed child care providers follow minimum licensing requirements set by the state to ensure children in licensed care are in safe, healthy, and nurturing places.

**Child Care Centers** offer full or part-time care where children are grouped together by age and participate in age-appropriate activities. Smaller centers may have mixed age groups for parts of the day. There are specifics for capacity and child/adult ratio at centers, depending on the ages of the children.

**Family Child Care** homes offer full or part-time care in a person's home. Children are in mixed age groups. Family child care home staff/child ratios and group size differ from those of child care centers, and do not fit easily in a small chart. If there are any children who are not yet walking, the number of children per adult should be six or fewer. If all children are walking and age 2 or older, two staffers can care for up to 12 children. The group size will be smaller if there are up to four children not walking.

The following are not regulated by the state and are not considered licensed child care:

- Part-day pre-school programs
- Nanny and babysitting services in the child's home
- Care provided by relatives
- Community recreation programs
- Informal parent cooperatives and playgroups

The Child Care Aware of Washington Family Center, a program of Child Care Resources, provides information and referral services for those looking to access licensed child care. Service is provided by resource specialists, with interpreter services available upon request.

#### **iv. Early Learning: Kaleidoscope Play & Learn Groups**

Kaleidoscope Play & Learn groups for parents and other caregivers are offered in neighborhood libraries, family centers, schools, and malls. They are a fun place to build relationships and to learn things to do at home to support early learning through everyday activities. Locations and schedule information for groups in King County are available at

[https://www.childcare.org/ckfinder/userfiles/files/Kaleidoscope\\_Play\\_%26\\_Learn\\_Groups-King\\_County.pdf](https://www.childcare.org/ckfinder/userfiles/files/Kaleidoscope_Play_%26_Learn_Groups-King_County.pdf)

#### **b. What are Early Intervention Services?**

These comprehensive services and supports enhance a child's development and help caregivers facilitate their children's growth and development. Services are tailored to meet an eligible child's and family's individual needs. Services are available to all eligible children ages birth to 3 with developmental delays or disabilities and their families regardless of income, in accordance with the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Part C. There are clear timelines and no waiting lists. For more detailed information, [click here](#).

#### **c. What is Infant/Early Childhood Mental Health?**

Defined as the healthy social and emotional development of a child from birth to 3 years, this a growing field of research and practice is devoted to the:

- Promotion of healthy social and emotional development;
- Prevention of mental health problems; and
- Treatment of the mental health problems of very young children in the context of their families.

Children can show clear characteristics of anxiety disorders, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, relationship-disorders, and adjustment disorder, regulation disorders related to sensory processing and other problems at a very early age. For more detailed information, [click here](#).

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### **8. How many openings do these programs usually have?**

The programs included in the database are in high demand. However, the following strategies have proven very successful in finding existing openings and enrolling children involved in the child welfare system:

- **In summer, there are thousands of openings** for Head Start, ECEAP, Step Ahead and the Parent-Child Home Program. All recruit new cohorts of children for fall program starts.
- **Providing information on current openings.** This helps focus linkage efforts on which programs to contact and avoids time-consuming dead-ends.

- **Prioritization.** Several providers prioritize children in foster care and/or children involved at any level of the child welfare system.
- **Partnerships and relationships.** Child welfare, dependency court, early learning, early intervention and infant/early childhood mental health staff who have conducted over 260 face-to-face “case staffings” in the last year have developed trust and working relationships that open communication and result in successful and efficient referrals.
- **Providers’ willingness to go the extra mile.** Providers who have attended the case staffing meetings are invested in reaching and serving young children and their families who are involved in the child welfare system. They are eager to help.

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## 9. What programs are not in the database?

- Child welfare evidence-based programs funded by Children’s Administration
- Enrichment and recreational programs such as community centers, libraries, museums, etc.
- Parenting programs
- Services offered by private, fee-based providers

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## 10. What other supports exist to supplement the database?

- The best results in finding programs best matched to an individual child, family, or caregiver depend on building positive relationships between the child welfare and dependency court staff and the skilled service providers.
- Child welfare and dependency court staff and providers included in the database are encouraged to attend monthly interdisciplinary “case staffing” meetings at each of the four main DCFS offices in King County. To obtain a calendar of the meeting dates, contact Nancy Ashley at [NancyA@chs-wa.org](mailto:NancyA@chs-wa.org).
- The programs update their information on a monthly basis. While we strive to maintain an up-to-date list of openings, the most accurate information can be obtained directly from the programs themselves.
- You can contact Nancy Ashley at [NancyA@chs-wa.org](mailto:NancyA@chs-wa.org) for complex or unique situations where additional support may be helpful.

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## 11. Who has access to conduct searches?

Limitations are placed to increase access to young children in the children welfare system, who have been underserved in these valuable community resources.

The database’s search feature is limited to the following categories of users *seeking to link King County’s young children prenatal to age 5 who are involved in the child welfare system to community resources that support early childhood development*

Child welfare offices

- DCFS – King South/Kent
- DCFS – King East
- DCFS – King West
- DCFS – Martin Luther King Jr.

- DCFS -- Office of Indian Child Welfare
- DCFS office outside King County serving child/family living in King County
- Region 2 Children’s Administration

King County dependency court organizations

- Parents for Parents
- CASA volunteer or staff
- Family Treatment Court team
- Attorney for parents
- Judicial officer
- Attorney General’s office
- Other dependency court staff

Service providers

- Participating provider helping to find resources for young children involved in the child welfare system
- Public Health – Seattle King County Early Intervention Program (EIP)

Administrators and others granted permission

- Child Care Aware staff
- Children’s Home Society database administrator
- Granted permission by database administrator

People who are not affiliated with any of the categories above, but want to use the database for the purpose described above can e-mail Nancy Ashley at [NancyA@chs-wa.org](mailto:NancyA@chs-wa.org) with a short description of their role and how they wish to use the database.

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## 12. Why is access to the database limited?

The primary audiences for the database are child welfare and dependency court staff. They are in key positions to support linkages to early learning and development programs for young children in the child welfare system, but are understandably not fully aware of what is available and how to make effective referrals.

Providers included in the database should use it primarily to assist in enrolling children involved in the child welfare system into high quality early learning and development programs. To do that, providers can become committed participants in the activities that support that goal, such as attending the monthly “case staffing” meetings at DCFS offices, modifying their eligibility and prioritization criteria to increase access for children involved in the child welfare system, and reviewing internal policies and procedures to see what can be done to better serve these most vulnerable children.

If providers use the database to make referrals for a broad range of eligible families, they will likely diminish the opportunity for a child involved in the child welfare system to be able to get a slot a day or a week later. Very few young children in the child welfare system are enrolled in the types of programs included in the database. To change that situation, it is critical to utilize a variety of strategies to increase access and availability.

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## 13. What types of accounts are needed to use the database?

- a. **Search account.** Anyone who fits within the categories of users who have access to the database will need an account.

- b. **Provider Update account.** The person designated by each program site to provide monthly updates about slots available and any other changes will need an account.
  - Within a provider organization, there may be one person who is designated to make the monthly updates, and other staff who are using the account to search for services IF for young children involved in the child welfare system.
  - If the designated update person is also conducting searches, she can use the same e-mail and password.
- **Be sure to write down your password. If you forget it, you can request to have it e-mailed to you.**

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#### **14. How do I conduct a search?**

- [Click here](#) to access a “How To” guide.

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#### **15. How do I accomplish the updating process?**

- [Click here](#) to access a “How To” guide.

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#### **16. How we will know who is using the database, what type of searches are being performed, and how well the database is working?**

The database is programmed to allow the database administrator to track the number of people who open search accounts, how frequently they use them, the types of services and features that are being searched for, and other specific data points.

If resources allow, we plan to conduct periodic surveys of those using the search function to learn what is working well and what could be improved.

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#### **17. Who can I contact with questions, for more information, or to provide feedback?**

- Contact Nancy Ashley at [NancyA@chs-wa.org](mailto:NancyA@chs-wa.org)

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