

EVERY
FAMILY
deserves
a chance
to thrive.



A family is a child's first teacher, the foundation for a healthy life, and the cornerstone of our communities—and their success is our responsibility. That's why after more than a century of working on behalf of children, Children's Home Society of Washington (CHSW) is committed to deepening our work with families across Washington state.



CHILDREN'S
HOME SOCIETY

of Washington

Children's Home Society of Washington was established more than 125 years ago, and continues to serve parents, caregivers, and children through a model of holistic, comprehensive support that we know works best for families:

- **Early learning:** ensuring children have the strongest possible foundation to thrive during a critical period of their development
- **Parent & family education:** equipping parents with the resources to support their children through every stage, milestone, and challenge
- **Behavioral health & counseling:** giving parents and children the tools to address behavioral health challenges, building on each family's strengths
- **Family reunification:** offering mentorship and support for parents whose children are temporarily in foster care, so they can move toward nurturing strong, life-long families
- **Deep community relationships:** acting as a partner to other organizations, leaders, and those most impacted by stressors families face—so we can develop an ecosystem of solutions through and beyond our own organization

Too many families in our state are in crisis—and it's our job to change that.

Parents living with the stress and trauma of generational poverty, racism, and now the lasting impacts of a global pandemic face unthinkable barriers to creating strong, healthy families.

The vast majority of child neglect cases occur in families with incomes below 50 percent of the poverty line. Even after decades of attempts to reform the foster care system; Black, Brown and Native American children are still disproportionately removed from their home, remain out of home longer, and have parents who are likely to have their parental rights permanently severed—compounding generations of family trauma.

To address poverty, family separation, and other crises—we need to tackle these issues at the root.

1.75 million Washingtonians

(more than **500,000** of them children) live in a household that struggles to make ends meet.

That's why Children's Home Society of Washington is ready to invest in families at a whole new level, in order to keep families together so they can thrive.

We are investing in a three-pronged approach over the next 3-5 years that gives families the resources to weather a crisis and emerge stronger as a family, and to address ongoing and supportive needs that prevent crises from occurring in the first place.

IN OUR LEGAL SYSTEM:

PUBLIC POLICIES

Passing the laws and policies that reshape our legal system so that it encourages families to stay together.

ON THE GROUND, EVERY DAY:

FAMILY RESOURCES

Offering culturally relevant services and resources to families so they can access basic needs, navigate the challenges of parenting, support behavioral health, and more—to prevent crises like abuse and separation.

IN AND THROUGH A CRISIS:

PEER SUPPORT

Offering peer-to-peer support through a family's most challenging crisis: navigating the foster care system once a child is removed from the home.

When we invest in families— **WE ALL BENEFIT.**

An ineffective legal system, siloed resources, and the lasting effects of the pandemic will continue to send families into crisis—especially those already living in poverty and who face historical trauma and racism. This is our chance to make a real difference for the children with the greatest needs today, for the parents who deserve a second chance, and for the communities we are all a part of.

“CHSW listens to me and we have a collaborative partnership. My granddaughter feels safe at CHSW and as a result, she speaks up for herself.”

Alesia Cannady
Grandmother and kinship caregiver
for granddaughter, Aleiyah



PRIORITY 1:

PUBLIC POLICIES

We will advance public policies that can reshape our foster care system and reduce rates of separation so families can heal, grow, and thrive.

“Instead of just saying ‘we’re saving children,’ we should be saving parents for their children.”

Shrounda Selivanoff
Director of Public Policy
Children’s Home Society of Washington



The problem:

In Washington state, it is too easy to remove a child from their home and family, period.

Currently, Washington state law allows children to be removed on the barest thread of evidence—dramatically increasing the number of interactions with the foster care system. Once a child is removed from their home, we have already missed so many opportunities for support and healing, and family separation exacerbates this trauma. Instead of potentially wrongly assessing risk, harming parents and children, and severing a child’s ties to relatives and loved ones—we should be investing in prevention strategies that reduce the number of separations and prevent interactions with the foster care system from happening in the first place.



Across the United States, 37% of children will have a visit from child protective services by the time they are 18 years old.

That number rises to an appalling **53% of Black children.**

And yet, only 10% of national funds are allocated to prevention work that could avoid these situations altogether.

The solution:

With the help of donors, we will advocate for and draft legislation that reduces unnecessary and harmful family separations, and changes the conversation from family separation to family preservation.

To lead a strong policy agenda to advocate for families, we will lean on our deep relationships with nonprofit and legislative partners, parents and caregivers, and others affected by the foster care system. Through deep listening and collaboration, we will work to encourage more rigorous criteria for removing a child from their home and prioritize placement of a child with relatives.

By collaborating with those who have lived experience with the foster care system we can respect the priorities of those closest to this issue and ensure that families have a say in what supports they need to thrive as a family.

Philanthropy will give CHSW the resources to draft, approve, and pass brand-new pieces of legislation shaped by parents and caregivers and aimed at reducing family separation.



“Who I was as a parent 10 years ago doesn’t say who I am as a parent today.”

Shrounda Selivanoff
Director of Public Policy
Children’s Home Society of Washington



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PRIORITY 2:

FAMILY RESOURCES

We will offer direct and comprehensive support to families in their everyday lives to weather a crisis and prevent separation.



As part of our future direction, CHSW plans to establish several new hubs for comprehensive family support across Washington state.

The problem:

Stressors for families are increasing in our state; yet support is siloed, underinvested in, and difficult to access.

As the long-term impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic send more people into poverty and instability, negative outcomes like child maltreatment and neglect may increase without the right family resources. Experts agree that family resource hubs are essential to addressing a family's most critical needs in one place, but we have no statewide legislation or coordination to support this work. Additionally, for the last 15 years Spokane has seen some of the worst child maltreatment rates in Washington state—and has been selected as a priority community for investment by the Department of Children, Youth, and Families to design community-driven solutions to prevent child abuse and family separation.



Studies from the Great Recession show that increased economic instability is associated with a rise in child maltreatment and abuse.

The solution:

With the help of donors, we will expand CHSW's **Family Success Hub Model** in Spokane to fill a gap in direct, comprehensive, community-informed family resources; while working to expand a **network of family resource centers** across the state.

Replicating a Successful Model by Deepening our Presence Spokane:

Building on successful hubs in North Seattle and Walla Walla, we will establish a comprehensive location for family resources in early learning, parent and family education, behavioral health and counseling, basic needs, and more in Spokane.



“When we moved to Seattle four years ago, I was looking for opportunities to connect with other families and have a safe and fun place for our children. Then my friend told me about CHSW’s North Seattle Family Resource Center (NSFRC) in Lake City.”

Zhen, with her two children, 4-year-old Vincent and 6-year-old Veronica

This model leans on strong community partnerships and family navigators who can work directly with families to set goals, respond to crises, and work toward solutions informed by a strong community and cultural context. To achieve this, we will hire a total of 12 family navigators as well as additional staff to enable coordinated, accessible family support; and collaborate with Medicaid to ensure we are eligible for sustainable government funding in addition to philanthropy.

Laying the Groundwork for Long-Term, Statewide Change:

At a statewide Family Support Summit convened by CHSW in 2018, we learned that our state’s disjointed family resource centers are in need of stable, coordinated funding streams, resources, and best practices to improve their effectiveness. CHSW is already leading a legislative effort to bring together family resource centers across the state of Washington to build capacity, improve quality of services through standards and training, and collect statewide data to learn and refine how these centers serve the community. Our next step is to work alongside partners to develop a coordinated statewide network and association informed by best practices over the next 18 months.

Your gift will help build better outcomes for families across Washington state.



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PRIORITY 3:

PEER SUPPORT

We will support more parents navigating child separation and the foster care system through parent mentors who can help families move forward together.

“We had a critical desire to grow as a family, and we were committed to doing the work to get our kids back and keep our family together,” Chris said. “I would tell other families dealing with similar situations to not be too proud to ask for help. There is support out there for you, too.”

Chris P.



The Page's personal experience with family reunification after navigating the foster care system led them to pursue careers in family strengthening and support. They remain active in the community with the Parents for Parents program.

The problem:

Our foster care system is not designed to support parents who face unthinkable stress, isolation, stigma, and anger that may pose long-term barriers to family reunification and the ability to thrive.

Research tells us that children who experience trauma¹—including being severed from consistent relationships with caregivers—face lifelong consequences. Removing a child from their home is painful and can have a lasting impact on both parents and children, the vast majority of whom long to be with their families under healthier conditions. Without a foster care system that supports parents, we fail young people who we hope will ultimately return to a safe, secure, and loving home.

Parents who receive education and training on the foster care system and additional peer mentoring are **more likely to be reunited with their children.**



¹Center on the Developing Child (2007). *InBrief: The Impact of Early Adversity on Child Development*. <https://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/inbrief-the-impact-of-early-adversity-on-childrens-development/>

The solution:

With the help of donors, we will expand CHSW's **Parents for Parents (P4P)** program; offering mentorship, education, and support to parents navigating the foster care system from those who have successfully exited it.

The Parents for Parents program (P4P) was developed in Pierce County in 2005 by a parent who had successfully reunified as a family, and wanted to pair other frightened and anxious parents navigating the foster care system with supportive mentors who had been through their experience. Through legal and nonprofit partnerships, the P4P program was passed and signed into law by Gov. Jay Inslee in 2015 and is administered by Children's Home Society of Washington. All counties in Washington state will have P4P by the end of June 2021.

The P4P program offers comprehensive and deep support through every stage of the process of family reunification following the removal of a child from their home, and leans on CHSW's extensive relationships with parents and courts. The benefits of this unique program begin at the moment of crisis but extend far beyond it:

- **Supporting parents through the initial crisis of child removal.** Parent mentors ensure parents are quickly connected to resources and, through their own experiences, can offer both practical advice as well as hope, empathy, and motivation.
- **Empowering strong, confident, and resilient parents** who can take the steps toward reunification and are better prepared to care for their families.
- **Developing parent mentors** by valuing parents' lived experience and resilience navigating the foster care system, offering professional development that can build practical skills for further career development.
- **Giving children the family they choose,** enabling families to stay together in a healthy environment rather than remain in a foster care system that may separate loved ones and cause further harm.



The ultimate goal of this mentorship and support is to end harmful family separations and help families thrive in stable, loving homes for the long term. And since the program's inception, we've confirmed what its founders already knew—it works.

Now, we're ready to expand this effective program across the country with a national program manager who can work with states, Tribes, and counties to launch P4P and replicate this successful model for more people.

Your support can make all the difference to keep families together.



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Your gift can change lives today, and shape stronger communities tomorrow.

Philanthropy means that instead of designing our work around what specific programs grants are likely to fund, we can do ambitious work that families really need. We are ready to invest more deeply in these three tactics and scale the work we know makes an impact, but we can't do it without donor support.

“CHSW believes in a bottom-up philosophy of listening to the community's needs and doesn't make all decisions from the top down. We are a tapestry, a blend of colors and ideas with the same goal—make our children's future better.”

Alesia Cannady
Grandmother and kinship caregiver
for granddaughter, Aleiyah



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