



## Foster Parent Alliance of Washington State

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### FPAWS Parent Mentoring Program

The FPAWS Parent Mentoring Program is a program focused on the reunification of children with their families. This program is currently in practice in the Clark County Family Treatment Court. For many families it means shorter stays for children in out of home placements and higher rate of reunification with their birth family. Job satisfaction is higher for social workers, parents, and Parent Mentors.

The Parent Mentoring Program is designed to utilize specifically trained and supervised foster parents that partner with birth parents to achieve reunification.

In 2019 the Clark County Family Treatment Court received a grant which allowed this program to be re-implemented on a limited basis.

The data collected from the 2008 study and the implementation of the Parent Mentoring Program in 2019 from Clark County Family Treatment Court, supports the positive impact of the Parent Mentoring Program.

#### Data

- In 2005-2008 the original study was conducted by the University of Washington School of Social Work with a grant from the Stuart Foundation.
- The study focused on four main objectives and included a control group and a study group of 97 parents and 157 children. Both children and parents received Parent Mentoring services.
- The study found that 85% of the children in the mentoring group were reunified compared to 44% of the comparison group. **Additionally, the children in the mentoring group stayed in foster care 224 fewer days than the comparison group.**
- The study indicated that there is a high satisfaction on the part of social workers, mentors, and parents.
- Anecdotal numbers from Clark County Family Treatment Court show that results are the same with only 4 failures in the 2 ½ years the program has been running.

#### Unanticipated results from the study

- Six babies were born to families in the PMP Group during the time they were working with a mentor or after the mentoring period was over and none were placed in foster care.
- While the original goal of the program was to increase reunification, other permanent plans were achieved for children whose parents worked with mentors at a greater rate than those in the Comparison Group. Of these permanent plans, which included the

relinquishment of parental rights, changes of custody and guardianships, 13 were achieved by agreement and without contested court action. Parents in the PMP Group were better able to understand the needs of their children and participate in making alternate parenting plans for their children.

- Most of the parents in the Program had abused drugs and alcohol and had fractured relationships with their extended families. As a result, their family members were distrustful of them and not available to provide the more natural support that parents need. Mentors worked with the parents' relatives to help the families rebuild trust and come together to support reunification.
- Foster parent retention was enhanced by the foster parents' involvement with PMP. Foster parent mentors reported increased satisfaction with foster parents and often remained licensed to provide care after adopting children or when they may have otherwise chosen to leave the program. Consequently, the wisdom and skill of experienced foster parents was not lost to the agency or to the families.
- Mentors continued their relationships with the parents they worked with long after the structured mentoring period was over. As a result, they were able to support parents beyond the official mentoring program

#### Design:

- The Parent Mentoring Program includes positive mentoring support to families with children in foster care, foster families, and social workers.
- Currently in Clark County, the referral process is initiated through the Social Worker. We hope to expand referrals coming from programs such as Family Connections, Parent 4 Parent, DCYF Social Workers, and through the Office of Public Defense (We do not want this to be a court ordered service, it needs to be a voluntary service in order for parents to gain the greatest benefit of the program).
- Each office throughout Washington State will have a state employee to act as an advocate and a liaison between the DCYF office staff and the FPAWS Parent Mentor staff.
- Each DCYF office will have a FPAWS Parent Mentor supervisor that will manage each case, train, and supervise the foster parent mentors.
- Parent Mentors will be experienced foster parents that will work closely with the birth parents, caregivers, and social workers to help facilitate the education and learning of the skills necessary for the families to stay on track for reunification.
- Parent Mentors will work with each birth family 20 hours per month to build relationships and build skills through mentoring for a 4 month period of time.
- The Parent Mentoring Program will work alongside programs such as Family Connections which is designed for all families within the foster care system. Not all Foster Parents are suited to mentor and not all Birth Parents choose this level of engagement.

- When the Parent 4 Parent program is involved we would work in cooperation and in conjunction with their program.

Quotes from the Stuart Foundation Report:

“Evaluation Conclusions The Parent Mentoring Program has proven to be a promising child welfare program. Parents who participated in the PMP were more likely to reunify with their children than comparison group parents. Furthermore, children in the PMP group spent fewer days in foster care. These are important findings because they go to the heart of the goal of child welfare intervention – to reunify parents and children whenever safely possible.”

“An additional benefit of the program is its grounding in every day child welfare practice. Most evidence-based models have been developed outside of child welfare and imported with uneven success. The fact that this program was developed by line public child welfare social workers increases the likelihood that it will be taken up and implemented within the system, creating systemic change.”

## Conclusion

FPAWS believes that expansion of the Parent Mentoring Program will greatly improve the rate of return home for children placed in out of home care. The program design will serve 2200 children per year throughout Washington State, decreasing the number of children in foster care and increasing the stability of families. By our calculations the Parent Mentoring Program will save taxpayers \$11 million per year based on the basic rate of a 5 year old in out of home placement. Expansion of the program will greatly impact the outcome for children in foster care throughout Washington State. Your support and sponsorship of this program and fundraising events will make a difference for Washington’s most vulnerable children.